

**The “monstrous births” of
Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson:
early modern interplays of religion, science, and politics
in the Atlantic World**

Martina Purucker

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In token
of my admiration for his passion for science
this dissertation is inscribed
to

Gottfried Purucker

-- with thanks to H. Melville --

“The monster’s body is not immediately buried;
its corpse does not at once disappear or decay,
but continues to give life to a narrative
long after breath has left its body.”

--Philip M. Soergel, “Portraying Monstrous Birth in Early Modern Germany”--

-- (1998, 142)--

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As a young student, in one of my first seminars at university, I intended to write a paper on “The History of New Science.” This endeavor resulted of course in a grandiose failure, as was to be expected considering the complexities of the subject matter: in the end I did not even hand in the paper. Years later, I succeeded at least in this respect. Although I cannot claim to parallel Pliny who, in his own word, had been “perusing about 2000 volumes” (13) when drafting his *Natural History*, nevertheless this was a project of monstrous dimensions. Finishing it would not have been possible without the help of a number of persons and institutions.

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I Introduction

1.1 Setting the stage and state of the art: the monstrous births in the context of the Antinomian Controversy and scholarly discourse

As various early modern sources hold, in the night of 17 October 1637, Mary Dyer, a member of the First Church of Boston in New England, brought forth a “monstrous birth,” as deformed infants were called up to the early modern period in both learned treatises and cheap print.¹ The stillborn girl came two months before the expected time and apparently showed strong patterns of malformation: the child supposedly lacked a head, had four hard horns over the eyes, and a crooked nose; it was covered with “pricks and scales,” had two mouths (one of which with “a piece of red flesh sticking out”), and on each foot there were “three claws” (Winthrop, *Journal* 254). Only a few months thereafter, Anne (or Ann) Marbury Hutchinson, a midwife and friend of Mary Dyer who had assisted Dyer in her labors, also suffered a miscarriage. Hutchinson produced “several lumps” of flesh, “every one of them greatly confused” and “altogether without form,” as the long-time Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, noted in his journal (*Journal* 265).

The reception history of these two “monstrous births” is regarded as one of the most promising subjects of study for scholars focusing on the colonial period of New England. Round, for example, claims that the transatlantic discourse on such prodigious events as Dyer’s stillborn daughter “provided the foundation for New England cultural formation in the first generation of settlement” (25). According to Egan, the “monstrous births” of Dyer and Hutchinson have “taken on the character of a scholarly touchstone . . . , to the extent that anyone who wants to rethink early American culture must interpret this trope one way or another” (144n24). Sievers regards the narrative of Dyer’s deformed child as “early America’s most famous story” (218).

Why are these failed pregnancies given so much weight—especially considering that these were not the only prodigious births in early New England?

¹ Since the term *monstrous birth* was common practice for describing children born with severe birth defects, it will also be used in this study. The term serves as a reminder that human deformity used to be interpreted in ways that differ from modern approaches.

There were twins joined together at some part of their bodies, children born without a tongue, with too many fingers, distorted body parts, or lacking arms.² Already in themselves such occurrences had the potential to dominate town talk for a while. The emotional appeal of Dyer's and Hutchinson's monstrous births was heightened by the fact that they happened in quick succession (in October 1637 and late spring or summer 1638); furthermore, rumors had it that Dyer's labors had been accompanied by appalling stench and other mysterious-seeming phenomena such as a shaking bed, which could easily be interpreted by early moderns as being caused by supernatural forces; and while many cases of so-called aberrant births seem to have left their contemporaries puzzling over their deeper meaning and the reason for their occurrence, Dyer's and Hutchinson's miscarriages suggested themselves for propagandistic use.

Dyer and Hutchinson belonged to the protagonists of one of the most disruptive crises in the history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. From 1636 to 1638, the recently founded settlement went through the so-called Antinomian Controversy.³ In the following, a short overview on this conflict will be given. One aim is to provide scholars focusing on early modern discourse on monstrous births with basic knowledge of this controversy, another to provide those familiar with the history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony with information on how Dyer's and Hutchinson's miscarriages were embedded in the sequence of events of this conflict.

Setting the Stage

At the core of the Antinomian Controversy lay differing conceptions of Puritan covenant theology. There was severe disagreement over the question how one could know for sure to be saved, that is, over the exact relationship between sanctification

² See for example Samuel Sewall's diary entries of the years 1682, 1702, and 1713 (I: 52, 463; II: 729-30; on Sewall, see also chapter 4.3), or Joshua Moodey's letter to Increase Mather of 1683 (see chapters 4.2 and 4.4).

³ As will be shown below, the label *Antinomian* was used as a derogative expression in a severe conflict, wherefore it has been suggested to term the Antinomian Controversy "free grace controversy" (Winship, *Making Heretics* 1). The adherents of the "free spirit" movement were said to claim having experienced "invisible Spirit-witnessing" (J. Crawford 155); assurance of salvation was called having experienced grace; Winthrop, for example, wrote about the "covenant of free grace" (*Journal* 241). The term *Antinomian Controversy* is well-established within the scholarly community, however, wherefore it will be used also in this study. A good overview on the controversy is given by Winship, *Making Heretics*; cf. Bozeman 112-210; Como 441-4 and passim; S. Foster, "New England." For additional secondary literature, see Sievers 218n21.

and justification, between being elected by God and outward signs of this election. According to Reformed covenant theology (see Morgan, *Puritan Family* 1-28; Stoevers 84-91; Ziff 49-77), God initially had entered a covenant of works with his people, promising eternal life for obedience. But due to the fall mankind lost their ability to meet this standard. As the influential Cambridge theologian William Perkins put it in 1606, Adam retained “the faculties of the soule and the bodie” but lost “conformitie or correspondencie to the will of God, in regard of obedience” (*Whole Treatise* 10). God therefore offered a second covenant, that of grace, promising rewards in eternity and redemption through Christ. This covenant was offered to those whom God had predestined for salvation and who were faithful in this promise: God “absolves them from the guilt and condemnation of all sins, and accepts them as perfectly righteous to eternall life” (Shepard, *First Principles* 12).

Despite the inability of mankind to fulfill the covenant of works, leading an orderly life was regarded by most Puritans as an indispensable precondition of living up to God’s demands. The covenant of works was a communal covenant covering the whole family, church, and state, and it was characterized by obedience rather than faith; through it the whole group had promised obedience, so the whole group would have to suffer God’s wrath in case of sinning. As would be formulated in the “Cambridge Platform” of 1648, censures of the church were necessary “for preventing of the wrath of God that may justly fall upon the church if they should suffer His covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders” (ch. XIV, 1, p. 109).

In 1635, Anne Hutchinson came out as someone placing all emphasis upon the covenant of grace. At some point in that year, Hutchinson had started small informal gatherings in her home to discuss the weekly sermons delivered by Boston’s ministers, most notably John Cotton, teacher of the First Church of Boston. In the wake of these discussions, Anne Hutchinson accused the ministers (with the exception of Cotton and the brother-in-law of her husband, John Wheelwright) of advancing a covenant of works instead of a covenant of grace. Hutchinson and like-minded Puritans were said to regard faith in Christ as sufficient to attain salvation and, therefore, to consider adherence to the religious or moral law as set forth in the Old Testament and as interpreted by religious authorities neither necessary nor possible. Hutchinson and her followers regarded the inner working of the Holy Spirit

within each individual as the primary source of ethical guidance and disregarded those who attempted to live up to the demands of the covenant of works, which included displaying moral rectitude. Their opponents therefore decried them as *Antinomians*—a term with Greek origin that designated those who were held to oppose the law. Those who regarded obedience to a pre-defined body of religious and moral law as the way to justification were termed *legalists*.

The Bay colonials were well aware of the dangers Hutchinson's viewpoints posed. In London, there had been fierce debates from the mid-1620s to the early 1630s between Puritans and "Antinomians" such as John Eaton, John Traske, and John Everard (see Como 73-103).⁴ Permanent self-introspection and search for signs of redemption could be painful and demanding, wherefore many were drawn towards easier ways of gaining certitude about their spiritual estate: it was tempting to choose "a faire and easie way to Heaven" (Weld, in Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface) and set all hopes on the covenant of grace, ignoring the need to live up to strict rules of behavior.⁵ On 25 October 1636, several ministers convened in Boston and debated the critical issues, and they tried to find out in private conversations the exact nature of the opinions brought forward at Hutchinson's meetings. The ensuing session of the December Court, in which the conflict over the covenant of works and sanctification should be solved for good, failed in its effort, and the front between the two parties hardened.

On 19 January 1637, the Court called for a day of humiliation, but John Wheelwright, who preached the accompanying fast day sermon, rekindled rather than soothed the conflict. While the orthodoxy saw fasting as a means to prevent that Christ abandoned them and to maintain and restore peace, Wheelwright claimed that the only reason for fasting was "the absence of Christ" ("Sermon" 155). In the General Court starting 9 February 1637, Wheelwright was called to answer questions on his sermon. In March, at the end of the Court setting, Wheelwright was sentenced guilty of sedition and contempt because he supposedly had called a great part of the ministers "antichrists" and had "stirred up the people against them with much bitterness and vehemency," as Winthrop noted (*Journal* 210). The General Court tried to persuade Wheelwright to leave the colony, which he refused.

⁴ On differences and similarities between English and colonial Antinomianism, see T. Cooper 25-26, 196-7; S. Foster, "New England" and *Long Argument*.

The next milestone of the conflict was the Synod held at Newtown, today's Cambridge, starting on 30 August and lasting until 22 September 1637, nowadays referred to as *Cambridge Synod*. About twenty-five ministers convened in the meetinghouse and discussed the "eighty" erroneous opinions that "were spread in the country" (Winthrop, *Journal* 232). The assembly officially condemned the meetings at Hutchinson's place. Since there still were unbridgeable differences between the two parties, formal court procedures seemed the only remaining option.

Both Wheelwright's court trial of February to March 1637 and the Cambridge Synod of September 1637 are important reference points for Mary Dyer's ill-fated pregnancy. On 17 October 1637, shortly after the Cambridge Synod had taken place, Mary Dyer gave birth to a child with severe bodily deformations. The midwife, Jane Hawkins, reported that the baby arrived "about two months before the just time" (Winthrop, *Journal* 254). Dyer, who probably supported Antinomian viewpoints, thus must have become pregnant at about the time of the verdict on John Wheelwright. At the beginning of Dyer's labors, several women of the neighborhood were present. In the early modern period, birth was a highly social event, so it was quite common that neighboring women provided comfort or assisted the midwife in her task (Tannenbaum; Wertz and Wertz 2-6). But obviously most of the other women had left the birthing scene at some point:

When it died in the mother's body, (which was about two hours before the birth) the bed whereon the mother lay did shake, and withal there was such a noisome savor, as most of the women were taken with extreme vomiting and purging, so as they were forced to depart; and others of them their children were taken with convulsions, (which they never had before nor after) and so were sent for home, so as by these occasions it came to be concealed. (Winthrop, *Journal* 255)

According to Winthrop's journal, only three persons were present at the moment of giving birth: Anne Hutchinson, a friend and experienced midwife; Jane Hawkins, the midwife in charge; "and another woman," who only "had a glimpse" of the deformed child (253). Anne Hutchinson and Jane Hawkins must have been well aware that such an aberrant birth would offer their opponents a welcome occasion for further attacks on the "Hutchinsonian" party. They asked John Cotton for advice as to what they should do, and he recommended keeping the birth a secret (Winthrop, *Journal* 254).

⁵ On the extent of "Antinomian" resistance to the church elders and public opinion within the Boston congregation, see J. Cooper, "Anne" 382-5, and *Tenacious* 46-47; Winship, *Making Heretics* 55-60.

The midwives followed this advice, and the body was buried without reporting it to the authorities.

So at this point in conflict, the Bay colony's officials still had been ignorant of Dyer's stillborn infant and, in particular, its outward appearance. But there were less formal ways of news-spreading than the official recording of the birth of a child. The third, unidentified woman who had witnessed the birthing scene was not "able to keep counsel, as the other two did," so rumors started to be heard "that the child was a monster" (Winthrop, *Journal* 253). The Reverend John Eliot remembered in 1660 that although the newborn child was "husht up & suddenly buried" (30), information on it soon was "whispered by s[ome] women in private to some others" (31).⁶

In October 1637, the Massachusetts Court held a by-election, and during the court session some of Wheelwright's supporters were banished from the colony or disenfranchised. "Mr. Wheelwright and those of his party . . . persisted in their opinions" (239), wherefore the General Court began its judicial procedure against the main protagonists of the Antinomian Controversy in early November. Those who had signed a petition on behalf of Wheelwright after his conviction were charged with sedition, disarmed, and disfranchised; Wheelwright was disfranchised and banished from the colony because he had not been willing to alter his opinions (Winthrop, *Journal* 240).

In mid-November 1637, it was Anne Hutchinson's turn to stand trial at the General Court (see D. Hall, ed. 311-48). She was charged with holding weekly public lectures at her house with sixty to eighty persons attending and criticizing the greatest part of the ministers for not preaching "a covenant of free grace" (Winthrop, *Journal* 241). More difficult to prove was that Hutchinson had preached publicly; Hutchinson denied that men had attended meetings led by her (see D. Hall, ed. 314-9).⁷ But when Hutchinson claimed to possess prophetic abilities that made her recognize "true" ministers, she offered her opponents the chance to finally condemn her: Hutchinson revealed to the Court that the Lord had opened Scripture unto her "by his prophetic office" and made her "see that those which did not teach the new covenant had the spirit of antichrist." She maintained that it had been the Spirit who revealed this to her

⁶ Decades later, Cotton Mather (see chapters 4.3 and 4.4) would use a similar wording when referring to Dyer's child: "It was Buried without any Noise of its *Monstrosity*," but only a few days later it was "being whispered . . . about the Town" (*Magnalia* VII, 20).

⁷ On the dispute over whether Anne Hutchinson had preached publicly, see in particular chapters 2.2 and 3.3 of this study.

“by an immediate revelation,” by “the voice of his own spirit to my soul” (D. Hall, ed. 336, 337).

While before the members of the assembly had struggled to reach a decision on how to deal with Hutchinson, now the case seemed clear. The New England Puritan clergy held that the age of direct, “immediate” revelation and of miracles had passed. God’s word was now revealed through the words of Scriptures, complemented by the “Book of Nature” (see chapter 2.1), since God’s intentions could be discerned through his continued presence on earth. Immediate revelations were out of the reach of any form of external control; the believer could thereby communicate unmediated with God, which would have meant the end of Scriptural authority over truth and the end of the authority of its official interpreters, the ministers: “by advancing . . . revelation by the Spirit,” Familists and Antinomians “destroy or weaken the revelation of the Scriptures,” claimed the Reverend Thomas Shepard in 1645 (*New Englands Lamentation* 4).⁸

Winthrop and other members of the Church of Boston began regarding Hutchinson “as the principal cause of all our trouble,” which, as one member of the assembly maintained, has “all come out from this cursed fountain” (D. Hall, ed. 344). Hutchinson turned into the main culprit of the dispute in official rhetoric, and Winthrop assigned all responsibility for the colony’s present troubles to her and her claim of immediate revelation. Winthrop declared that Hutchinson was “unfit for our society,” and all but three consented to her banishment and imprisonment “till she be sent away” (D. Hall, ed. 347). Hutchinson was placed under arrest in Roxbury at the house of the merchant Joseph Weld and was sentenced to leave the colony by the end of March, when winter would be over.

During her confinement, in spite of continued attempts by ministers such as Thomas Shepard to reach a recantation, Hutchinson strayed even more from the path of accepted Puritan doctrine. She claimed that neither was the body destined for resurrection nor was the soul immortal—only the spirit. Denial of bodily resurrection and belief in mortalism of the soul had been considered heretical since the end of the second century (Maclear 74-77). By comparison, many other of Hutchinson’s

⁸ Thus the problem was not so much that Hutchinson claimed to possess prophetic abilities (which had also been said of John Wilson, for example, see N. Mather, “Increase” 58-59), but that she claimed to have experienced *immediate* revelations. On this claim, see shortly in chapter 2.1 and esp. chapter 3.4; see also Ditmore; Westerkamp, “Anne” 493-6; Winship, *Making Heretics* 39-40, 177-81. On prophesying, see Lovejoy 53-61.

viewpoints, such as that “the Sabbath is but as other days” (Winthrop, *Journal* 245), seemed almost harmless. Another list of Hutchinson’s wrongful opinions was compiled, and the Boston Church decided that she should stand trial for heresy. The clerical synod on church discipline started 15 March 1638. Anne Hutchinson stuck to her viewpoints that both the body and soul are bound to die and that only the spirit was immortal (see D. Hall, ed. 354-64). On 22 March 1638, Hutchinson was “[c]ast out of the Church,” that is, excommunicated, “for impenitently persisting in a manifest lye then expressed by her in open Congregation” (*The Records* 21-22).⁹

By the time of Hutchinson’s church trial the rumors on Dyer’s monstrous birth had probably reached almost each household of the settlement, and the story finally became publicly known. The sequence of events can be reconstructed in a fairly detailed way by help of Winthrop’s journal entries of late March and early April 1638 and a text published in 1644 based upon these entries (see part III of this study). On 22 March 1638—“that very day Mistris *Hutchison* was cast out of the Church” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, 44)—“a stranger asked what young woman it was” who was walking next to Hutchinson out of the assembly; the bystanders informed him¹⁰ that “it was the woman which had the monster; which gave the first occasion to some that heard it to speak of it” (Winthrop, *Journal* 255). The “bystanders” may have been female colonials or husbands who had heard about the story in their homes from their wives or maid servants. In any case, the statement was overheard by “[o]ne of the elders” of the Church of Boston (the person is not identified by Winthrop), who made further inquiries and confronted Anne Hutchinson with the rumor just when she was about to leave the colony; she thereupon “told him how it was” (Winthrop, *Journal* 253).

When Governor Winthrop learned about this, he first talked to one of the magistrates and to “that elder” and then sent for Jane Hawkins, the midwife, “and examined her about it.” Hawkins first seems to have been reluctant to give a full report on the dead born child; she “confessed only, that the head was defective and misplaced.” But when Winthrop told her “that Mrs. Hutchinson had revealed all, and

⁹ The source gives “January” as date instead of March.

that he intended to have it [the child's body] taken up and viewed" (Winthrop, *Journal* 253), Hawkins "confessed all" (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, 45) and provided Winthrop with a detailed description (see chapter 2.1). Winthrop now took vigorous action and, "with advice of some other of the magistrates and of the elders of Boston," ordered the exhumation of the secretly buried child (Winthrop, *Journal* 255) to further investigate the previous events, which took place on 27 March 1638.

The exhumation seems to have been a crucial step in the process of news-spreading. It is known that public interest in the event was great. In May 1660, the Puritan minister John Eliot, who had participated in the trials of Anne Hutchinson, wrote in a letter to Reverend Thomas Brookes, the Puritan Rector of St. Mary Magdalen in London, that Winthrop, Cotton, and the Reverends Thomas Weld and John Wilson, accompanied by "40 persons more went to the place of buryall & commanded to digg it up to [behold] it, & they sawe it, a most hideous creature" (31). An influential text published in 1644, *A Short Story*, gave an even higher number of witnesses: the remains of the child "were found and seen of above a hundred persons" (45). A high number of eye-witnesses gave a report on a prodigious occurrence more credence and dramatic appeal, thus the number given in *A Short Story* may have been exaggerated—all the more since the publication aimed at a transatlantic audience and had a polemical character, as will be shown in part III of this study. Another possibility is that the actual exhumation had been witnessed by just a few dozens, while others came to see the corpse later, which was common practice in the early modern period.¹¹

Those who had seen the exhumation of Dyer's child played with high certainty a crucial role in passing on information on it. Eliot, for example, according to whom the "monster was borne in my time whiles I was in N[ew] Engl[an]d at Boston two miles from Roxberry where I lived" (30), stated that the witnesses of the exhumation "declared this fully to my self & 1000 others," so "that it was famously knowen, as any thing that ever was seen or done in the land & uncontradictable in

¹⁰ Possibly the Reverend John Davenport, who had arrived in Boston in June 1637 and stayed at the house of John Cotton. Davenport actively participated in the Cambridge Synod and attended the church trial of mid-March 1638; thereafter, he was about to move on to Connecticut. Despite being known to Winthrop, he may nevertheless have been termed "a stranger," because Davenport did not belong to the settlement. See Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, ed. Hosmer 247n1; cf. C. Adams, ed. 222n1; Winthrop, *Journal*, ed. Dunn, Savage, and Yeandle, I: 223n4.

¹¹ The exhumation of Dyer's child will be explored in detail in chapter 2.1. On the role of witnesses in reports on monstrous births and on the way news on them spread, see chapter 3.1.

those places” (31). What before had been kept a secret turned into “a collective drama” (Gowing 111)—similar to the experience of looking at a woodcut on a broadside depicting a monstrous birth.¹² That the tale of Dyer’s monstrous birth dominated town talk for a while and was discussed in many a household even months (or years) after its occurrence is evident from an episode described in a letter of the Reverend Thomas Hooker: possibly in June 1638, Hooker (who had attended the “Cambridge Synod” of 1637; Bush Jr., *Writings* 77-78) did “confer about this Occasion” in his home with his wife and maid (C. Mather, *Magnalia* VII, 20).¹³

As soon as Dyer’s miscarriage had become known to the officials, the “two or three women” who had “secretly buried” the child (probably Hawkins, Hutchinson, and maybe the unidentified woman who only had had “a glimpse,” see above) were put under a “public humiliation” (Yonge 36) for not having reported its birth to the officials. Such official public rituals allowed the Elders to remain true to the principles of covenant theology; public repentance signaled that the moral standards of the community were accepted and confirmed that the sentence was just (Erikson 194-5; L. Friedman 25-37). Although Anne Hutchinson did not back off from her religious viewpoints, she seems to have been well aware that her doings contradicted common practice. When she was confronted with the secret burial of Dyer’s stillborn child shortly before leaving the colony, Hutchinson explained that “she meant to have it chronicled, but excused her concealing of it till then, (by advice, as she said, of Mr. Cotton)” (Winthrop, *Journal* 253). Roger Williams (see below), who stood in contact with Hutchinson after her banishment, reported similarly that Hutchinson “makes her Apologie for her Concealment of the monster, that she did nothing in it without Mr. Cottons advice” (“Letter” 25).¹⁴ Also Cotton admitted his wrong-doing: as Winthrop noted in the spring of 1638, Cotton apologized “in public” and declared his reasons (see chapter 2.1), “which was well accepted” (Winthrop, *Journal* 254).

Only one day after the exhumation of Dyer’s stillborn child, on 28 March, Anne Hutchinson, banished from the Bay colony and expelled from the Boston

¹² Gowing refers not to Dyer’s monstrous birth but to similar cases in early modern England. Broadside sheets functioned “as a direct iconic replacement for the experience of having seen the infant or animal personally” (Soergel 143). Broadside sheets therefore had a powerful uniting effect, transforming an individual into a communal experience. On broadside sheets, see chapter 1.2 and chapter 2.1.

¹³ The contents of this conversation are not known. Parts of the letter are quoted in Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), from which the passage cited above is taken. On the letter, see also chapter 2.1

¹⁴ On the duties of midwives regarding stillborn children, see chapter 2.2.

Church, left with her family for Aquidneck Island (now Rhode Island) in the Narragansett Bay (Gaustad 55). Mary Dyer, who possibly had also been excommunicated (Winship, *Making Heretics* 211), and her husband, William, who had been disenfranchised and disarmed, moved first to Portsmouth (now Rhode Island) and then to Newport. The conflict lingered on for at least three more years, however; from late 1638 to late 1640, the Bay colonists were troubled once in a while with men and women questioning the authorities and propagating their own viewpoints on religious matters (Winthrop, *Journal* 275-7; 281-2; 339-40).

News on Dyer's monstrous birth spread quickly across New England. On 11 April 1638, less than two weeks after the exhumation had taken place, William Bradford, long-term governor of Plymouth Colony, thanked Winthrop for a letter "touching Mrs. Huchingson" (sic) and added that he had "heard since of a monstrous, and prodigious birth which she should discover amongst you"; Bradford demanded more information on the rumors concerning Dyer's "monstrous, and prodigious birth": "If your leasure would permite, I should be much behoulden vnto you, to certiffie [sic] me in a word to tow [sic], of the trueth and forme of that monster, etc." (23). While Bradford obviously had heard the story from someone other than John Winthrop, Roger Williams received news on Dyer's prodigious birth in Providence, Rhode Island, directly from Winthrop, as we know from the letter written in reply by Williams dated 16 April 1638: "I allso [sic] humbly thanck you for that sad relation of the monster etc." ("Letter" 25).¹⁵

Shortly after her banishment, in late spring or summer 1638, Anne Hutchinson was said to have suffered herself a miscarriage, giving birth to "thirty monstrous births or thereabouts, at once; some of them bigger, some lesser, some of one shape, some of another" (Weld, in Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). This time Winthrop, whose writings constitute the main source on both monstrous births for us today, had no possibility to question the midwives involved to get detailed information, since Hutchinson lived in another area; neither did he have the possibility to examine the child with his own eyes. He received, however, a detailed report from Dr. John Clarke, "a physician and a preacher" (264) who had moved from Boston to Portsmouth after having been disarmed as an Antinomian; furthermore, William Hutchinson, Anne's husband, seems to have sent "a letter" (Winthrop,

¹⁵ On the letter, see also chapter 2.1. On Williams, see n131 and 132 (chapter 2.2) and chapter 3.2.

Journal 266) to John Cotton, including information on Hutchinson's failed pregnancy (see chapter 2.2).

It is much more difficult to reconstruct when Hutchinson got pregnant and had her "monstrous birth" than in Dyer's case, if she had been pregnant at all. Hutchinson is said to have produced a "mole," a precancerous uterine growth (see chapter 2.2). A transcript of the second trial of March 1638 can be read as a hint that Hutchinson had been with child at the time: Thomas Oliver, who had the duty to handle cases of discipline, explained to the congregation that Hutchinson was not present at the beginning of the court session because she was "so weake that she conceaves herselfe not fitt nor able to have bine hear soe longe togeather" (D. Hall, ed. 351). Anne Hutchinson seemed to have had a clear notion when to expect birth. In September 1638, Winthrop noted that "Mrs. Hutchinson, being removed to the Isle of Aquiday [sic], in the Naragansett Bay, after her time was fulfilled, that she expected deliverance of a child, was delivered of a monstrous birth" (264); soon thereafter, Winthrop got the information that the miscarriage happened "six weeks before her delivery" (Winthrop, *Journal* 265).

Suggestions as to when Hutchinson was said to have suffered a miscarriage range from May to September 1638.¹⁶ There are good reasons to believe that it occurred around July or August. If it had occurred already in May, it would have taken about four months until John Winthrop learned about it (if we are to conclude from his notes that he received the information in September 1638), which seems quite a long period of time considering the frequent correspondence of Winthrop and other colonials with settlers from neighbouring communities and the Bay colonials' continued interest in the doings of those banished. If it had been in September, it would have to be the very first days of this month, since there exists a letter sent to England by the minister Edmund Browne from Sudbury, south of Concord (about 25 miles distance to Boston), dated 7 September (see also chapter 3.1), in which Hutchinson's miscarriage is mentioned: "Also since their removal up to the island Mrs. Hutchinson is brought to bed of a monstrous shape but in what form it is not yet known as the governor told me, but reported to be many false conceptions in a lump."

¹⁶ LaPlante assumes that Hutchinson had her miscarriage in May, with her pregnancy having started at about the time of the first trial, in November 1637 (13, 217). Pearl and Pearl state (without further explanation) that Hutchinson had her labors in August (31n30). St. George claims (also without further explanation) that it was in September (169). According to Valerius, Hutchinson "delivered monsters six months later" (180), but her reference point is not clearly determinable.

(E. Browne 230). It is known that Browne and Winthrop occasionally exchanged letters (see Emerson, ed., 153-5), thus it is well possible that Browne got his information from Winthrop himself, though no corresponding letter is known. Browne's wording is not to be found in Winthrop's journal, so maybe it was used in oral discourse: according to Browne, "the governor [had] told" this to him (230).

News of the two miscarriages was passed on orally and in written form along the far-flung lines of a network of correspondence that linked direct witnesses, officials involved in the proceedings, relatives, ministerial colleagues in other parishes as well as friends and business partners. The monstrous births were dealt with in letters, journals, and almanacs, compilations of wonders, polemical treatises, works of history writing, and learned tracts on providence. By mid-seventeenth-century the story had become a standard element of New England historiography and served as a time marker in colonial history. The failed pregnancies were included along with other events of public interest in chronological overviews such as Samuel Danforth's *An Almanack for the Year of Our Lord 1648*, providence collections such as Nathaniel Morton's *New-Englands Memoriall* (1669), or travel narratives such as John Josselyn's *Account of Two Voyages to New-England* (1674).¹⁷ They were remembered as one of those events that shaped the early Bay colony, for example armed conflicts, the death of eminent personalities, or changes in government. Up to Cotton Mather's time (died 1728), various publications or manuscripts reported on one or both of the aberrant births, and it is safe to assume that there were even more journals or letters mentioning them than those that have come down to us or that have been identified by now.

Like the early modern depictions of monstrous births adorning the title pages of broadsheets, presenting stillborn children in lively postures as if they were directly talking to the viewer or as if they had returned from the dead with some message from God, so the failed offspring of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson would not rest in peace for almost a century. Not only was the secretly buried child of Mary Dyer exhumed upon order of the magistrates of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in March 1638 but the two abnormal births became part of a highly complex rhetorical battle encompassing both sides of the Atlantic. In short, their story was not simply "news" but "news you could use" (Cressy, *Travesties* 25).

¹⁷ On the treatment of Dyer's monstrous birth in Danforth's *An Almanack*, see D. Hall, *Worlds* 81-2,

The struggle for sovereignty of interpretation had already begun on a local level during the Antinomian Controversy, and it intensified when Hutchinson's opponents tried to exploit the narrative of the two monstrous births for their own ends, presenting them as first-rate instance of Godly intervention in the world. Around mid-seventeenth century, the story was taken up again by opponents to the "New England Way," who used much the same line of argumentation for contrary ends: English Presbyterians such as Robert Baillie presented the Antinomian crisis and the two ill-fated pregnancies as proof of the failure of the New England practice of ordering churches, Congregationalism. In the early eighteenth century, the Bay colonial Puritan minister Cotton Mather made an attempt to regain interpretative control and incorporated the story of the two monstrous births in his monumental history of the New England churches, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702).

In addition to such politico-religious rhetoric, the discourse on the two failed pregnancies was influenced by the first stirrings of modern scientific thinking. As of mid-seventeenth-century, belief in miracles and providence came under attack. In England it was publicly debated whether the two deformed fetuses were a divine sign against "antipaedobaptism" (or "Anabaptism"), which increasingly became associated with Antinomian thinking. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the interpretation of the New England Puritan Increase Mather of Dyer's malformed offspring possibly was influenced by the English scholar John Spencer, who used the tales of the two monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson to demonstrate the negative effects of belief in omens and prodigies. In the early eighteenth century, Cotton Mather, son of Increase Mather, referred to Dyer's monster and similar cases in his transatlantic efforts to establish himself as a scientist in his own right and New England as a region worth being studied in detail. Thus the importance of the two misshapen infants exceeded the religious controversy over the question of sanctification by far, and their relevance reached far beyond mere medical details.

State of the art – I: scholarly work on Dyer's and Hutchinson's monstrous births

Considering their early modern reception history and the way they were embedded in the religious, political, and early scientific debates of the period it is surprising that

102; Nord 9; on Josselyn, see chapter 3.1, on Morton chapter 4.1.

the two monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson have been “a neglected aspect of the Antinomian Controversy” and of early New England history at large for quite some time, as the title of Schutte’s essay suggests. From the nineteenth century up to the 1960s it has been argued—with rare exceptions—that the narratives should be forgotten rather than analyzed in detail. The available descriptions were regarded as just as defective as the bodies of aberrant births. Also Valerius describes this phenomenon, pointing out that although “monstrosity was integral to Hutchinson’s story” in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, “later commentators have tended to treat it as an odd, largely irrelevant detail in the panoramic sweep of the Antinomian Controversy” (196). A monograph on the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson does not yet exist, and most of the countless studies on the New England Antinomian Controversy do not analyze their narrative in detail.

Also studies on early modern monster discourse usually ignore the tale of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s prodigious births and restrict themselves to Continental Europe or England. In most cases, this restriction is not even addressed, a rare exception being Bates who explains that he focused on Europe and “excluded a few cases reported by settlers in the New World, only one of which seemed to me to provide significant extra information, and for which I have made an exception” (8); Bates does not refer to Dyer’s or Hutchinson’s miscarriage but to one of the first known autopsies of a child with a birth defect that took place in Hispaniola in 1533 (*Emblematic* 154-5). One of the few scholars focusing on English discourse on monstrous births who also refers to the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson is Julie Crawford (2005), who showed that they exerted substantial influence on English pamphlet-makers in the 1640s (162-3; cf. Cressy, “Lamentable” 56). Most writers on the topic seem to consider early modern tales of monstrous births in the overseas colonies as either too different from or too similar to their European counterparts, or as providing no “significant extra information”—provided that they know about them at all.

The reception history of the aberrant births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson deserves being studied in detail, however. They not only verifiably existed but are very well documented: we have detailed information on their outward shape, their parents, the overall context of their birth, and their reception history, wherefore it is possible to trace early modern discourse on monstrous births in

unprecedented detail and over an exceptionally long period of time. As Cressy remarked concerning narratives of prodigious births: “most of the networks of interaction among the parties remain hidden” (“Lamentable” 56)—contrary to the two cases that form the subject of this study. Last but not least, these are the only known cases of monstrous births in the colonies that have played a prominent role in seventeenth-century politico-religious discourses in England.

As various scholars stated (albeit in differing contexts), seventeenth-century New England and the Antinomian Controversy can be used as a kind of “laboratory” for analyzing specific topics in detail (R. Cohen 475; Erikson vi; P. Miller ix). Although I disagree with Kay Erikson’s interpretation that the Massachusetts Bay Colony serves as a “laboratory” because of the “relative isolation” of the colony in comparison to the complex and multi-faceted history of early modern Europe (vi), I agree with him that a focus on New England offers the advantage that we are “not dealing with nations or dynasties, here, but with small groups of men [and, one would want to add, women] whose names we remember and whose lives we know something about” (Erikson vii). There are a limited number of protagonists whose impacts and interactions within the Anglo-American world can be analyzed in detail.

With Schutte, the first decades of the modern reception history of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s miscarriages can be summarized as a history of neglect. The historian Brooks Adams demanded in 1919 that “posterity draw a veil over the shocking scene” (247). In 1908, James Kendall Hosmer felt so appalled by the detailed account of Anne Hutchinson’s failed pregnancy that he omitted the episode altogether in his edition of Winthrop’s journal,¹⁸ explaining that the “repulsive details which Winthrop took pains to gather . . . only show how far bigotry could carry a mind naturally noble and magnanimous.” Hosmer conceded, however, that the “notion that the displeasure of Heaven was revealed by monstrous births was entertained by men of the best intelligence” (Winthrop, *Winthrop’s Journal*, ed. Hosmer, 268n1). Like Hosmer, Charles Francis Adams, editor of *A Short Story* (see part III of this study), wanted to further understanding of Winthrop’s situation. Calling to mind that this was an era when the printing presses produced countless polemical broadsides and pamphlets, Adams claimed in 1967 with regard to *A Short Story* that, “tested by the standards of the time, if it is in any way unusual, it is in its moderation” (40); however, this

moderate stance does not cover Winthrop's detailed description of the two monstrous births: this "sort of writing," Adams remarked, was "characteristic" of Winthrop, who "was somewhat prone to congenital monstrosities" (41). Overall, there was quite far reaching consensus that such an "absurd story" should not be laid out in such "sickening," "unpleasant," "disgusting," "nauseous" and "repulsive details," since this was an "absurd story," a "repellent," "horrible and loathsome tale."¹⁹ As James Savage, a descendant of Anne Hutchinson and the first editor of Winthrop's journal, complained, such a story only pleased "admir[ers] of horrors" (460).²⁰

It is maybe because of this rather emotional early reception history that these two famous cases of birth defects have been largely ignored in studies on the history of medicine in the overseas colonies but were frequently commented upon in biographies of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson. Studies on midwifery, childbirth, and the development of obstetrics in the colonial period often do not cover the events extensively—or not at all (see Elwood and Elwood 5-12; Ulrich 132; Wertz and Wertz 21-22). Only when a broader perspective is chosen, as for example in Tannenbaum's study on *Women and Medicine in Early New England*, interest in for example Dyer's "monstrous birth" has risen (84-89). The two monstrous births seem to have been regarded as more relevant for other fields of study, as a historian of medicine has recognized early on: in his *History of Medicine in Massachusetts* (1881), Samuel Abbott Green invited to take a more comprehensive view on Winthrop's notes on Dyer's and Hutchinson's "monsters," arguing that they "help us catch the coloring of that period; and no picture of the times is complete without it" (30). The various biographers of Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer show more interest in the monster stories but rarely offer new insights as far as the reception history of the monstrous births is concerned; they mainly aim at reconstructing their female protagonists' experiences as lively as possible.²¹

¹⁸ Hosmer based his edition on the two-volume edition of James Savage (Winthrop, *History*). On the Savage and Hosmer editions, see Schweninger 68-69.

¹⁹ G. Ellis 327; Palfrey 467n2; Rogers 33; Savage 459-60; Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, ed. Hosmer, 268n1; B. Adams 247, 41.

²⁰ The approach of these early historiographers and editors of John Winthrop's writings resembles that of the famous romancer Nathaniel Hawthorne who in 1830 regarded Winthrop's report on Hutchinson's miscarriage as "very interesting in a scientific point of view, but fitter for his old and homely narrative than for modern repetition" (23).

²¹ See e.g. Dunlea ix; 186-7, 234, 238-41; Leonardo and Rugg 118, 283-4, 293-6; Plimpton. LaPlante tries to give a voice to Hutchinson with regard to her failed pregnancy (see e.g. 88-89, 160, 205-7, 217-9). S. Williams offers some valuable input (135-9, 143, 183-91, 198-9). Robinson considers a broad range of sources.

Another aspect that is striking when screening possible sources is that the monstrous births do not figure prominently in texts published in the wake of the Quaker crisis of the 1650s or in later scholarly work on the topic.²² With rare exceptions, Dyer's earlier Antinomian affiliations are not mentioned at all or only in passing in early modern accounts of the Quakers in New England (see chapter 4.1). As Pestana has noted: "What is remarkable about the Quaker crisis . . . is the lack of direct references to the Antinomians." ("City" 353n68). Today's studies on Quakerism refer even less to Dyer's earlier involvement in the Antinomian Controversy and her mothering of an aberrant birth (Hamm; Ryan); furthermore, Mary Dyer has received much less scholarly attention in studies on Quakerism than Anne Hutchinson in literature on the Antinomian Controversy, wherefore a stronger focus on Mary Dyer "is an overdue act" (Myles 3). By analyzing the discourse on the two New England monstrous births this uneven distribution of attention will be corrected, since overall Dyer's "monstrous birth" has been accorded slightly more space in the texts considered here than Hutchinson's (see also the appendix).²³

In the past decades, there has risen awareness that the two monstrous births had not only importance for the colonial Antinomian Controversy but the history of New England and beyond. Nowadays, there is a whole range of studies available that use their tale as a pathway to a pivotal point in the history of the Atlantic World. The first in a long row is Anne Jacobson Schutte's essay (1985), which offers a transatlantic perspective and an analysis of early modern views on monstrosity. Schutte's study provides first indications as to how the interpretations of the two birth defects can be connected to broader streams of cultural and socio-political developments. During the past decades, scholars have taken on a decidedly comparative approach and have taken into account monster discourse in Civil War England. St. George (1998), for example, compared Winthrop's description of Dyer's monster to other early modern descriptions of headless births in his study on "expressive culture" (2) in colonial America (164-73). Another example is Round

²² The eighteenth-century historian Thomas Hutchinson, for example, commented in the context of the history of the Quakers in Massachusetts: "This is the same Mary Dyer, who in the year 1637 was banished for her familistical tenets." (note † on p. 171). Some nineteenth-century historiographers shortly refer to the monstrous births in the context of the Quakers in New England (G. Ellis 328; Palfrey 467n2; Rogers 33). On Thomas Hutchinson, see chapter 4.3.

²³ The main focus of attention of this study lies, however, not on Dyer as a person but on the way her miscarriage and her "headless" child were used and transformed in seventeenth-century transatlantic discourse.

(1999), who analyzed how New England colonials partook in transatlantic civil discourses by offering “‘A True Relation’” of Dyer’s monster (17-64).

In 1990, there appeared three essays focusing on available sources and on the way information on the two New England monsters was passed along. The spread of news is outlined by Valerie and Morris Pearl, who criticized that the “prompt transmission to England” is “scantily chronicled” (21). Winsser, who clearly sides with Dyer and Hutchinson, gives a very helpful overview on primary sources. Focusing on the period from 1630 to 1730, Nord took Dyer’s monster story as starting point for his study on the evolving of news-gathering into newspaper journalism, pointing out that both the subject matter and the way of reporting news in early American journalism were deeply steeped in and influenced by seventeenth-century New England religious culture (9-10).

From the 1980s onwards, there appeared various studies that analyzed the monstrous births in the context of gender, speech, and rhetoric. In 1986, Kibbey analyzed how early colonial rhetoric may have contributed to Puritan acts of violence against “others” such as Native Americans or the “Antinomian” Anne Hutchinson, and she shortly mentioned one of the two prodigious births (113).²⁴ In 1987, Amy Schrager Lang (53-64) used reports on the ill-fated pregnancies to show that female gender and religious dissent were presented as inseparable unity in the rhetoric accompanying the Antinomian Controversy. In 1996, Mary Beth Norton shortly referred to Dyer’s monster (*Founding* 223-4) in a chapter on female-centered networks of news-spreading. Traister’s essay (1997) directed scholarly interest to male gender roles in the Antinomian Controversy. Round (see above) focused on how discourse on Anne Hutchinson influenced the English debate on gender (108-9). In 2006, C. Smith based her feminist perspective on the concept of “distortion” (438) of female speech and on how it served to present Hutchinson’s utterings as just as “monstrous” as the outflow of her body (451). Buchanan (2006) also centered her study on “the intersection of gender and rhetoric” (239); in her view, public discourse was dominated by male protagonists who tried to discredit Hutchinson by using negative associations of maternity with failed pregnancies.

Speech and rhetoric also play a key role in the essay of Valerius (2010) and in Sievers’s study (2004), which concentrate on the use of Dyer’s monster for

persuasive purposes and on how the story was embedded in religious, scientific, and socio-political debates. Valerius is mainly interested in “the ways in which monstrosity functions in narratives” of the Antinomian Controversy (197). Sievers intended to show how the rhetoric used in reports on various prodigious events helped fostering the group identity of the colonial settlers (214-31). Both Sievers (227) and C. Smith (2006, 446-8; see above) shortly addressed the question whether and in how far John Winthrop acted similar to adherents of “New Science.” Field (2011) used the story of Hutchinson’s failed pregnancy to formulate a critique of modern “Pathologies of Obstetrics” (title).

In parts as a reaction to the strong interest in questions of gender, as of the late 1990s concepts of the body, the body politic, and related topics moved at the center of attention. In 1999, Egan called out “a postfeminist age” with regard to scholarly interpretation of the New England monsters. For him, the importance of the two narratives derives not so much from questions of gender but from “the impact of Winthrop’s use of monstrosity on the reigning figure of the English body politic” (144n24). In 2010, Herzogenrath embedded his interpretation of the monstrous births (98-100) in an exploration of “the oscillation between the ‘real’, material body, and the social ‘body politic’ in American culture” (*American* 1). Related to studies of the body politic are works analyzing early modern concepts of the body; both often find early modern visual representations and textual descriptions of human oddities to be a rich depository worth mining to gain a better understanding of early modern notions of the body and metaphors related to it, and this also applies to scholars dealing with the New England monstrous births (see J. Crawford 162-3; St. George 164-73). Cassuto focused in 1997 on the de-humanization of “others” on the basis of race (xiii) in his study of the grotesque from the colonial period up to the nineteenth century, and he, too, refers to the New England monstrous births (44-45, 54).

As of the 1990s, the trope of monstrous births has also been analyzed by scholars focusing on female literary production. Howe (1991) shortly took into account interpretations of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s monstrous births in her feminist-inspired study of American literary history (1, 113, 119). Many studies established a connection with Anne Bradstreet’s poetry and differing notions of the female body. Schweitzer (1991) analyzed how Bradstreet highlighted the positive aspects of the

²⁴ Kibbey (like Cassuto, see below) accidentally refers to the description of Dyer’s stillborn child

productive abilities of female minds and bodies and, in doing so, emancipated herself from the negative connotations of Dyer's and Hutchinson's miscarriages (153-4). In 1997, Lutes explored "how the Dyer and Hutchinson cases might have affected Bradstreet's use of childbirth as a metaphor" (333; cf. 333-7). Reid (1998), analyzing "metaphors of illegitimacy and dissent" in Bradstreet's writings (519), argued that the Antinomian Controversy and the monstrous births influenced not only Bradstreet's poetry but attitudes toward women in general in the Bay colony. Major (2012), finally, also analyzed the birth metaphor in Bradstreet's writings in the context of Bradstreet's knowledge of Dyer's and Hutchinson's "monstrous births" (113).

State of the art – II: early modern monster discourses

It is not serving the purpose of this study to give a complete overview on scholarly work on monstrosity,²⁵ but a few preliminary remarks on functions and characteristics of early modern discourse on monstrous births help analyze the narratives of Dyer's and Hutchinson's miscarriages in a larger context and, in particular, explain why colonial and English tales of monstrous births can be interpreted within a similar framework as long as the specific circumstances of their occurrence are taken into account. Reading relevant studies, the task of defining monstrosity in the early modern period turns out to be an elusive aim. As Wilson formulates it, "our knowledge of monsters is in itself monstrous because it is formless, gigantic" (8; cf. Hagner, "Monstrositäten" 9). Part of the problem has to do with the plethora of terms used to describe defective human bodies, ranging from wonders and prodigies, to monsters, and freaks of nature. The differences in terms reflect differing time frames (the monstrous birth of the sixteenth century turns into the freak of the nineteenth century), changing functions within society (coping with change, for example), and, last but not least, differing scholarly perspectives and interests. Unfortunately, these differing functions, perspectives, and time frames are rarely addressed in studies on the topic (with the notable exception of e.g. Edwards and Graulund), wherefore a tentative overview will be given.

complete with horns and claws when writing about Hutchinson's monstrous birth.

²⁵ On monstrosity in the early modern period, see for example Bates, *Emblematic*; Brammall; Céard, *Nature*; Cressy, "Lamentable"; Cressy, *Travesties*, esp. 29-50; Daston and Park; Fischer, *Genèse*, and *Monstres*; Hagner, ed., *Körper*; Jones and Sprunger, eds.; Kappler; Knoppers and Landes, eds.; Park and Daston; Razovsky; N. Smith; Wilson; Wunderlich.

In the early modern period, birth defects served at times as a prognosticator of future events. Monsters were actively “showing forth” and “demonstrating” God’s intentions upon earth, as the word *monster* implies: it is derived from the Latin terms *monere*, to “warn,” and/or *monstrare*, to “show forth,” “display,” or “demonstrate.” In the classical age, this aspect of monstrosity had been prevalent: deformed newborn children were considered a *portentum* or an *ostentum*, that is, an “omen” or “portent,” or a “marvel.”²⁶ The strong sign character is what differentiates the early modern monster from the freak of the nineteenth century. While the term *monster* implicates that “human abnormalities are the products not of a whim of nature but of the design of Providence,” the term *freak* implies a playful nature (Fiedler, 20).

In the early modern period, prodigious births “were not usually presented as isolated curiosities but were assigned a place in the wider scheme of things” (Bates, *Emblematic* 12), and this usually included a strong divine component. Dyer’s stillborn daughter, for example, was “assigned a place in the divine plan that gives the anomaly a purpose in the New England millennial scheme” (Cassuto 54; cf. 43-44). In English cheap print, monstrous births often served as an emblematic sign that carried moralizing lessons or symbolized individual sins: birth defects were created “as just judgments for sins” (Lemnius, First Book, 22), they were “Ensignes of [God’s] anger” (*Wonder worth*, 1617, sig. A2).²⁷

The more a creature seemed to deviate from “the common decree and order of Nature,” the more evident was its sign character: “those Monsters are thought to portend some ill, which are much differing from their Nature” (Paré 585). Also according to Aristotle, whose writings still exert strong influence on modern conceptual work on monstrosity, monsters were “‘things contrary to Nature’” (IV, IV, 770b). Aristotle believed in “the superiority of normality, which depends on a mean,” explains Wilson, wherefore it could be said that “we all deviate from the ‘norm’ simply because we are not all the same” (16; cf. 16-21). For Aristotle, even a lack of resemblance to one’s parents “is really in a way a monstrosity, since in these cases Nature has in a way strayed from the generic type” (IV, III, 767a/b). Hanafi (63) similarly claims that doubtful parenthood is what unites diverse forms of monstrosity (ranging from “savage” men to automatons), and according to Huet “it could be said

²⁶ On the etymology of the term *monstrous* and related expressions, see Bates, *Emblematic* 12-13; Céard, “Crisis” 182; Fiedler 19-21; Hagner, “Monstrositäten” 8-9; Moscoso 59-61; Wilson 4-6.

that the monster is truly that which resembles *what is not* its father” (35; cf. 8, 31-35).²⁸

Bodies described as “monstrous” can be defined most basically as a form of category crisis, which has the great advantage that not only theories on monstrosity of classical antiquity can be subsumed under it but also Puritan concepts of monstrosity. Monstrous bodies refuse to fit in hitherto established categorizations of objects or behavior, they are “both physically threatening and ontologically impure” (Cassuto 43; cf. 43-44; 48).²⁹ The monster violates both the laws of society and of nature; it combines what is forbidden with what is impossible. “Impossible” combinations resulted for example from a mixture of species (combining e.g. human body parts with that of an animal), of the two sexes, of dead and living, and of all kinds of differing forms and shapes (Foucault, *Anormaux* 51, 58).

Although the category crisis caused by monstrosity was a symptom of an incomplete state of knowledge, discourses on strange phenomena should not be seen as an impediment to knowledge creation. Being a liminal figure situated at the border between the known and the unknown, the monstrous body is not only disturbing but offers new perspectives and can bring about new insights. Revealing borders of knowledge, the monster assists in expanding these borders and allows us to grasp and come to terms with complex issues. As composite beings combining elements of different species, monsters hint at similarities between areas that have never before been seen in this combination. The monstrous embraces ambiguity and makes us aware that the signified and its sign are not identical. This symbolic form of knowledge was deemed superior by many early modern thinkers. Monsters served as figurative signs that elevated the mind above the realm of nature, thereby allowing for a higher level of understanding (D. Williams 3, 11-13, 33-60, and *passim*).³⁰

Representing a disruption of categories, the monstrous body shares similarities with objects described as “grotesque.” The grotesque is also “born of the violation of basic categories,” for example when “an image cannot be easily classified even on the

²⁷ On the sign character of monstrous births, see chapters 2.1, 3.1., 3.3. See also Ashworth 142; Campbell, “Nude” 298; J. Crawford 15-16; Pender, “Bodyshop” 116; N. Smith 279-81; D. Williams.

²⁸ On deviance from one’s parents as a marker of monstrosity, see chapter 3.2. For criticism of Huet’s definition of monstrosity, see below.

²⁹ Scholars defining monstrosity as a category problem (and a sign of disorder) are for example Cassuto 6, and *passim*; J. Cohen, “Preface” 6-7; Foucault, *Anormaux* 51, 58-62; Halberstam 27; Herzogenrath, *American* 104-5, 113-5; Knoppers and Landes, eds., 6; D. Williams 13, 75-77, and *passim*. On notions of impurity, see Douglas; Flint 120-2.

most fundamental level: when it is both one thing and another, and thus neither one.” (Cassuto 6; cf. 47). The grotesque differs from the monstrous in that it results mainly from aesthetic experiences and has a strong relation to the arts,³¹ but both the monstrous and the grotesque reflect the unstableness and unpredictability of the worldly sphere. The grotesque represents the fight between form and content (Harpham 7-8), and early modern learned tracts on monstrosity were preoccupied with the great mystery of how spirit, form, and matter interacted (Hanafi 34-35).³² In the worldly sphere, form and content are no peaceful entity but fighting for primacy. The particulars of nature allow for endless permutations, resulting in constant, unpredictable transformations and metamorphoses. Symptomatic is the title of the early modern ballad *A Monstrous Shape, Or A Shapelesse Monster*, probably printed in 1639. It deals with what could be termed a perfect exemplar of a monstrous, hybrid being: “a female creature” with “a head like a swine” (“L.P.,” title). In its potential for variety the human sphere differed from God, the only being that was a single entity without the potential for change; it was “without matter and forme” (Richardson 4). When quality and substance are identical, no conflict between form and content is possible—thus, no monstrous or grotesque beings.

The monstrous and the grotesque “merge in the hybrid forms” (39) that combine for example human with non-human elements (Edwards and Graulund 39-40; cf. 36, 145). According to Homi K. Bhabha, the hybrid “breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/Other, inside/outside” (“Signs” 177; cf. 173-7), and it has been argued that for example the descriptions of monstrous races (see chapter 2.1) can be subsumed under Bhabha’s concept of hybridity (Rossi-Reder 54-57). Groups of outsiders, legendary monstrous races, or the medieval “wild man” served as an

³⁰ See similarly Ashworth 142; Biernoff 125-8; J. Cohen, “Preface” 7; McAvoy and Walters, eds. 5.

³¹ This is already implicit in the term itself: the word *grotesque* is linked to “the Italian *pittura grottesca*, meaning a work (or painting) found in a grotto” (Edwards and Graulund 5). On the “grotesque” and its effect on the human mind, see Cassuto 1-29, esp. 8-10; Garland-Thomson 112-4; Harpham 7-16; Platt 16; Stafford 220-4; Thomson 12-13, 27.

³² The conflict between form and content will be taken up in chapters 3.1 (regarding double births) and 3.2 (regarding the form and matter of a congregation organized along the “New England Way”). For primary sources on a world full of change, see Augustine’s *The City of God* (XI: 10, 354) and Richardson’s *The Logicians School-Master* (8).

alter ego for society.³³ Despite all difference, all of these shared distinctive elements with “civilized” or “normal” individuals; therefore, it has been suggested to look at these differences “as variants within a single classificatory system rather than as polar opposites” (Lionarsons 170).

The monstrous body acts as a “boundary guard,” fixing boundaries of transgression within society (Ingebretsen 97). What a society considers as “monstrous” or “aberrant” reflects its social structure and its legal and extralegal methods to stabilize this order: the way criminals, severe conflicts, and strange phenomena are dealt with creates a corpus of both official and unofficial laws and regulations, thereby creating a codified body politic. Thereby, the existing order is confirmed, prohibiting certain forms of behavior while sanctifying others. The aberrant, ridiculous and appalling helped develop and define what a society considered the norm; or, as Deutsch and Nussbaum formulated it: “learn the norm from witnessing as many deviant examples as possible” (17). The purpose of categorization and binary opposition was to confirm one’s own positions and values, but it also had legal relevance.³⁴

Thus the definition of monstrosity of for example Aristotle, Hanafi, and Huet—that it is caused by an uncertainty regarding paternity (see above)—can be supplemented by seeing monstrosity as a sign “of the fact that we can never be sure of any kind of identity, at least not through the means of a stable visual signifier” (Campbell, *Wonder* 250; cf. 242n33). The monstrous leads us to questioning our own identity and to confronting hidden fears (cf. Garland-Thomson 113; Hebel, “Negotiation” 97n9; Todd 153-61), whereby it contributes to processes of identity building both on the individual and collective level. For the unborn child just as for newly established organizational entities, sooner or later the question arises when they are ripe for separating from their place of origin. When a child is born, existing categories are severely disrupted—what once had been one body, all of a sudden turns into two. The question of when and how the fetus develops into a self-sustaining

³³ For a discussion of monstrous races as “the medieval other,” see Freedman 3-12; cf. Lionarons 169-72. On the early modern concept of the “other” in the Atlantic World, see Vaughan and Vaughan. From a psychological point of view, the existence of seemingly deviant “others” creates not only a feeling of horror but also provides a form of security. As Benedict has remarked with regard to the popular interest in giants and dwarfs, “[t]he contrast between an abnormally small and an abnormally large person usually implies the spectator’s normality” (7; cf. T. Cooper 6-7).

being can be transferred easily from the individual level—the microcosm of the body—to the collective level—the macrocosm of the body politic, as also this study will show. After all, the term *nation* has its etymological root related to the Latin “nascere,” “to be born” and to “come into being” (Olwig 55-56; cf. 125-47).³⁵

The human body serves as an ideal metaphor for describing the social dimension of political entities, as the expression “body politic” vividly demonstrates. Since the body is made up of various parts, visible and invisible, that all worked together in admirable ways, it is an ideal symbol of “man-made assemblies and artificial compositions” (Stafford 12). In the Renaissance, double births, or hybrid, composite beings could have a uniting function by transforming individual elements into single entities. This may be the reason why the heraldic animals on coats of arms often showed awe-inspiring, hybrid beings, such as a lion with wings. Monstrous births are a perfect symbol of disorder and a world turned upside down; they served as an ideal figuration of the defects of communal government and organization. A disorderly body was interpreted as expressing disorder in the body politic, while the harmonious functioning of the body symbolized a healthy community.³⁶ Double births, which were highly popular in the early modern period (Foucault, *Anormaux* 61-2),³⁷ could symbolize unity—or, on the contrary, rupture; they represented the danger of separation or of a sovereign power divided into two (see chapters 3.1, 3.3).

Tales of monsters were both an indicator of change and valuable tools for coping with change. Surges in publications of broadsides and other reports on monstrous births were often accompanied by deep-going societal changes. In 1556, for example, when England was amidst a crisis with regard to succession to the

³⁴ For example, when a double birth with two heads was born (and survived), it had to be decided who was entitled for heritage; or, when a newborn child possessed body parts that seemed to belong to an animal, the question arose whether the being was human at all and therefore should be baptized.

³⁵ I do not intend to use the concept of the nation as a framework for this study, although I am considering aspects related to it; see the following chapter.

³⁶ For studies with a strong focus on concepts of the body in the context of the New England monstrous births, see Egan; Herzogenrath, *American*. On the monstrous and theories of the body see e.g. Pender, “No Monsters.”

³⁷ At least in Civil War England, also “headless children” were highly popular, as will be shown in chapter 3.2; cf. Cressy, “Lamentable.” Foucault argues that each era had its “forms de monstre privilégiées,” depending on the specific needs and circumstances (Foucault, *Anormaux* 67; cf. 61-75). In the medieval period, this has been the “wild man,” complemented in the Age of Exploration by a revival of the monstrous races of the classical antiquity; in the early modern period, double births; as of the seventeenth and up to the early nineteenth century, hermaphrodites (61-62). As of the early nineteenth century, finally, a new type of monstrosity entered the stage—that of conduct: the criminal, the “monstre moral” (Foucault, *Anormaux* 67-75; quotation 75; cf. Brammall 3-21).

throne, more than fifty prodigious signs were recorded by Edward Fenton (148-9).³⁸ It is rather not possible to find out today whether all these prodigies did exist in some way or other and whether there had in fact been a significant increase of the actual numbers of children born with birth defects or similar phenomena. But it is probable that this surge in publications had to do with the ability of the monster to assist society in defining itself anew and to define who belonged to the body politic and who not. Exactly because the monstrous was closely connected to disorder and upheaval, it had the potential for creating or stabilizing new forms of order,³⁹ for example by constant reinterpretation of categories and “facts” (J. Cohen, “Preface” 14-15), or by re-establishing or confirming moral boundaries.

Since narratives of early modern monsters are closely tied to the time and place of their occurrence, analyzing narratives on the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson can help gaining a better understanding of a particular region in a particular period—in this case a region that so far has been neglected by scholars working on the history of monstrosity in the medieval and Renaissance periods. This study intends to integrate the narrative of the two deformed infants into scholarly discussion on early modern discourse of monstrous bodies. In this endeavor, I take up the impetus of the late Puritan Cotton Mather, who hoped that his reports on New World prodigies would find a positive reception by his English correspondents (see chapter 4.4).

³⁸ Other years with a substantial rise in publications on monsters in England are for example 1562, 1580, and 1648 (see Brammall 8-10; Wilson 40).

³⁹ On the potential of the monstrous to create order, see J. Cohen, “Preface” 8, 14-15; D. Williams 14-15, 81-85. Mary Douglas argues that the human reaction to “ambiguity or anomaly” (5) played an important role in the self-organization of societies.

1.2 Approaches taken: fields of interest, notes on methods and sources, project outline

This study analyzes how the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson were interpreted and debated in the Anglo-American Atlantic World from the late 1630s up to the 1710s. This time span has been chosen for three inter-related reasons. First of all, while the two human anomalies were treated almost annually in the first decades after their occurrence, the frequency seems to have declined continually as of mid-seventeenth century as far as we can tell from the available sources (see the appendix); furthermore, as of the eighteenth century, the scarce comments on the two failed pregnancies refer mostly to their treatment in earlier sources: the focus lay on how to interpret their interpreters (see chapter 1.1) and no longer on how they are to be interpreted in themselves.

Second, as Perry Miller has remarked, the period up to 1720 is “the furthest extent to which one may say that the original system of Puritanism survived without drastic alteration” (vii). While I diverge in this study in many aspects from Miller’s monumental work on New England Puritanism,⁴⁰ I agree with Miller that the early eighteenth century marks the final phase of a process of disintegration that ended the dominance of the Congregational system of church order.⁴¹ As a consequence, the authority of ministers in medical matters and as providers of news declined sharply—a development that was intensified by the professionalization of medicine and the rise of modern journalism.⁴² When Cotton Mather, a third-generation New England Puritan minister (who also is the last person who left us with extensive written

⁴⁰ Miller treated “the whole literature” of New England “as though it were the product of a single intelligence,” regarding “individual differences” as “merely minor variations within a general frame” that was dominated by non-separating Congregationalists (vii). This study stresses instead competing discourses within transatlantic Puritanism, see below.

⁴¹ Michael G. Hall regards Increase Mather as the “last American Puritan” (title), because there were “social, political and intellectual forces” at work after the 1670s “that would erode Puritanism” (xiv). As David D. Hall points out, clerical and popular religion drifted apart as of around 1700 (*Worlds* 20).

⁴² In the early eighteenth century, newspaper journalism fundamentally changed the mechanisms for “the reporting of current public occurrences” (Nord 10). Even if newspapers can be regarded as “merely another kind of text in a world of communication tools that included the mouth, the ear, the pen, and the press” (McIntyre 614; cf. 606), they clearly heralded a new era of mass communication, addressing an audience that increasingly was less personally known to the providers of news. On the emergence of newspaper journalism in the British colonies, see Amory, “Printing” 108-16; B. Anderson 61-64; Clark, “Boston” 243; McIntyre 594-614; Mulford 81-2; Nord 31-32, 36; Reese 354.

comments on the two New England monstrous births), died in 1728, the Puritan hegemony had long come to an end in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Third, as of the eighteenth century, discourse on monstrous births began to change fundamentally. Over the centuries, the entertaining function of monsters increased, while its sign character decreased. The monster came to be regarded not anymore as a sign of God but as an accident of a playful nature or a specific type of birth defect, and it ceased to have “a ‘special’ role in society” (Wilson 14). The dominance of religion began to crumble, and the rise of “New Science” heralded a new era. As shown in chapter 1.1, discourse on monstrous births served as a valuable tool for coping with change, but technological and social progress came to offer more and better solutions for the demands of this new era (cf. Coudert xvi). The term *monster* gradually disappeared from teratological writings and came to be replaced by terms such as *malformation* (Moscoso 72; cf. 63).

The time frame chosen for this study thus encompasses a period of transition. Both sensational prints and learned treatises presented monstrous births as portents up to the late seventeenth century and beyond; neither could superstition be ascribed solely to cheap print nor was progress the sole domain of learned debate.⁴³ This can be seen in exemplary form in the gynecological treatise of Jacob Rueff, *De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis* (1554), published in English in 1637 under the title *The Expert Midwife*. The tract assembled contemporary wisdom on human generation, such as the generative parts of the female body, the care of pregnant women, or the signs of conception. In the first part of the work, the few woodcuts serve to illustrate the factual information given in the text; they show for example a birth stool or how the fetus was positioned within the womb (Rueff 63); the woodcuts in the fifth book of the second part, in which birth defects are described (see e.g. 157), resemble the visual representations of monstrous births in contemporary broadsides: the body was presented as a living being that pointed out a hidden truth; it was part of the story and told itself a story, much as the text surrounding it.⁴⁴ The two differing parts in Rueff’s midwifery manual can be read as representing two differing epistemological concepts. The first part heralds a culture of fact, while the second represents the sign-

⁴³ See Fissell 7-9; Soergel 145-6; Wilson 34; Wittkower 70-72.

⁴⁴ On monstrous bodies covered with signs, see the discussion of figures 3 and 4 in chapter 3.1. On the changing relationship between texts and representations of the body in anatomical texts, see Sawday 133-40. On differing views among early modern physicians whether illustrations or verbal descriptions provided more accurate representations of anatomical structures, see P. Smith 140-1.

oriented approach. The two parts exemplify in visual form what Kuhn termed the “transformations of the paradigms” of a certain field, leading to what has been summarized as “scientific revolutions” (12).⁴⁵

Another characteristic of the period in question is that in the Anglo-American world the realms of religion, politics, and science were closely interrelated, as also the reception history of the two monstrous births as sketched in the previous chapter suggests. That in the Bay colony religion and politics were closely intertwined is almost a common-place: in the “church-state, theology was wedded to politics” (Bercovitch, *American* xiv; cf. Bonomi). Also in England the relationship between politics and religion has been close. As Coffey points out, the toleration controversy of the 1640s (see chapter 3.1), with its focus on conformity and in combination with the debate on a national church, expressed the widespread belief that unity in religion fostered the communal sense: “a nation that prayed together, stayed together” (“Toleration” 45). Also Burgess stresses that religion and politics were closely intertwined in the period of the English Civil War (8).

Furthermore, religion and the first stirrings of modern science were inseparably connected.⁴⁶ Human understanding was considered a God-given gift; it was the heavenly “Father, who . . . didst breathe into the face of man the intellectual light as the crown and consummation thereof,” wrote Francis Bacon in 1620 (29). Hartmann consequently sees science and religion not as opposites but as two practices that “evolved dialectically, each taking from and enriching the other to create some entirely novel branch of knowledge” (xii; cf. Sievers 18). Science and religion were like two sides of one coin. For one, religion was regarded as a fertile ground for scientific thinking. The first chronicler of the London-based Royal Society, Thomas Sprat, suggested in 1667 that it may have been Reformation “which put men upon a stricter inquiry into the Truth of things,” ultimately leading to the “*third great Age of the flourishing of Learning*” (22). Also modern scholars argue that it has been Protestant religion that fostered “the privileged status of scientific discourse” by giving so much weight to the careful interpretation of texts (Harrison 266; cf. Howell

⁴⁵ Kuhn defines “paradigms” as “universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners” (viii). When a problem arises that cannot be solved within the premises of established paradigms, these conceptions are re-arranged and new procedures are defined (Kuhn 5-7). On the term *Scientific Revolution*, see below.

⁴⁶ On the close relation between science and religion, see Brooke; Coudert; Dixon, Cantor, and Pumfrey, eds.; Ferngren, Larson, and Amundsen, eds.; Hooykaas; Rivett.

16; Kilgour 138). Robert K. Merton famously claimed that the English Puritan way of thinking furthered the pursuit of knowledge by presenting the study of nature as a religious duty.⁴⁷ And second, science fostered religion. Puritans made use of new epistemological concepts such as the method of induction and adapted providence tales—sensational accounts of supernatural events—to the rising “empirical spirit”: they presented facts, witnesses, and other forms of evidence to bring to life “a supernatural or unseen, in other words *imaginary* world” (Hartmann x; cf. D. Hall, *Worlds*).⁴⁸ Scientific activities often were religiously motivated, much as scientific concepts sometimes functioned as an “alternative religion” (Brooke 31).⁴⁹

Finally, especially as of the second half of the seventeenth century, also the fields of science and politics formed an entity. As Sprat put it in 1667, the universal outlook of the Royal Society united the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, so different in laws and customs, in a common endeavor: “From hence no doubt very much *Political*, as well as *Philosophical* benefit will arise.” (131). Another member of the Royal Society proclaimed ten years later that the surveying of hitherto unexplored lands was “for the honor . . . of the Nation” (Plot, *The Epistle Dedicatory*). In the late seventeenth century, settlers of the English colonies in the “New World” (a term just as problematic as the “discovery” of the Americas)⁵⁰ began taking over this line of argumentation. They increasingly used the unique variety of flora and fauna to distinguish themselves from England and perceived and presented their environment as “American.” New England discourses on wonder and related

⁴⁷ On the “Merton” or “Puritanism-and-science” thesis, see I. Cohen, ed. with Duffin and Strickland; Hill, *Intellectual* 25; Hooykas 135-49; Webster 89-93; Webster, ed. Rivett argues that Puritans had a natural inclination towards empiricism due to “the rigours of Calvinist self-examination” (5). For criticism on the Merton thesis, see Elmer; Feingold 181-3; Jacob and Jacob; Mulligan.

⁴⁸ Herzogenrath (*American* 104-5 and *passim*) describes not only the influence of science upon religion but uses concepts of physics, such as the solid and fluid state of bodies, to explain differing theological viewpoints among colonial Puritans.

⁴⁹ Brooke therefore doubts that science and religion ultimately were separated (53). On the splitting up of the discourses of science and religion and the re-calibration of the interactions between these systems of discourse, see chapter 4.5 of this dissertation.

⁵⁰ Both terms were coined out of a European perspective. In this study they will be used nevertheless, since they have come to be standard terms for describing the phenomena at hand, and a more fitting nomenclature is not available as yet. On the idea of a “New World,” see *Columbus Papers*, ed. Obregón, 36-38; Ginzburg 82-83.

phenomena therefore are regarded as constitutive of the gradual emancipation from European and, above all, English role models.⁵¹

The discourse on the two prodigious births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson thus was embedded in a multi-layered context. Several key questions offer themselves for deeper consideration in this contextual meshwork. In the field of religion, it will be explored whether and in what ways Puritan covenant theology or the belief in providence influenced the interpretations of the two monstrous births. This cannot be achieved without taking into account the fundamental epistemological changes taking place at the time. In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, religion lost its predominant position in making meaning of prodigious events, and science began taking over as preferred reference frame. As far as the interplay of religion and science is concerned, a key point of interest therefore is how religiously motivated interpretations were interwoven with early “scientific” modes of explanation and how this mixture evolved over time. The question to be answered is in what ways the reception history of the two monstrous births was influenced by changing concepts of nature and the human body.

Making a full turn to the field of politics, special consideration will be given to the question whether and how the changing interpretations of the deformed bodily offspring of Dyer and Hutchinson affected the perception and self-understanding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony or New England at large. As sketched in chapter 1.1, monstrous births were elementary for processes of identity building, both because of the characteristics of the individual monstrous body and the metaphoric potential of birth. This aspect possibly has been especially relevant for the colonies on the Eastern shore of the American continent, whose development has often been described with metaphors related to birth and growth. Right from the beginning, New England was compared to a child that needed time to develop and prosper, while England was described as its mother.⁵² In the Revolutionary Era and thereafter, the “calibration of a natural time for independence—of a necessary passage from nonage to maturity”—was a much debated issue (Parrish, “Female Opossum” 511).

⁵¹ See e.g. I. Cohen, *Some* 5; Mulford 81-83; Parrish; Reed; Semonin, *American*; Sievers 12-13, 18-19, 231. Hartman points out that New England providence tales “heralded the future discourse of the new nation” (2). Burns stresses the close relation between science, technology and “colonial nationalism” (*Science* xvi). This aspect will be analyzed more in depth in chapter 4.4 and part V of this study.

Definitions and theoretical groundwork

Since monstrous births can be seen in close relation to processes of identity building, it has sometimes been established a connection between monstrosity and early forms of the concept of the nation. Knoppers and Landes, for example, see early modern monsters as “crucial definitional Others in the processes of European self and nation formation” (7). Drawing upon Foucault’s influential work *Les Anormaux*, they argue that “religious, ethnic, and national identities, societal and political norms are instantiated and enforced by the construction of monstrous bodies” (8). The cultural historian Peter Burke suggests that “[e]ighteenth-century discussions of national character reveal a similar approach to physical or cultural difference” (30) as early modern reports on monstrous races: “So, although the phrase ‘national character’ was something of a novelty in the eighteenth century, the idea is much older,” claims Burke (“Frontiers” 31).

I agree with Burke that although the concept of the nation emerged only in the eighteenth century, it did not emerge out of a vacuum. There were cultural developments that paved the way for the idea of nationality in its various forms and degrees. Discourse on monstrous births such as those of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson—stretching across the Atlantic Ocean, touching the spheres of religion, science, and politics, and spanning almost a hundred years—can be seen as a form of training: metaphors were developed and tested in public discourse, in particular with groups criticizing the covenantal body of the Bay colony for its actions and form of organization. There was created a kind of archive, a stock of metaphors to be used in public debate.

The diverse ways in which the two failed pregnancies have been incorporated in various (transatlantic) narratives possibly exerted a strong influence on the collective memory of the early Bay colonial settlers.⁵³ History writing is “a process of self-definition” (232), Gura has remarked with regard to the influence of the Antinomian Controversy “on the development of the American Puritan imagination”

⁵² New England resembled “Old” England “the same, as the daughter the mother,” wrote Clarke in 1652 (*Ill Newes* n. pag.). For similar examples, see Bulkeley 13-14; J. Smith, *Complete Works* I: 309, 349, 421; II: 255, 267, 462; III: 223.

(*Glimpse* 275), and since the two prodigious births of Dyer and Hutchinson were included in such a large number of publications with in parts wide circulation, their influence on this process cannot be denied. Last but not least, when Cotton Mather and like-minded colonials enthusiastically collected and published natural prodigies of their home region in the early eighteenth century (which forms the endpoint of the time frame chosen for this study), the emancipation process of the Revolutionary Period was already looming on the horizon, as will be argued in chapter 4.4.

Much as the narratives of the two monstrous births analyzed in this study were the subject of debate and conflicting interpretations, collective identities are conceived of today not as one homogeneous set of attitudes and concepts but as a bundle of narratives created in a competition of discourses (see B. Anderson; Bhabha, “Introduction”; Geertz). This applies all the more to communal entities that were only developing and that underwent deep-going transformation processes, as in the case of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and New England at large in the seventeenth century.⁵⁴ Puritans were not a hegemonic force but struggling for dominance.⁵⁵ As also this study will show, New England historiographers have been challenged continuously by alternative narratives; as a consequence, there evolved a “post-Puritan paradigm” (696) that reduced the primacy of New England within scholarly debate: the new “operative P-word is pluralism, not Puritanism” (C. Cohen, “Post-Puritan Paradigm” 697). It is no longer convincing to sketch “a coherent narrative of colonial beginnings” (Mackenthun 9n16), drawing a more or less direct line from Puritan New England religious discourse to American civic culture and the rhetoric of the “New Nation,” as Perry Miller and later scholars belonging to the “continuities school” had a tendency (Gura, “Early” 600-4).

⁵³ For an overview on modern approaches to the concept of collective memory, see Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy, eds. I understand “collective memory” with Kubal as the product of a process of “negotiation and conflict” between different groups, the result being partly based upon facts and partly constructed (3-4).

⁵⁴ New England is understood as a rhetorical entity that comprised foremost the Massachusetts Bay Colony and stretched out to surrounding areas. The debate on the New England Way created a discursive net weaved by the participants of the discussions about the two miscarriages. The contributors to this field of discourse were closely related to the Bay colony—either living there, having lived there for a while, or having a strong interest in the colony. Also contemporaries had quite an inclusive view of the area. William Rathband subsumed in 1644 Massachusetts Bay, New Plymouth, and Connecticut under the term *New England*, since there was no “materiall [sic] difference” between these Churches, “so that what may be truly said of any one of them, may be beleaved of them all” (1).

⁵⁵ See e.g. Breen 9-10; C. Cohen 701; Godbeer, *Devil’s*; Gura, *Glimpse* 5-9; Hebel, *Construction; Images*; Winship, *Making Heretics* 64. See Como (esp. 131) regarding English Puritanism.

Not only was Puritanism challenged by other groupings in New England and the Atlantic World but also within Puritan congregations there was dissent. The notion of competing discourses can even be regarded as a constitutive element of Puritanism. It has been discussed whether “a Puritan identity” existed at all (Wood 140-9), with definitions ranging from Puritanism as a “style of piety” to a clearly definable movement with the aim of furthering Reformation (Lake 3-9). Some scholars stopped writing “Puritanism” with a capital “p,” arguing that “there were almost as many puritanisms as there were puritans” (Winship, *Making Heretics* 3; cf. Como 131). Seen in this context, it is convincing that C. Cohen chose a definition of Puritanism that is grounded in dynamic; he sees the Bay colonial community as the result of “a long-running negotiation” “among magistrates, ministers, and laity” “about how to achieve a reformed church and a moral order” (701).⁵⁶

The notion of competing discourses serves not only as a useful concept to analyze processes of identity building and define colonial Puritanism but for explaining the evolution of modern science. For a certain period of time, the empiricism of “New Science” and the sign-oriented way to gain knowledge co-existed side by side, but over time the first won over the latter. In the process, deformed newborn children turned from an “object of scientific interest” into an “object of science” (Moscoso 69).⁵⁷ How this came about and whether this change can be regarded as “progress” is still much debated. In the past, many propagated a teleological narrative of a linear process of “rationalization” and “naturalization” of the monstrous: the sign-oriented, emblematic worldview came to be replaced by discourses of fact by the early eighteenth century. The endpoint of this narrative of linear progress is the emergence of the scientific discipline of teratology in the nineteenth-century.⁵⁸ The reality, however, was much more complex. The monstrous body disturbs any narrative of linear progress (Knoppers and Landes 6-11). As

⁵⁶ The Antinomian Controversy is interpreted nowadays in a similar realm. Field (“Antinomian”) recommends seeing it “as a literary, rather than historical, phenomenon, for it is in texts, rather than space and time, that the Antinomian Controversy continues to take place” (463). Regarding it as one of many crises in early colonial history, Field understands the controversy “as an artifact of print culture, rather than as an event” (450).

⁵⁷ In the original version: “Gegenstand des wissenschaftlichen Interesses” versus “Gegenstand der Wissenschaft.”

⁵⁸ See for example Fischer, *Genèse* 1; Wilson 1. In their earlier work (Daston; Park and Daston), also Daston and Park had claimed that there was a kind of three-step development towards rationalization and naturalization—from prodigies carrying “ominous religious resonances” to “natural wonders,” and, finally, “objects of scientific inquiry” (176); later they came to reject this teleological model (Daston and Park 17-18).

Hagner has noted, those writers who assume progress through “rational” science tend to take on a dichotomic view on history by contrasting irrationalism with logic, and imaginative thinking with empirical science (“Monstrositäten” 9-10; cf. Céard, “Crisis”; Hanafi 34); but, as shown above, we are rather dealing with two different epistemologies that both served the needs and demands of their period. The widespread interest in monstrous beings functioned even as a kind of catalyst for the development of scientific disciplines (Hagner, “Monstrositäten” 10-11; D. Williams).

Today, the rise of “New Science” is regarded both as an amalgamation of competing discourses and a way of seeing the world that had to fight for recognition; or, as Dascal and Boantzis put it, “as much as there was, and still is, controversy *around* the scientific revolution, there was controversy *within* it” (1). It is now widely accepted that the changes of paradigms were closely connected to rhetoric, history writing, and literary production. Both rhetoric and science are characterized by a meticulous analyzing of facts, the careful drawing of conclusions and bringing forward of evidence (Slawinski 72).⁵⁹ Thus while the terms *New Science* and, in particular, *Scientific Revolution* suggest a break or watershed in the history of science, the changes captured by these terms are best seen “as a process of conflict, co-optation and displacement amongst different natural philosophical claims” (Anstey and Schuster 2).⁶⁰ Almost no theory remained unquestioned, and competing theories led to fierce debates among “competing schools and sub-schools” (Kuhn 12). As a consequence, the development of intellectual history follows a cyclical rather than a linear pattern: older belief systems are not replaced all of a sudden but co-exist with new theories until they are discarded. “Progress” sometimes simply meant the return to a belief system that had already been valid in earlier centuries, and often one and the same person propagated ancient explanatory models just as vehemently as new medical findings (see Maclean 1-13).

Last but not least, maybe because of its relatedness to processes of identity building and its manifold interactions with the development of modern science, also

⁵⁹ On the close relationship of the terms *fact* and *fiction*, see Campbell, *Wonder* 6; Glasenapp 15; Shapiro 189-207, esp. 197-207. On the interrelatedness of science and literature in the context of the discovery of the “New World,” see Campbell, *Wonder* 5-13, 28-31; Harrison 267; Hartmann; Jowitt and Watt, eds.

⁶⁰ Campbell prefers the term “epistemological innovation” and focuses on the changing attitudes toward wonder (*Wonder* 5). On the term *Scientific Revolution*, especially on criticism that the term suggests a watershed, see H. Cohen esp. 14, 21-22, 147-50. See Shapin for the thesis that there was no such thing as a “Scientific Revolution.”

scholarship on monstrosity shows a penchant for discourse analysis. It has been pointed out that (half-) fictitious tales of monstrous births are worth being studied in detail, since their narratives can be used to analyze the mental worlds of early moderns (Duden 11-12; Fissell 161; Hanafi 6, 14-15). Narratives on half-mythical prodigies often contain factual elements and reflect socio-political conflicts. Discourse on monstrosity therefore can be regarded as a kind of medium transporting meaning through time and across space, depending on the needs, desires, and fears of each age (Locher 253; Romack 228n19; Wilson 8, 28). As Wilson formulates it, a monstrous birth “has no entity as such, and cannot be seen except in relation to the rest of humanity. Indeed, it would appear that the monster can only be seen as a function of the society in which it lives.” (8). The monster exists, if (in some cases) only in collective imagination and as a literary trope, and the “monstrous” body can be regarded as a carrier of cultural inscriptions and a cultural site that can be read and interpreted. For this reason, although Anne Hutchinson suffered from a precancerous uterine growth (see chapter 2.2) rather than a miscarriage, I will refer nevertheless to her “pregnancy” or “miscarriage,” since this was what her contemporaries (and maybe herself, too) took it to be.

Drawing upon the basic definition of the monstrous as disrupting existing categories (see chapter 1.1), I concentrate in this study on the monstrous as a floating variable within history. Analyzing interpretations of a specific example of a monstrous birth in the course of several decades creates a dynamic perspective, since within this time frame categories have been re-arranged and adapted according to need and depending on changing epistemologies and levels of knowledge. Studies on the grotesque, with their focus on change, epistemology, and, at times, identity (see e.g. Astruc; Bynum; Cassuto) have given valuable input in this respect. The theoretical framework of this study is based upon the concept of “hybridity” and “metamorphosis” as means to understand and describe the processes of change and evolving identities (Bynum 29; cf. Astruc). I regard the monstrous body as both a hybrid being and a symbol and carrier of metamorphosis. According to Bynum, who focuses on the “evolving notions of change and identity in the high Middle Ages” (29), the “hybrid and metamorphosis reveal or violate categories in different ways”:

“Hybrid reveals a world of difference, a world that is and is multiple; metamorphosis reveals a world of stories, of things under way. Metamorphosis breaks down categories

by breaching them; hybrid forces contradictory or incompatible categories to coexist and serve as commentary each on the other.” (Bynum 31).

The hybrid and metamorphosis stand for two basic concepts of change: the substituting of one element for another, which can be summarized with the concept of the hybrid, and metamorphosis, a process that functioned like a story, a narrative. The hybrid is rather static; it resists change; its main characteristic is “spatial,” and it is “an inherently visual form” that serves to point out the existence of two different, even two competing versions at a time (Bynum 30). The concept of change related to it, “replacement-change” as symbolized by “images of hybrids and doubles,” is characterized by “rhetorical strategies that force confrontation with paradox or contradiction, and to see meaning in the simultaneity of opposites” (Bynum 31). The hoped for end point of this process is what Bynum offers as an alternative concept of change, that of metamorphosis. Contrary to the more spatial and visual form of replacement-change, metamorphosis is characterized by a strong temporal aspect. In the process, hitherto accepted categories are destroyed and subsequently redefined through narrative (Bynum 30-32), so that a new order is created.

The discourse on Dyer’s “headless child” and Hutchinson’s formless lumps oscillates between these two poles. The colonial settlers had to decide again and again whether the two “monstrous birth” should be accepted as an integral part of the history of New England or regarded as a monstrous aberration—as the “abject” or an “other,” having nothing to do with those who wrote tracts and pamphlets mentioning them.⁶¹ The question was which way of dealing with change would prevail—combining opposites and contradictory elements in one hybrid body, or redefining categories through narratives, leading to metamorphosis. Following this meandering path illuminates a complex process of identity building. Also with regard to the Native Americans (see part IV) the Christian settlers had to decide whether they were willing to accept Native Americans in their humanness or whether they should continue with their efforts to keep them on distance. The “Indians” confronted the colonial Puritan settlers with change and instability on a daily basis, representing a

⁶¹ “Abjection / the abject arises out of the threat of a breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other.” “Abjection must be relegated to the margins of the living subject . . . separating the self from that which threatens the self.” (Edwards and Graulund 143; cf. 32-35). For a study on the abjective, see in exemplary form Kristeva.

constant disruption of categorization (Cassuto 48).⁶² The way the Indians are described in seventeenth-century colonial Puritan writings allows seeing them as just another variant of monstrosity within the methodological template described in the previous chapter, although discourse on Native Americans differed from that on monstrous births.⁶³ As this study hopefully will show, while the Native Americans remained “thorns” in the “sides” of the Christian settlers (Nowell 287; see chapter 3.2),⁶⁴ the “monstrous births” of Dyer and Hutchinson came to be treated differently.

Methodological approaches

This study hopes to show how individuals and groups struggled to shape and determine the use of the story of the two monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson in differing fields of discourse and how difficult it was to create a singular narrative. As a kind of guiding frame, three fields of discourse will be explored: religious, political, and early forms of scientific communication. The spheres of religion, politics, and science are conceived as rhetoric spaces in which multiple forms of discourse interacted. Inspired by cultural history, the aim is to understand which function the narratives of Mary Dyer’s and Anne Hutchinson’s monstrous births had in varying public discourses, which metaphors were used, which themes recurred, and what differing participants in discourse made of these. To delineate how the monstrous births were recreated in diverse sorts of writing this study follows an interdisciplinary and a transatlantic approach.

Both American (cultural) studies and scholarship on early modern monstrosity tend to draw upon diverse methodologies from various disciplines, ranging from (cultural) history, sociology, and psychology to literary studies. As shown in chapter 1.1, monstrosity is characterized by defying easy categorization and breaking up of

⁶² A famous example is the captivity narrative of Mary Rowlandson. Like many of her contemporaries, Rowlandson seemed to have great difficulties in making meaning of the Native Americans’ behavior: “Sometimes I met with favor, and sometimes with nothing but frowns.” (340). To Rowlandson, the Native Americans seemed “unstable and like madmen” (352).

⁶³ Both Dyer’s stillborn child and the Native Americans are described as beast-like beings, but although “the Indians were obviously anomalous for the Puritans, they were *not* prodigies, not wondrous phenomena reflecting specific divine intervention in the natural world,” claims Cassuto (54).

⁶⁴ As McWilliams comments regarding William Hubbard’s narrative of King Philip’s War: “heathenism and race combine to identify all Indians as one people separate from New England’s continuing identity” (115; cf. 115-6).

compartments, which makes it difficult to master as a topic.⁶⁵ For the specific purposes of this study a combination of discourse analysis in historical perspective and intellectual history is regarded as the most promising route. Since monstrosity in seventeenth-century New England is also the story of a transatlantic transfer of knowledge and culturally based motifs (e.g. that of the headless birth or of heretical opinions spreading like uncontrollable disease),⁶⁶ the aim will be to show how these metaphors were changed and adapted in narratives on the prodigious births and which cultural motifs and tropes were influential in the (self-)representation of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in a transatlantic web of rhetoric.

Regarding the ideas and motivations of those participating in these discourses, this study stands in the tradition of the history of science and intellectual history, with changing concepts of the body considered a part of both. The history of science comprises not only the history of scientific discoveries but what Foucault has called “the unconscious of science”—meaning “the implicit philosophies that were subjacent to it, the unformulated thematics, the unseen obstacles” (*Order* xi). Intellectual history is, in the broadest sense, “the study of intellectuals, ideas, and intellectual patterns over time” (Gordon [1]). I agree with Curran that early modern concepts of monstrosity also need to be understood “as a discourse or series of discourses that one must access through institutional and/or ideological analysis” (235). Institutions as the Royal Society of London, the short-lived Boston Philosophical Society, or the founding history of Harvard University therefore will receive their part of attention, in addition to the “intellectual biographies” of individual persons.

Regarding the objects of discourse, both physical and metaphorical aspects of the early modern monstrous body will be considered. Although bodies that were described as “monstrous” shared similarities with textual products due to their emblematic sign character, they also need to be analyzed in their material existence (Healy 11-12): the monstrous body is both “a material organism” and “a metaphor” (B. Turner 8), we are dealing with both “physical entities and textual productions”

⁶⁵ In his study on the grotesque, Harpham faces a similar problem; his preface consists more or less completely of an exploration of the methodological difficulties the concept of the grotesque poses for any scholar (xv-xxii), a discussion that is continued in chapter one (3-22).

⁶⁶ On recurring motifs in seventeenth-century England and in the American colonies in stories of wonders (as well as narratives of witchcraft), see in exemplary form D. Hall, *Worlds* 76-77; 87-88.

(Lindman and Tarter 2).⁶⁷ Seeing the monstrous as a phenomenon existing only as part of various forms of discourse would mean neglecting valuable information on the social and cultural context, which can also be said of studies regarding monstrosity mainly as a psychological problem (Halberstam 6-9; D. Williams 17-18).⁶⁸ Even if many of these tales were embedded in propagandistic discursive fields, they demand nevertheless for an analysis of topics relating to the history of embryology, such as the organic and physiological constitution of sexual difference, or the representation of physical bodies in early modern sources.

The way discourses on potentially prodigious beings were organized depended on material aspects and social conventions, wherefore this study shares scholarly interest in forms of “public communication” (Nord 13). Colonial Puritans depended on the printing culture of the London metropolis and the transatlantic book market when they wished to publish their works or gain access to contemporary wisdom. And the rise of New Science was not the least a change of genres and genre conventions. The emergence of the scientific spirit contributed to the development of new “technologies of speech, writing, and printing” (Hall and Walsham 336-7)⁶⁹ and a new culture of fact. There developed new rhetorical strategies, ways of argumentation, and visual conventions, as the example of Rueff’s midwifery manual mentioned above illustrates.

To adopt a transatlantic perspective—understood as “the history of the Atlantic world told through comparisons” (Armitage 18)—on seventeenth-century New England is not so much an option as an imperative.⁷⁰ As for example Udo Hebel has shown (*Construction; Images*), New England had to define itself continually in

⁶⁷ Lindman and Tarter call for “a redefinition of the parameters of early American studies” based on the concept of the body (6; cf. 2). For general theories on the body see e.g. Funk and Brück, eds.; O’Neill; Scheper-Hughes and Lock; B. Turner; Weiss, Featherstone, Hepworth and Turner, eds. For studies on the body in early modern European culture, see e.g. Egmond and Zwijnenberg, eds.; Kantorowicz; see also n36 in chapter 1.1.

⁶⁸ The ability of the monster to trigger feelings of fear and horror tempted scholars to adopt methodologies that are inspired by psychoanalysis, depth psychology, and Freudian studies on taboos. See in exemplary form J. Cohen, *Giants* xvi; xv-xvi.

⁶⁹ David D. Hall and Alexandra Walsham focus on the sphere of religion; it is in this context that they called for a scholarship on religious communicative practices, meaning “historically specific descriptions of how particular groups or communities deployed the technologies of speech, writing, and printing in the maintaining of religion” (336-7).

⁷⁰ For studies taking on a transatlantic (or “Atlantic” perspective), see e.g. Armitage and Braddick, eds.; Bremer, “Puritan”; Bremer and Botelho, eds. For a critical approach, see Gura, “Early” 609-13. The “Atlantic World” is described by Breslaw as being “those areas that participated, either passively or actively, in the European westward expansion and the exchange of ideas from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century that helped to shape American society” (2-3).

relation to England and other colonial powers. The colonial Puritans had to fight for their political survival as a remote outpost that was put under constant surveillance as to how the Congregational church system worked. On a personal level, men like John Winthrop Jr. actively participated in the intellectual debates of England, and political developments, such as the danger to the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, led colonials like Increase Mather to participate in diplomatic missions overseas. One—though not the main—aim of this study therefore is to examine with the help of a clearly defined example what early to mid-colonial Puritans contributed to the transatlantic discourse on monstrous births and how this discourse was in turn affected by intellectual currents within the Atlantic World and by socio-political developments in England.

This study can be described even more precisely by help of what David Armitage has termed “*Cis-Atlantic history*”: the study of a particular place within the Atlantic World with the aim to show up the “uniqueness” of this place “as the result of the interaction between local particularity and a wider web of connections (and comparisons)” (21). Like Elaine Breslaw, who concluded that the Salem witchcraft episode was both part of the European tradition of witch hunting and also distinctly different from it because of the experiences with the Native Americans (10), I state that the colonials’ reaction to human anomalies was influenced by the specific circumstances they were living in (such as the wilderness surrounding them), the encounter with the Native Americans (who at times were described with similar motifs as monstrous births, as will be shown in chapter 4.3), or the debates on the congregational way of church order.

It is especially promising to explore how New England settlers participated in a form of discourse that was characterized by a strong visual component. Starting around the late fifteenth century, broadsides (or broadsheets) became the most popular genre for publicizing on malformed human bodies.⁷¹ Broadsides reporting on monstrous births usually were printed in black letter on a single unfolded sheet. In

⁷¹ Since they usually reported on recent events of a general interest, broadsides sometimes are described as “a literary form of journalism” (Wilson 61); but broadsides clearly had their own specific genre conventions (J. Crawford 2-3; cf. Wilson 38). On early modern forms of reporting news on “marvels” and prodigious events, see Shapiro 86-104; cf. J. Friedman, *Miracles*, esp. xii. On broadsides, newssheets, and pamphlets see Bates, *Emblematic* 43-48; J. Crawford; Cressy, *Travesties* 32; J. Friedman, *Miracles* 7-15; Hall and Walsham 338-42; Razowsky; Wilson 30-61. For an overview on publications on monstrous births from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, see Bates, *Emblematic* 215-67, and Cressy, *Travesties* 31-32.

most cases, they carried a title as well as a large woodcut illustration and an accompanying verse or prose text, giving a factual account of the event and explaining its circumstances in a moralizing or entertaining way. Reports on monsters in sixteenth-century cheap print “were illustrated brilliantly” and in a “realistic and evocative” “manner” (Wilson 38).

Visual sources have received heightened scholarly attention in the wake of the so-called visual, iconic or pictorial turn. In this context, it has been argued that the shift towards visualization occurred at the threshold of modernity, or, regarding the colonies on the North American continent, in the eighteenth century at the earliest, when prints started being published in significant numbers and when text-oriented Puritanism had lost its cultural dominance—a process that started as of the 1690s (D. Hall, *Worlds* 243).⁷² Apart from some exceptions, broadsides and related genres were practically nonexistent in the New England colonies in the first half of the seventeenth century (D. Hall, “Readers” 124-7; Ford). The first printing press would be established only in 1639 (in Cambridge), and then its primary output would not be sensationalist reports on strange occurrences but works of spiritual devotion or official proclamations (C. Evans; Reese).

But much as the pre-modern period had not been a “dark age” for the visual (see e.g. Biernoff 133-64), so Puritanism (or Protestantism) cannot be associated with an imageless culture, especially not as far as the discourse on monstrosity is concerned. One of the first illustrated broadsheets on a monstrous birth was produced in 1552 by the Protestant printer John Day (J. Crawford 7-9). The Netherlands and England, from where a great part of those joining the “Great Migration” departed for the New World, belonged to the battlefields of religious polemic that unfolded in the wake of the Reformation. Both Protestants and Catholics used tales of prodigies to influence public opinion and to further their cause. Luther and Melanchthon, for example, had published narratives of monstrous creatures for polemicizing against the Pope and Catholic rites and institutions, and their publications were answered by similar pamphlets during the counter-Reformation (Hsia; N. Smith 275, 278; Soergel 133-7). Also the Civil War period in England led to a tremendous rise in publications on monstrous births and other prodigies, as will be shown in chapters 3.1, 3.2 and 4.2.

⁷² For the late colonial and early national periods, see McInnis; for the American Republican Period, see Fitz and Gross; for a focus on “late American capitalism” (4), see Reynolds.

Although broadsides were rather not printed in the New England colonies in the seventeenth century, it is thus safe to assume that this and related literary genres were known to a significant degree and to a substantial part of the people dwelling in this area. After all, the settlers had arrived only recently from their mother countries or returned there at occasions (Cressy, *Coming Over*; Games). The early American book trade was closely interrelated with the western European and especially the London book trade. Many had their private libraries shipped to the New World, and English booksellers sent small quantities of cheap print to the colonies on individual orders.⁷³ Often enough, New England colonials participated in the London printing scene, as also this study will show. Learned tracts on midwifery, human anatomy, or “secret miracles of nature” (Lemnius, title) circulated in the colonies (see e.g. chapter 2.2), and many of these contained illustrations of monstrous births resembling those used in cheap print, as the example of Rueff’s *The Expert Midwife* shows.

Last but not least, colonial Puritans seem to have been willing to adapt to existing conventions in discourses on monstrosity: one of those having witnessed the exhumation of Dyer’s stillborn daughter is said to have made a sketch of the remains of the child (see chapter 3.1); and in 1716, Cotton Mather sent an “Icon” of “A Monstrous Calf” in one of his “Curiosa” letters to England (“Monstrous Calf” 366; see chapter 4.4). Although there were no sufficient printing facilities in the first decades of the New England colonies, Puritans participated—if they liked it or not—in a world oriented towards the visual sense. And although (or rather because) the iconoclasm of the Reformation led to a strong text-orientation in Puritanism, the visual played a non-negligible role in Puritan culture. After all, Puritans became iconoclasts, because they strongly believed in the power of visual images (Reynolds 4).⁷⁴

Following a decidedly transatlantic approach also as far as the visual aspect is concerned, I focus on how the stories of the two monstrous births were embedded in cultural practices and printing conventions in England. Analyzing the woodcut illustrations of English publications allows for a better understanding of how iconographic images were connected with the narrative of the two New England monstrous births (see chapters 3.1 and 3.2). In doing so, I regard not only visual

⁷³ On the transatlantic book trade, see Amory, “Reinventing” 31; Amory and Hall, eds., 6-8; D. Hall, “Introduction” 6-8; Tuttle 10. On publications available in colonial America, see Clark, “Early American Journalism” 350; Ford; D. Hall, “Readers” 127; D. Hall and Walsham 342-6; Reese 360-3.

representations as part of visual culture; rather, I argue that already the purely textual amassing and repetition of stories of monstrous births created iconic images—in the mind. This effect has been pointed out similarly by Paul Smith:

the longer and more precise the description, the greater the description's representability, in other words, the greater the stimulus to the reader to imagine or illustrate the described object, or to imitate the described action in some other way. (146)

The exhumation of the stillborn child of Mary Dyer, for example, was witnessed by a large number of persons (see above). The sight of the corpse must have been appalling, and the verbal description to those who did not want to or could not get a look for themselves probably left a strong impression. Furthermore, mental images created in the discourses on the two famous New England monstrous births may well have had influence on the iconographies created in the Revolutionary Period, when the technical resources for printing illustrations in high numbers finally were available on the North American continent. This aspect will be followed up in the concluding part of this study. In sum, in “exploring the interplay of images and narratives,” this study intends to contribute to what Reynolds calls “American cultural iconography” (3, 4)—focusing on an era in which motifs and metaphors could only be tested in rhetoric but were influenced by conventions of broadsides and related genres printed in England.

A note on sources

Both scholarship on early modern monstrous births and colonial American Puritanism formulate the desideratum to choose a wide range of sources to take into account the heterogeneity of cultural experience.⁷⁵ Despite the dominating role of broadsides in discourse on monstrosity, there is no “single corpus of ‘monster literature’” (Bates, *Emblematic* 12) to be considered for the early modern period. Medical works had not yet been a genre in themselves, because medicine was “an art rather than a science” in the early seventeenth century (Green 18; cf. Healy 6).⁷⁶ In addition, the advent of

⁷⁴ On the visual in Protestant culture, see Dillenberger; Finney, ed.; Spraggon; Watt 131-77.

⁷⁵ On the broadening of the canon of American literature, see in exemplary form Galinsky. On the question whether an “American literature” exists at all, see D. Hall, *Cultures* 15-35.

⁷⁶ On embryology in the early modern period, see Blackman; Bodemer, “Embryological”; Bodemer, “Natural”; Bowler; Boylan; Chamberlain 289-99; Fouke; Keller, “Embryonic”; Needham; Preus.

printing had facilitated the diffusion of knowledge on human deformities into much larger sections of the population than before, wherefore the “monstrous” was no longer confined to tracts of historiographers, scholastic theologians, or natural philosophers. Reports on monstrous births can be found in such diverse sorts of text as church records, private letters and diaries, books written by learned authorities, or travel reports. Last but not least, antique and medieval collections of wondrous peoples in distant regions (the so-called monstrous races) continued to be popular up to the seventeenth century and influenced early modern viewpoints on corporal deformity.

Also with regard to colonial Puritanism, choosing a wide range of sources is highly recommendable. As mentioned above, colonial Puritanism was much more heterogeneous than assumed in earlier decades. The focus consequently shifted to the voices of common colonials as expressed in ephemera such as chapbooks, journals, letters, travel narratives, and auto-biographical texts (C. Cohen 697), and the perspective of females moved to the center of attention. As far as discourse on monstrous births is concerned, the Bay colonials could not rely upon printing broadsides for passing on information on prodigious births, wherefore informal and oral ways of news-spreading played a significant role (D. Hall, *Worlds* 82-85; McIntyre).

In early colonial New England, the most important sources of information on local, prodigious events were sermons, letters, and gossiping. The regular days of humiliations were “keyed to current public occurrences” (Nord 29), which is “news” in its most basic definition (Shapiro 86-87). Such public reenactments offered anew the occasion to meet in groups, exchange information, and discuss the preceding events—as has been the case with the public exhumation of Dyer’s daughter. Also lectures and preaching, as in fasting day and execution sermons or the regular weekly sermons, played an important role in discourses on monstrous births in seventeenth-century New England; they exceeded other literary forms in terms of impact and outreach, especially in the early years of the colonies (Bush Jr., *Writings* 10; Winship, *Making Heretics* 85-86). Ministers were regarded as particularly well suited for interpreting supernatural events: they often possessed medical knowledge of and interest in aberrant births (see chapter 2.2), and they usually had a large network of correspondents. Last but not least, it is confirmed by various early modern sources

that up to the early 1680s and beyond women attending birthing scenes, and in particular midwives, played a key role in spreading news on monstrous births.⁷⁷

To choose a wide range of sources thus is highly desirable but brings along some difficulties. Informal and oral ways of news-spreading are at least as difficult to handle as written sources. How the majority of people dealt with information taken from learned tracts or passed on orally by Puritan ministers in their weekly sermons we may never know for sure, since documentation is scarce. Only rarely are we offered glimpses of what “common” early modern people thought and what they made of the information received, which ideas they took over, and how they re-fashioned texts and narratives in their minds.⁷⁸ In early modern discourses on monstrous births, the reaction of the parents is rarely addressed.⁷⁹ As far as Mary Dyer’s and Anne Hutchinson’s failed pregnancies are concerned, we do not know what common members of the congregation or the parents themselves thought about it.

There was a strong intersection and a reciprocal relationship between elite and lay discourses (Burke, “Popular” 58-63; Ginzburg), though, and especially discourse on monstrous births built a “‘common ground’ between popular and elite cultures” (Pender, “No Monsters” 145). Cheap print frequently borrowed from learned treatises and the other way round, especially since the printers and collectors of prodigies often were active in varying genres. Also in the Bay colony the boundaries between written and oral forms of communication and between “elite” and lay discourses were thin, and both spheres influenced each other (see J. Cooper, *Tenacious* 7, 23-45; D. Hall, *Worlds* 5-20; Hall and Walsham 357-8). Much as the transmission of culture was not a unilateral, one-dimensional process, so the interaction between the clergy and secular parts of the population was complex and mutual. Lay people did not passively take over cultural artifacts and concepts from the ministers and elders but selected

⁷⁷ In 1682, for example, William James offered in a letter to the Reverend Increase Mather that his wife might give Mather a detailed report on a monstrous calf (“Letter” 614). In 1683, the Reverend Joshua Moodey of Portsmouth offered Mather to get more information on a child with severe birth defects from the midwife (362). When reporting on a severely deformed child, Increase Mather pointed out that several witnesses of high standing had seen the baby—among them the midwife, who “testified before the Deputy Governour” (*Brief History* 35).

⁷⁸ For a convincing study of how a sixteenth-century miller reinterpreted contemporary writings, see Ginzburg.

⁷⁹ Also the perspective of those considered monstrous remains mostly in the dark for us today. For one of the earliest texts written by someone who was personally affected, see William Hay’s *Deformity: An Essay*, first published in 1754.

and transformed them (D. Hall, *Worlds* 11-20, 241-2; cf. D. Hall, *Cultures* 93-95). It thus can be assumed that those holding official positions and the lay members of the Boston congregations shared at least some guiding motifs when interpreting prodigious events (D. Hall, *Worlds* 73-77, 87-88; Sievers 230).

However, the different parties involved in the discourses on the two monstrous births dealt with in this study had good reasons to draw quite differing conclusions, wherefore it is all the more unfortunate that no comment is known from Mary Dyer or Anne Hutchinson on their miscarriages. There are some sources that at least give an impression of how Dyer and Hutchinson thought about the religious controversies they had been embroiled in. We know the letters that Mary Dyer wrote while imprisoned as a Quaker in the 1650s (see chapter 4.1), and some excerpts of a letter presumably authored by Anne Hutchinson are cited in *A Glass for the People of New-England* (1676), probably authored by Samuel Groome.⁸⁰ An important source for recovering Hutchinson's perspective on the Antinomian Controversy and her viewpoints on covenant theology is the transcript of her trials.⁸¹ In combination with her biography, these sources can be used for developing a hypothesis of how Hutchinson may have thought about bodily defects in newborn children. These passages are of course more speculative than others.

Male authored sources can be used as pathways to oral forms of discourse and for reconstructing at least partly how female witnesses described Dyer's stillborn child. Regarding Dyer's monstrous birth and Hutchinson's miscarriage, most of the information available today is taken from John Winthrop's *History of New England*, nowadays published under the title *The Journal of John Winthrop* (1996). Winthrop, who served as Governor of the colony when the two miscarriages became publicly known, noted the circumstances of these events in hindsight. His report on Dyer's headless child was a summary of oral statements provided by Anne Hutchinson and the midwife in charge, Jane Hawkins (see chapter 2.1). With regard to Hutchinson's "mole," Winthrop drew upon written reports by one of those exiled from the Bay colony, John Clarke (see chapter 2.2). Winthrop was also responsible for the main

⁸⁰ The excerpts are dated March 1646; Hutchinson had died in 1643, so the date given may refer to the time when the letter (which must have been written after Hutchinson's banishment) reached Groome. According to the author of the *Glass*, the letter was addressed "to one Mr. Leveret" ([Groome] 9-10; quotation: 9). John Leverett had travelled to the colony in 1633 and attended the court trial at Newtown in 1637. On the contents of the letter, see shortly in chapter 3.3.

part of the influential tract *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines, that Infected the Churches of New England* (1644), which for the most part is based on Winthrop's journal entries. The preface (as well as the "To the Reader") of *A Short Story*, which includes information on Hutchinson's miscarriage, has been authored by Thomas Weld, who was involved in one way or other in the publishing of the work.⁸²

The two most important sources regarding the failed pregnancies of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson, Winthrop's and Weld's *A Short Story* as well as Winthrop's journal, thus have to be regarded as multi-layered sources, combining texts authored by Winthrop with quotations from other sources (and, in the case of *A Short Story*, with a preface and a "To the Reader" authored by Thomas Weld). This is true of many of the texts considered in this study (see for example the texts used to delineate the "Tombes-Baxter" debate in chapter 3.4). Sometimes it is obvious that passages from other sources are quoted, but at other times it is hardly recognizable that another author has been involved, and sometimes the writer of the text "hides" himself behind the statements of others, as was typical of Cotton Mather (see chapter 4.3). As Sievers puts it, it is rather impossible to clearly distinguish between "witnesses' direct observations," "the frightened imagination of midwife Hawkins," and "the annals of English and continental literature" (216).⁸³ As a consequence, these sources must be interpreted with care.

It is maybe due to these difficulties that some scholars spend not much effort on considering differing time periods, contexts, and contributors when analyzing these sources, using for example Winthrop's journal entries—usually generated immediately after the occurrences reported upon—parallel to Weld's preface to *A Short Story*, published years after Winthrop had made his notes in his diary. This not only leads to at times inaccurate historic connections (and also this study may not be completely free of them),⁸⁴ but thereby the chance is missed to explore whether, and

⁸¹ It is included in David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (1968).

⁸² Extensive information on *A Short Story* will be given in Part III, in particular in chapter 3.1. The tract is printed in D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History* (1968), and Adams, ed., *Antinomianism in the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay, 1636-1638* (1967).

⁸³ Whether the report on Dyer's failed pregnancy was the product of Hawkins's "frightened imagination" or rather has to be considered as "state of the art" will be discussed in chapter 2.1.

⁸⁴ Referring to Winthrop's description of the monstrous births, St. George states for example that "Dyer was a leading Quaker" (171), which creates the false impression that Dyer had already been a Quaker at the time of her miscarriage. On Dyer as a Quaker, see chapter 4.1.

at which point, Winthrop's multilayered notes show influence of the emerging scientific thinking. It also has to be kept in mind that Winthrop's *Journal* and *A Short Story* were composed for different purposes. Both texts had differing, though related functions. While Winthrop's journal offers a mostly chronological account of the first decades of New England settlement and history, *A Short Story*, and especially the preface authored by Thomas Weld, was a persuasive, even propagandistic text that was directed at a transatlantic audience and caused some controversy within the contested public sphere of Civil War England. While Winthrop's journal is considered "the primary record of the early history of the Bay colony" (Moseley 9) and its "semi-official chronicle" (Winship, *Making Heretics* 51); *A Short Story* is a text with persuasive intent written and published in a polemical, transatlantic setting.

Most importantly, it should be avoided to analyze Winthrop's journal entries and *A Short Story* under the premise that both were authored completely by Winthrop and therefore reflect mostly his viewpoints. This faulty assumption has sometimes led to one-sided judgments of both Winthrop's interpretation of the supposed prodigies and his deeds. Winthrop's description of Dyer's (and also Hutchinson's) monstrous birth has been criticized not only by nineteenth-century scholars as quoted in the introduction (chapter 1.1) but by various modern commentators for providing an irrational, partial report (see chapter 2.1). A differentiated approach, taking into account English examples of discourse on monstrous births resembling those of Dyer and Hutchinson, not only gives also females a voice but protects Winthrop from being regarded as a singular phenomenon and allows for a more balanced judgment of him. Even more important, this approach may help gaining at least a rudimentary understanding of how Hutchinson may have thought about Dyer's monstrous birth. So while there are certain difficulties and therefore risks in trying to identify distinct voices in Winthrop's journal, it is worth the effort.

The various text sorts of differing genres taken into account in this study can be loosely associated with the main parts of this study. Accounts of monstrous races, broadsides, and midwifery manuals will play a prominent role in part II, when Winthrop's journal entries on the monstrous births are analyzed in the context of early modern discourse on human oddities. Religious-political tracts, most notably *A Short Story*, form the center of part III, which focuses on propagandistic aspects of the transatlantic discourse on monstrosity. Publications that emerged in the wake of

the rise of New Science or played an important role in early scientific discourse, such as learned tracts on the concept of providence, letters exchanged between amateur scientists, or the *Philosophical Transactions*, are considered in part IV of this study, which analyzes changes in the epistemological system.

Quotations from primary sources are reproduced as faithfully as possible with only minor adaptations.⁸⁵ Within quotations, words that are underlined in the original texts are highlighted by being set in italics. Quotations from passages that are in the original version set in italics—usually indicating that the author is quoting from another work—are set in roman type (passages that were highlighted in the original by being set in roman type are consequently set in italics). For dates, the day and month as given in the original source have been retained. Where necessary, the year has been adjusted to New Style so as to avoid misunderstandings.⁸⁶ Passages from the Scriptures are quoted from the 1560 edition of the *Geneva Bible* (see *The Bible*).

Project outline

Presenting a chronological overview on the interpretations of the two monstrous births in the course of almost a century shows that there was no linear process of rationalization triggered off by New Science. Thus I do not share the opinion of scholars arguing that a chronological order automatically implies belief in steady progress or cultural constants (J. Cohen, “Preface” ix; J. Friedman, *Monstrous* 4). On the contrary, a chronological approach allows seeing more clearly the backward and forward of progressive ideas and the partial circularity of progress (Wilson 1, 14-15).

Part II analyzes “Early reactions to the ‘monstrous births’ (1637–1638)” in the context of early modern medical theories and discourse on monstrosity. In chapter 2.1, “a certain strange kinde of thing,” Governor John Winthrop’s—or rather the midwives’—description of Mary Dyer’s stillborn daughter will be put in relation with typical early modern reports on “headless births”; another point of interest is the

⁸⁵ For example, commas placed within instead of after brackets have been removed. When quoting from manuscripts, abbreviations and contractions have been silently expanded when it facilitated understanding; the tilde has been replaced by expanding the word; “the,” “that,” etc., have been substituted for “y^e,” “y^t,” etc. and, at least within quotations, “vv” has usually been replaced by “w.”

question whether Winthrop's order to exhume the child was motivated by pre-scientific considerations. Chapter 2.2, "some strange things," focuses on the metaphorical potential of the medical phenomenon ascribed to Anne Hutchinson's multiple miscarriage, diagnosed a "mole." It will be shown that religiously motivated interpretations co-existed with what would be termed today a medical approach—which reflects the differing types of Puritan ministers involved.

In Part III, "A *Short Story* turns into a long controversy (1637–1651)," it will be analyzed how the story of the two monsters was debated and transformed within the transatlantic public sphere through publication of the tract *A Short Story* (1644). How the tales of the two monstrous births found their way into print is delineated in chapter 3.1, "Publishing New World prodigies." The following three chapters show up the complexity of the reception history of *A Short Story*. In chapter 3.2, "The 'hand of Civill Justice'," the attempts to defend New England congregationalism against the critique of Presbyterians are analyzed, focusing on metaphors of headless bodies and failed parenthood. Chapter 3.3, "Early modern public debate and misogynistic rhetoric," gives an overview on the risks and chances the public sphere offered in the mid-seventeenth-century Atlantic space. Thomas Weld's preface to *A Short Story* will be analyzed as a prime example of misogynistic rhetoric, while the writings of John Wheelwright Jr. and Anne Bradstreet serve to show that also alternative narratives were created. In chapter 3.4, "The 'hand of God'," a key rhetoric device of Weld's preface is put into a larger context: the claim that the two monsters were an act of divine providence. The ongoing re-conceptualization of nature will be shown in exemplary form in what is called in this study the "Tombes-Baxter debate," a public dispute in mid-seventeenth century England about the question whether the New England monstrous births were a miracle.

Part IV, "A family endeavor in interpreting prodigies (1652–1714)," concentrates on two prominent members of the second and third generation of New England Puritans, Increase and Cotton Mather. Part V is introduced in 4.1 with a short "Prologue" that marks the period from the mid-1650s up to the 1720s as one of transition—which may help explain why the monstrous births did not play a

⁸⁶ Up to 1752, Puritans employed the Julian, or Old Style calendar: the new year began 25 March, wherefore March counted as the first month; sometimes, the double-year was given for the period 1 January to 24 March. In this study, all dates are based upon a January 1st New Year's Day; a text dated 27 February 1638, for instance, is given as 27 February 1639. For dates as given in Winthrop's *Journal*, see Dunn, Savage, and Yearndle, eds. (1-li).

significant role in mid-seventeenth-century debates on Quakerism. Chapter 4.2, “The advancement of New Science in colonial New England,” uses Increase Mather’s approach to the two monstrous births as starting point for an exploration of how Mather reacted to increasing attacks on the concept of providence by scholars such as John Spencer. In chapter 4.3, “The New England body politic endangered by female agency,” Cotton Mather’s discussion of the two monstrous births in one of his main works, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), is put into relation with the death of his son due to a severe bodily defect, which Mather attributed to the disastrous effects of female witchcraft. The overarching topic of chapter 4.4, “The rise of ‘patriotic science’,” is how the scientific inquiry of monsters and prodigies was used by Mather in his endeavors to position himself and New England in the transatlantic scientific community by means of his series of letters titled “Curiosa Americana.” The “Epilogue,” chapter 4.5, shows why Mather’s “Curiosa” letters mark an endpoint of the transitional period sketched in the preceding chapters.

Part V, the “Conclusion,” summarizes along the reception history of the monstrous births how the interplays of religion, science and politics evolved in the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It will be explored whether and how narratives of hybrid bodies such as Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s monstrous births were incorporated in so-called myths of origins and whether they can be seen in relation to the emergence of “American” identities.

In the Appendix, spanning the period from 1638 to 1714, a chronological overview on primary sources mentioning one or both of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s failed pregnancies is given.

II Early reactions to the “monstrous births” (1637–1638)

2.1 “a certain strange kinde of thing”: John Winthrop, Jane Hawkins, Anne Hutchinson—a colonial governor and two midwives on Mary Dyer’s headless child

“The Church is Catholike, universall, so are all her Actions; All that she does, belongs to all. When she baptizes a child; that action concerns mee; for that child is thereby connected to that Head, which is my Head too, and engrafted into that body, whereof I am a member.”

--John Donne, *Meditation XVII* (1642)--⁸⁷

As of the nineteenth century, Governor John Winthrop’s journal entries on the two monstrous births—and in particular that of Mary Dyer—have been judged by the scholarly community in mostly negative terms. Modern scholars criticized Winthrop for providing “accounts [that] were variously embellished” (Pearl and Pearl 28; cf. 27-31), “notoriously bizarre” (Burnham, “Anne” 354), or full of “macabre detail” (Reid 530). It has been stated that Winthrop’s report was at odds with the spirit of New Science (Cassuto 45; Sievers 227) and similar to the medieval and early modern rhetoric of monstrous races (Egan 71; Sievers 222). With regard to the exhumation of Dyer’s child it has been claimed that the officials of the Bay colony, and in particular Winthrop, had not been able to distinguish between fact and fiction (Kibbey 2-4, 112-3).⁸⁸ This chapter serves the aim to reach a more balanced verdict. It will be taken into account that Winthrop’s journal entries on Dyer’s stillborn daughter have to be read as a multilayered source, as has been pointed out in the previous chapter; therefore, an additional focus lies on the perspective of the two female direct witnesses, Jane Hawkins and Anne Hutchinson, as far as it can be reconstructed from Winthrop’s journal entries and other sources. Since it is sometimes difficult to decide whether Winthrop’s notes express his own viewpoints or those of Hawkins and Hutchinson (or other early colonials), additional journal entries relating to similar

⁸⁷ Qtd. in Wood (15); Donne was a renowned English minister with a strong personal interest in the English colonies. The quotation in the title of this chapter stems from John Tombes (qtd. in Baxter, *Plain* 189); on Tombes, see chapter 3.4.

prodigious events will be taken into account, and also Winthrop's deeds will be considered: his having ordered the exhumation of Dyer's stillborn child. Both the midwives' and Governor Winthrop's perspective will be analyzed in the context of medieval and early modern discourse on "headless" children, in particular as part of learned tracts, broadside ballads, and the still popular legendary reports on "monstrous races."

Because of the female-dominated character of early modern child-care and the secret burial of the stillborn child, John Winthrop depended on the midwives, Jane Hawkins and Anne Hutchinson, for getting to know the particulars of Mary Dyer's⁸⁹ miscarriage. Hawkins, the midwife in charge, provided Winthrop with a first, detailed report, which was probably included without much alteration in his journal: it was "a woman child, stillborn," arriving "about two months before the just time, having life a few hours before"; the baby "came hiplings till she [Hawkins] turned it; it was of ordinary bigness" (Winthrop, *Journal* 253-4). The child, the failed result of Dyer's third pregnancy (Winsser 22-23),

had a face, but no head, and the ears stood upon the shoulders and were like an ape's; it had no forehead, but over the eyes four horns, hard and sharp; two of them were above one inch long, the other two shorter; the eyes standing out, and the mouth also; the nose hooked upward; all over the breast and back full of sharp pricks and scales, like a thornback; the navel and all the belly, with the distinction of the sex, were where the back should be, and the back and hips before, where the belly should have been; behind, between the shoulders, it had two mouths, and in each of them a piece of red flesh sticking out; it had arms and legs as other children; but, instead of toes, it had on each foot three claws, like a young fowl, with sharp talons. (Winthrop, *Journal* 254)

Also Anne Hutchinson had "told" one "of the elders" "how it was" (Winthrop, *Journal* 253), but Winthrop did not write down the exact wording—maybe because he did not have it available.

Egan argues that Winthrop's journal entry on Dyer's daughter—with ears that "were like an ape's," "pricks and scales" on the rump "like a thornback," and claws resembling those of "a young fowl" (Winthrop, *Journal* 254)—could be read as a warning that English bodies would be permanently altered in foreign climates (Egan

⁸⁸ Kibbey mixed up the two monstrous births, however: it is Dyer's stillborn daughter—and not "Hutchinson's stillborn, malformed child" (113)—who was exhumed.

⁸⁹ The Dyers had arrived at the Bay colony in 1635; they joined the First Church of Boston in late 1635, and as of March 1636 William Dyer belonged to the freeman of Boston. For biographic information on Mary Dyer (ca. 1611–1660), see Myles 3-7; Pearl and Pearl 24-25; Plimpton; Schutte 86-88.

71). In the early modern period, the human body was not regarded as a stable, permanent entity but being subject to change. The Roman physician Galen of the Second Century before Christ had described the body as a composition of fluids that were derived of blood and could turn into one another: blood, semen, milk, sweat, tears. The processes of menstruation, excretion, and alimentation all served the production and transformation of these fluids. Illness was caused by an imbalance of the four humors within the body: blood, black bile, yellow bile, and phlegm. The combination of fluids and humors was dynamic and could alter even in a short period of time, for example due to the climate or the food one took in (Chaplin 238-42; Eden).

Because of its climate, the eastern shore of the Americas seemed like the ideal habitat for monsters. The medieval *mappae mundi*, still circulating in the early seventeenth century, had blamed extreme climate (cold, hot, or very humid) for the existence of strange beings (Breslaw 10; Hoogvliet 96). Collections of wondrous, prodigious beings from distant, exotic regions such as Pliny's *Natural History* suggested that the so-called monstrous races—peoples such as giants and dwarfs, men with only one foot, or beings with dog-like heads—were living at the margins of the world, and famous early modern tracts on monstrosity such as Boaistuau's *Secrete Wonders* (1569), Lykosthenes's *The Doome* (1581), Aldrovandi's *Monstrorum Historia* (1642), or Liceti's *De Monstris* (1665) perpetuated such monster lore. Columbus consequently was expecting to encounter fantastic beings on his travels, for example people “born with tails” or “monstrous men” (*Columbus Papers* 67; cf. J. Friedman, *Monstrous* 197-207; Vaughan, “Early English” 40-45). In the Age of Exploration, when European travelers encountered Native Americans and a hitherto unknown flora and fauna, a “new geographical distribution of wonders” developed (Daston and Park 175).

Small wonder, then, that there were widespread fears among colonial settlers that the hostile environment of the American wilderness⁹⁰ might corrupt their minds and bodies. As Captain John Smith summarized the situation when John Winthrop's fleet had arrived in New England after a long and troublesome voyage in 1630: “they found . . . all things so contrary to their expectation, that now every monstrous humor began to shew it selfe” (*Complete Works* III: 292). The wilderness was a place where

the devil was more active and more powerful than elsewhere. Cotton Mather later would state that the devil easily could tempt a soul when he met with “distempered *Bodies*,” and the New England “*Brains* or *Bowels* have some Juices or Ferments, or Vapours about them, which are most unhappy *Engines* for *Devils* to work upon their Souls withal” (*Magnalia* III, 119).⁹¹

The influence of the devil threatened to reduce the colonial settlers to a beastly state of being. Puritans were well aware that the boundaries between man and beast were instable due to the corrupting effects of the flesh (Canup, *Cry* 117), and in the wilderness the beastly nature of mankind seemed to prevail. Even in “civilized” regions heresies, mental disorders, and disorderly behavior such as sodomy hinted at the existence of an inner wilderness that persisted while the outer wilderness was tamed. Especially bestiality—sexual intercourse across species boundaries—was considered the outward sign of a sinful state of being and an abominable crime against divine law: sodomy was a “monstrous and horrible *Confusion*” that “turneth a man into a bruit Beast” (Danforth, *Cry of Sodom* 5).⁹²

In England as in New England, the birth of a child with severely distorted body parts and with “horns” on its head could easily evoke associations with the devil. The Jacobean print *A Wonder Worth the Reading* (see J. Crawford 118-20), for example, introduced a “Prodigious and Monstrous Child” with devilish attributes (see fig. 1): “bigg staring” eyes, “firy [sic] red” ears which were not “like to Christians eares” but stood “pricking up,” and a body covered with “very long heare” (sig. A2, 6). The stillborn “female child with a halfe forehead” had two horns behind the ears, and “its mouth & eyez [were] miraculously placed in the sayd halfe forehead neere upon the breast” (*Wonder worth* 5-6). Also the *Strange Newes out of Kent* (1609; see Fissell 67-68)—reporting on an infant who, like Dyer’s daughter, “had no head” but “two faces,” one “directly placed in the breast,” the second being only partly discernible, “like unto a face quite disfigured” (sig. B verso / B ii)—pointed out the possibility of demonic influence. The mother had admitted that the child had moved in her womb before delivery “not like unto other naturall children, but as shee had

⁹⁰ The motif of the New England wilderness will again turn up in Part IV of this study (chapters 4.1, 4.3, and 4.4).

⁹¹ See also shortly in chapter 4.3 on Cotton Mather’s belief in a heightened activity of the devil in New England.

beene possessed with an evill spirit, which put her to extreame torments” (sig. B iii). Extreme body movements (much as a horrible smell or threatening noise) could be taken as a sign of satanic forces (Karlsen 117; Sievers 224-5). Also in Dyer’s case the presence of evil powers could be read by inclined readers (or listeners) into the phenomena accompanying Dyer’s labor as described in chapter 1.1, such as the shaking of the bed, the “noisome savor,” or the children “taken with convulsions” (Winthrop, *Journal* 255).



Fig 1. Title page of *A Wonder Worth the Reading* (London, 1617).

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The frequent use of animal imagery—as in the description of Dyer’s child—reinforced the impression that the devil must have been involved in one way or another. The headless child reported upon in *Gods Handy-worke in Wonders* (1615), for example, that had a piece “of deformed flesh” sticking out from its breast covering something like “a mouth with a tongue” (calling to mind the “piece of red flesh” that stuck out of each of the two mouths on the back of Dyer’s child, Winthrop, *Journal* 254), was said to resemble a black swan with white belly, possessing a tail “like unto an Ore,” “two hornes upon his head,” and claws instead of fingers. Also the passage on the “strange Monster of Cracovia” in Rueff’s midwifery manual *The*

⁹² On the often disturbing relationship between mankind and animals, see Fudge, Gilbert and Wiseman, eds.; Mizelle 145; Thomas, *Man* 36-50. According to Aristotle, offspring resembling rather

Expert Midwife (1637) contains comparisons to animals and presents an amalgam of signs: the creature had a tail, a nose “long & hooked,” a trunk like an elephant, eyes that “flamed like fire,” dogs’ heads on various body parts, and feet and hands resembling those of goose (157). In Reginald Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), the devil is himself described as a combination of different parts of animals: he was “hauing hornes on his head, fier in his mouth, and a taile in his breech, eies like a bason, fanges like a dog, clawes like a beare, a skin like a Niger, and a voice roring like a lion” (152-3). The devil is conceived as a hybrid figure, with various elements combined in one entity, as was typical of early modern monsters.⁹³

The question whether a child could be created by the devil or witchcraft was much debated in the early modern period, but this possibility was usually denied:⁹⁴ as will also be shown in chapter 3.4, God was guiding the entire universe, and in creating children with birth defects he pursued his own intentions. In most English cheap print narratives of monstrous births it was pointed out that God’s wrath was directed at the sins of mankind rather than paternal guilt, creating a common sense of unworthiness and degeneration (Soergel 132-3, 140-6; Wilson 41-49; Winship, *Making Heretics* 167). But there were also exceptions to this rule. The author of *Strange Newes* stated that one could not know whether the birth was a sign of God’s wrath with the whole nation or the parents; the strange comportment of the woman—who disappeared after having given birth—suggested that the child was the product of an illegitimate coupling. In *Gods Handy-worke in Wonders* it was explained that it were the “blacke and monstrous” sins of the parents that initiated God to create such “an vgly Monster.”

For many an early modern contemporary, a mother bringing forth such a creature delivered the evidence that she either had never been in a state of grace or that she had left the righteous path. As will be shown in chapter 3.1, when the parents had been propagating heretical viewpoints, the birth of a headless child was usually interpreted as an example of divine wrath and an emblem of the spiritual state of the parents (J. Crawford 146-70). That it was even more painful for the mother to deliver

an animal than a human being “belongs to the class of monstrosities” (IV, III, 769b).

⁹³ For a visual example see the woodcut adorning the title page of *A pittillesse Mother* (1616), which presents the devil with a beard, breasts, wings, scales, and talons instead of feet.

⁹⁴ See for example Fenton’s *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature* (1569, [16]-19), Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584, Epistle to the Reader), Cotta’s *The Triall of Witch-craft* (1616, 32-40), Sadler’s *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (1636, 180), and Rueff’s *The Expert Midwife* (1637, 2-3).

a deformed child than one with regular limbs, as was pointed out in an early modern midwifery manual (Sharp 168) and as had probably been the case with Dyer's labor, could be read as a sign of a marred spiritual state both of the parents and mankind in its entirety: the pains of childbearing were considered the divine punishment for the transgression of Eve, and a mother prone to sinning and disorderly behavior possibly would have to suffer more than others.

The interpretation of human prodigies as materialized sins had a long tradition in the Western hemisphere. Already in antiquity, the external surface and form of the body were interpreted as being in some way related to the inner state of mind and the character of a person.⁹⁵ The outward peculiarities of monstrous races served medieval and early modern Christians as an alter ego on which unsettling traits of the Christian self could be transferred. Blemmyae, for example, a legendary, exotic people who were said to have their face on their chest, were usually described as hairy, mostly naked, and dark-skinned beings, often with giant size, a vicious character, and beastly habits. Having no head and thus no brain, blemmyae served as a figuration of the lack of rationality. The blemmyae's size confronted mankind with an inflated, debased version of themselves and pointed out the enormity of sinning that threatened to turn mankind into brute beasts.⁹⁶ Also in the Renaissance period it was widely held that monstrousness was both an inward condition and externally visible. John Ponet, for example, saw it as "requisite" to describe how someone holding erroneous opinions looked like, so "that our posteritie knowe what he was, and by his description see, how nature had shaped the outwarde partes, to declare what was within" (I iij).

Puritan covenant theology reinforced the impetus to link visibly deformed offspring with previous sinning. The covenant of grace was understood as an extension of the covenant of works. Obedience to the law was a necessary precondition for the covenant of grace and was only made possible through the latter, as Peter Bulkeley, the influential Puritan minister of Concord, Massachusetts, summarized it in *The Gospel-Covenant* (1646):

⁹⁵ On monstrous births as a sign of disorder in the mother and analogies between physical deformities and specific sins, see Brammall 7-15; J. Crawford 62-87; Neumann 39-44; Pender, "No Monsters" 151, 163.

⁹⁶ On blemmyae, see Austin 29-34; J. Friedman, *Monstrous* 25; Husband 22, 39-47; Neumann 43; Rossi-Reder 66; St. George 166-7; Twomey 153-5; Vaughan, "Early English" 42; Wittkower 53, 57, 66, 69; Wunderlich, with Müller, eds. 659, 662.

The Covenant of grace doth not require works in the same order as the Covenant of workes doth, for the Covenant of workes requires workes first, and then faith to believe our selves beloved unto life; but the Covenant of grace requireth faith first, and then that we bring forth good workes (55)

Thus, in theory, sanctification—the ability to live in accordance with the moral law—could only follow justification and the experience of free grace. But it was tempting to reverse this causality that was difficult to grasp in everyday experience. Most of the ministers—with the notable exception of John Cotton (see chapter 2.2)—held that leading a lawful, godly life was a consequence of having experienced grace and, therefore, might be a sign of election—or at least a possible preparation for experiencing saving grace. The outward appearance therefore was taken as a clear sign of the inward state: appropriate apparel or the strict observance of the Sabbath served as external evidence that someone had undergone true conversion. As Bakewell noted in 1643: “he that findeth an inward desire and an outward endeavour to doe these things is certainly the child of God” (10). And although the fall had made it impossible for mankind to fully obey God’s laws, all mankind needed to follow the law since all participated in the covenant of works: “all are shut up under it, al bound to fulfill it” (Bulkeley 98).⁹⁷ The aim was to create a community of “visible saints,” of Puritans who had offered visible evidence of their holiness and built a common, “visible body” by entering the church covenant (R. Mather, *Apologie* 5; cf. Middlekauff 44-45; Morgan, *Visible*). In Congregationalism, the local church was the visible, miniature version of the invisible Church of Christ, the true church, consisting only of the elect.

On both sides of the Atlantic there was wide-spread fear of hypocrites secretly broaching heretical opinions that would corrode the social cohesion of the visible city on earth. The Puritan concept of hypocrites (see Bozeman 247-52) can be traced back to Augustine’s “two cities,” which denote “those who wish to live after the flesh” and “those who wish to live after the spirit”; there was constant danger of “false Christians within the church” (Augustine 14:1, 441; 1:35, 38) who followed “*carnall*,” self-serving ends, even “[t]hough their *actions* may be *spirituall*” (Bulkeley 221). The unredeemed, hypocrites, and criminals fortunately could be detected through their sinning and breaking of laws, and especially prodigious events were regarded as helpful for detecting misbehaviour. Sodomites, for example, were

uncovered through the unusual resemblance of young animals to young males (Cressy, *Travesties*). George Spencer, for instance, was held responsible for the crime in 1641/1642 because a newborn piglet had various “human resemblances” to this “loose fellow” (Winthrop, *Journal* 385). And a calf born with almost “an Humane Visage” was held to have been “impregnated by a Beastly Negro” (C. Mather, “Monstrous Calf” 366). Also thieves and murderers could be detected by help of prodigious signs (see Winthrop, *Journal* 313).

It is safe to assume that Anne Hutchinson (1591–1643),⁹⁸ who had assisted Mary Dyer in her labors, was not inclined to interpret Dyer’s deformed child as a visible proof of its mother’s spiritual state or an act of divine providence. It was not an attractive option to interpret this personal tragedy of one of her followers as an example of God’s judgment upon offenders; furthermore, Hutchinson did not accept the clergy’s interpretation of covenant theology. In her view, leading an orderly life full of good deeds in accordance with the moral law of the Old Testament was neither a prerequisite for being saved nor a reliable proof of it; this feeling of assuredness could be provided solely by the Holy Spirit, which therefore was the prime route to salvation.

Hutchinson turned the question of certainty about redemption into a private matter that no outsider could detect from outward behavior. She valued individual experience above ministerial and church authority, thereby denying the ministerial elite their mediating position between God and the laity. Relying upon outward appearances and godly behavior sounded to Hutchinson like Arminianism, which, like Catholic faith, promised salvation in exchange for good works. Those clinging to Antinomian viewpoints therefore were said to despise those “legall Teachers” who did “goe by markes and signes” instead of trusting revelation from the Spirit of God (Bakewell, flyleaf). By laying the focus on the covenant of grace, Hutchinson

⁹⁷ On Puritan covenant theology (including secondary literature), see chapter 1.1.

⁹⁸ Anne Hutchinson and her family had arrived at Boston harbor in September 1634; they lived nearby Governor John Winthrop’s house, and her husband, the merchant William Hutchinson, was chosen deputy to the colony’s governing body, the General Court in Boston. For biographical overviews on Anne Hutchinson, see Stoevers 23-33; Winship, *Making Heretics* 37-43; see also the various biographies of Hutchinson (e.g. LaPlante; S. Williams).

devalued the importance of outward signs of regeneration and endangered the very concept of the “visible church” that was built of the various local churches.⁹⁹

Also as far as Jane Hawkins is concerned it is rather not probable that she was prone to refer to human sinning with regard to Dyer’s failed pregnancy. Hawkins is not known to have had a strong impetus to pronounce theological concepts, and she probably followed Anne Hutchinson in religious matters rather than developing own theories. A later source points out (admittedly in a polemical setting, see chapter 3.3) that Hawkins had lived in great poverty, and only “through Mrs. *Hutchinsons* affection to her, [she got] some good victuals, insomuch that some said she followed Christ for *loaves*” (Wheelwright Jr. 198).

With Winthrop the situation was different. Even before the officials learned about the stillborn child of Mary Dyer, Hutchinson was regarded by Winthrop and others as being prone to sinning. The Hutchinsonians, as those of the Boston church following Antinomian viewpoints were called by some, were accused of having “secretly carried” diverse “foul errors,” as Winthrop commented in January 1638 (*Journal* 245; cf. 205-6). During Hutchinson’s November trial, Deputy Governor Thomas Dudley had suggested that “Mrs. Hutchinson is deluded by the devil” (D. Hall, ed. 343), and during the church trial of March 1638, Thomas Shepard had implied that Hutchinson might be a reprobate, stating that she was not guided by the Holy Spirit but “a spirit of Delusion and Error” (D. Hall, ed., 365; cf. Winthrop, *Journal* 287).

When one of Hutchinson’s followers gave birth to a severely deformed child it could be read as confirming the suspicion that Hutchinson and her followers had not been in a state of grace—especially when the doctrine of providence was taken into account. In Winthrop’s journal, every event could take on significance in God’s providential scheme, for example when people escaped death by accidents or other calamities, such as shipwrecks (see e.g. 87, 199, 200); all these incidents were examples of “the Lord in his special providence” (*Journal* 88). Already in late 1635 Winthrop had noted that it “is vsefull to observe as we goe alonge, suche especial

⁹⁹ Various scholars point out that Hutchinson challenged the notion of visible sainthood and external signs, see Breen 32-35; J. Crawford 148, 152; Lang 59; New 99; Valerius 197-8. Similar to Hutchinson, John Wheelwright demanded that “the servants of God” should not be forced to live after the “works of sanctification . . . so as if they had a power to do them.” For Wheelwright, the law was not binding, since after expulsion from Paradise mankind had lost the ability to live in accordance with it (“A Sermon” 166).

providences of God as were manifested for the good of these plantations” (*Journal* 159). Winthrop tended to interpret especially those occurrences as acts of providence that seemed like a punishment for acts that endangered the existence of the community, for example when someone had confronted the colony’s authorities or had shown serious misconduct (Rumsey 10-11; Schutte 96n36).¹⁰⁰

As the doctrine of providence demanded, Winthrop actively collected prodigious happenings, and as soon as he heard about Dyer’s monstrous birth, Winthrop began documenting any possible piece of evidence. On 27 March 1638, Winthrop noted in his journal the “familist” affiliations and despicable character traits of those involved, whereby he implicitly presented the miscarriage as the logical outcome of heretical beliefs and wrong behavior:

The wife of one William Dyer . . . , a very proper and fair woman, and both of them notoriously infected with Mrs. Hutchinson’s errors, and very censorious and troublesome, (she being of a very proud spirit, and much addicted to revelations) had been delivered of [a] child some few months before, October 17, and the child buried (being stillborn) and viewed of none but Mrs. Hutchinson and the midwife, one Hawkins’s wife, a rank familist also (*Journal* 253)

Despite being “a very proper and fair woman,” Dyer was addicted to appalling heretical beliefs and produced a child terrible to behold. By opposing the positive image of the mother to the monstrous outcome of her pregnancy, the horribleness of the event was heightened and the danger of deceiving outward appearances and first impressions was evoked.

Dyer’s offspring—including the circumstances of its birth—revealed its mother as a hypocrite. In early April, Winthrop pointed out that “the discovery” of the failed pregnancy was a “thing observable,” since it occurred “just when Mrs. Hutchinson was cast out of the church”; furthermore, Hawkins, “the midwife, presently after this discovery, went out of the jurisdiction” (*Journal* 255) because the magistrates had suspected her of being addicted to magic and witchcraft. On 12 March 1638, Hawkins was banished from the colony: the General Court of Newtowne decided that Hawkins “had liberty till the beginning of the third month, called May, & the magistrates (if shee did not depart before) to dispose of her” (*Records of the Governor* 224). Hawkins moved with her husband to Portsmouth,

¹⁰⁰ On the doctrine of providence and its influence on later interpretations of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s “monstrous births,” see also chapters 3.4 and 4.2.

now part of Rhode Island (*Winthrop Journal*, ed. Dunn, Savage, and Yeandle, 253n20; cf. Karlsen 14-19), which was appreciated by Winthrop:

and indeed it was time for her to be gone, for it was known, that she used to give young women oil of mandrakes and other stuff to cause conception; and she grew into great suspicion to be a witch, for it was credibly reported, that, when she gave any medicines, . . . she would ask the party, if she did believe, she could help her, etc. (*Journal* 255)

In the summer of 1640, Winthrop referred again to Hawkins, noting that “it was certainly known” that Hawkins “had much familiarity with the devil” (*Journal* 330). Last but not least, “[a]nother observable passage was that the father of the stillborn child, William Dyer, had been, “by an unexpected providence, questioned in the church for divers monstrous errors” and was admonished for it when Dyer’s failed pregnancy became public news (*Journal* 255).

In addition to internal disorders, Winthrop referred to external threats and natural catastrophes in the context of his journal entries on Dyer’s failed pregnancy, which created the impression that the birth of such an abnormal child could only be a sign of disaster. After having reported on Dyer’s monstrous birth, Winthrop commented on the “evil” represented by the possibility of “a general governour” (255, 256) and that “this was a very hard winter” (256). A short mentioning of the neighboring Indians was followed by an entry on the earthquake that had happened at Naragansett in Connecticut on 1 June 1638: “the earth was unquiet twenty days after, by times” (257-8; quotation: 258). The description of Hutchinson’s miscarriage was succeeded by information on the continuing dangers to the political autonomy of the colony (see chapter 3.1), a tempest, and “the highest tide, which had been seen since our coming into this country” (but, Winthrop added, “through the providence of God, it did little harm”; *Journal* 266-7; quotation: 267). That Winthrop combined his report on the two monstrous births with reports on natural catastrophes and the Antinomian Controversy created the impression that all these events had to be seen in close relation—simply because they happened in close succession.

Winthrop was not the only one for whom the doctrine of providence served as a guiding principle for making meaning of Dyer’s stillborn daughter. When Roger Williams learned about the “monster,” he commented in April 1638 in a letter to John Winthrop that “[t]he Lord speakes once and twice: he be pleased to open all our Eares

to his Discipline” (25).¹⁰¹ John Cotton regarded it as “a providence of God” that the other women, “which were coming and going in the time of her [Dyer’s] travail, should . . . be absent” when the child actually was born; furthermore, Cotton “thought God might intend only the instruction of the parents, and such other to whom it was known, etc.,” which served him as justification for his assistance in keeping the failed result of Dyer’s pregnancy a secret (Winthrop, *Journal* 254).¹⁰² In 1659, John Hull, a member of John Cotton’s church, a wealthy colonial merchant, and, like Winthrop, a high-ranking colony official (see Hull 117-40), explicitly established a connection between Dyer’s miscarriage and spiritual fertility in his diary. In the passage in which he had mentioned Dyer’s failed pregnancy, Hull commented on the baptism of the son of Constant Madock, which was a remarkable occurrence, since Madock’s wife

had abortives before, but never any living child; and it is the more remarkable, because, seven or eight months before, she embraced the order of the church, and was accepted a member, though her father and mother are much declined in that respect, and have been for many years. (189)

Both episodes—Dyer’s monstrous birth and the Madock case—were a “merciful providence” to Hull (189). While Madock’s case stood for the blessings resulting from being a profitable member of the church, Dyer’s miscarriage demonstrated the disastrous effects of heterodox viewpoints on all those involved. Like Winthrop, John Hull was inclined to interpret special occurrences as judgments on those who challenged the colony in one way or another. In December 1680, Hull noted in his diary that John Russell, a minister of the Boston Baptist church who was said to propagate Anabaptism, “died suddenly, after a pamphlet of his in excuse of themselves, and accusing the churches here of persecution” (248). Although Hull did not explicitly establish a connection between the two events, he did so implicitly, by presenting them as a sequence.

¹⁰¹ One is tempted to read this passage as a reference to the monstrous births of both Dyer and Hutchinson; however, as shown in chapter 1.1, it is rather not probable that Hutchinson had had her miscarriage already in April, so Williams may have referred to other occurrences, such as Hutchinson’s claim of having experienced immediate revelations (see below). On the relationship of Roger Williams to the Bay colony, see shortly in chapters 2.2 and 3.2.

¹⁰² Cotton also gave a personal reason, stating that he probably would have concealed a stillborn, deformed infant if it had been his own child (Winthrop, *Journal* 254). Winship points out that Cotton’s reaction to Dyer’s miscarriage “differed strikingly from his handling of the monstrous birth” of Anne Hutchinson (*Making Heretics* 167; cf. Schutte 99-100). See chapter 2.2 on Cotton’s interpretation of Hutchinson’s miscarriage.

Also Winthrop's habit of linking natural phenomena with human prodigies had not been unusual. The author of *Gods Handy-worke in Wonders* (1615), for example, combined a report on an earthquake with the story of two monstrous births.¹⁰³ The most immediate connection between Dyer's miscarriage and a disruption of the common course of nature was established by the Reverend Thomas Hooker of Newtowne, who co-founded Hartford, Connecticut, in 1636 after having left the Bay colony due to disagreements with the colonial leaders on suffrage. Hooker described what happened when Dyer's ill-fated pregnancy was being discussed at his house:

While I was thus Musing, and thus Writing, my Study where I was Writing, and the Chamber where my Wife was sitting, shook, as we thought, with an Earthquake, by the space of half a quarter of an Hour. We both perceived it, and presently went down. My Maid said, it was the Devil that was displeased that we confer about this Occasion. (qtd. in C. Mather, *Magnalia* VII, 20)¹⁰⁴

The English alchemist and mystic Edward Howes (see chapter 2.2), referring to the two monstrous births, the "generall earthquake" (probably that of June 1638), and the religious disputes within the colony (of which he had learned from John Winthrop Jr., see chapter 3.1), raised the rhetorical question whether it was "a wonder [that] the Earth should quake at this? O Earth, Earth, Earth, heare the voyce of the Lord, a still silent voyce, yet where it comes it maketh the mountaines to quake, and the hills to tremble." ("[1639]" 506; cf. Como 422-3). In many diaries of the time, strange natural phenomena such as earthquakes, eclipses of the moon, or the appearance of a great swarm of flies were dutifully noted in between observations of political or social events of a potentially public interest, ranging from the death of eminent personalities to cases of murder (see e.g. Hull 226, 228, 230, 247).

However, it is important to note that, at least in his *Journal*, Winthrop did not explicitly term Dyer's miscarriage an instance of providence but rather a verbal statement of Hutchinson. Winthrop was certain that Hutchinson's claim of immediate revelation during her court trial of November 1637 (see chapters 1.1 and 3.4) was a sign of God: "now the mercy of God by a providence hath answered our desires and

¹⁰³ One was the "headless" child mentioned above; the second was one of the rare cases when a deformed child was not stillborn but living and killed after birth, according to the anonymous author. See J. Crawford (72-78) for additional information on this broadside.

made her to lay open her self and the ground of all these disturbances to be by revelations” (D. Hall, ed. 341). Winthrop wrote on the monstrous births in a providential setting but did not openly regard them as divine special providences. Roger Williams and John Cotton had referred much more explicitly to the doctrine of providence in the context of Dyer’s failed pregnancy. As Rumsey points out, Winthrop had an “orthodox model of providential doctrine,” making use of it with caution (4-13); writing on Dyer’s miscarriage, he preferred using terms such as “observable passage” (see above). A few years later, in 1643, Winthrop again avoided a direct statement and only hinted at a possible causal relation between “proud,” “troublesome” women (as he had described Mary Dyer, see above) and fertility: he described in his journal how Mary Onion of Roxbury, who had been delivered of a stillborn child, “died in great despair” without finding peace only two months later. Winthrop characterized Onion as a “stubborn and self-willed” personality with a “worldly” orientation, which made her “aiming at great matters” (*Journal* 425; cf. 425-6).

The search for “natural” causes – alternative ways of finding the truth

Belief in providence cannot be equaled with a hostile attitude towards knowledge. As Thomas points out, the belief in omens and portents was part of a coherent system of thinking that involved the purposeful search for analogies and correlations between strange occurrences (*Religion* 91), and, as the example of Winthrop aptly shows, this is also true regarding the doctrine of providence. It also has to be kept in mind that it was not unusual that early moderns pondered both on “natural” causes of monstrosity, such as the effects of the stars and planets on the unborn child (Culpeper, *Directory* 139; Rueff 65-66), and “supernatural” causes. Rueff, for example, attributed monstrous and deformed children “to the Iudgements of God, yet afterward also the corruption and fault of the seed is to bee acknowledged” (151). Paré first elaborated upon God wanting to demonstrate his power and punish sinning and then listed defects of the womb or seed as possible causes of monstrosity (585-6). God was regarded as the “first cause” of everything that happened on earth, while the laws of

¹⁰⁴ The date of the letter is unknown (there are generally very few of Hooker’s letters extant today, see Bush Jr., ed., *Correspondence*, 79; Bush Jr., *Writings*), but the earthquake may have been the one that Winthrop had mentioned in his journal; see above.

nature constituted “second causes” (see also chapters 3.4 and 4.2). Monsters could be interpreted as a sign without denying their physiological, natural causes, since they possessed a physical and a symbolic (or divine) element: they were “simultaneously participating in the material and spiritual worlds” (D. Williams 13; cf. J. Crawford 15-16). As Céard points out, this is by no means a sign of conceptual weakness on the part of Renaissance thinkers (“Crisis” 186-8). Prodigies were just as likely to be the product of nature as the representation of divine will, since God guided the entire universe, including the laws that ruled the material world.

In Puritan thinking, providence denoted everything that was unusual and therefore suited to shed light on God’s hand in creation (I. Mather, *Essay The Preface*). Extraordinary events that seemed to disrupt the orderly course of nature constituted important though limited hints at how God’s creation worked and, in a second step, at divine will. God’s intentions manifested themselves in the world, in unusual events. Since the material world was created by God it also offered the route via which the Puritan divine could partake in divine wisdom.¹⁰⁵ Central to this epistemological concept was the doctrine of the Book of Nature that complemented the Book of Scripture. Nature was “that universal and publick Manuscript, that lies expans’d [exposed?] unto the eyes of all” (Browne, *Religio* 31). The belief that God the creator revealed himself in the Book of Nature can be traced to St. Paul’s famous Letter to the Romans: “For the inuisible things of him, that is, his eternal power and Godhead, are seene by the creation of the worlde, being considered in *his* workes” (1.20). In themselves, comets carried no clear message, they “are illegible; yet when they are placed in Conjunction with Scripture-predictions . . . , being interpreted according to the word of their Creator, they are not without instruction.” (J. Norton, *Abel* 47-8). The Scriptures allowed revealing more clearly “the Mystery of such (otherwise inscrutable) Secrets of his profound Providence.”¹⁰⁶ The concept of the two books allowed Christians to study nature without neglecting the duty to praise the glory of God, since the Book of Nature was conceived of as a kind of complement to Scriptures (see Howell esp. 16).

The wish for a closer examination that expressed itself in the disinterring of Dyer’s daughter can be taken as an indicator of a person with a curious mind and an

¹⁰⁵ On Puritan viewpoints on cognition, see Breitwieser 46-47; P. Miller 111-53; Roberts-Miller 53-55; Stoeve 8-9.

early form of scientific interest who studied in detail the Book of Nature. About twenty years earlier, in 1620, the Lord Chancellor Sir Francis Bacon, an English natural philosopher and statesman, had called for an empirical study of monstrosity based upon a collection of marvels and phenomena digressing from the ordinary course of nature; the aim was to clarify what was superstition and what was explicable by nature. In this context, Bacon postulated that those

who aspire not to guess and divine, but to discover and know, who propose not to devise mimic and fabulous worlds of their own, but to examine and dissect the nature of this very world itself, must go to facts themselves for everything. (Bacon 23)

Bacon hoped to “drag into light” (25) hidden secrets “out of the very bowels of nature” (Bacon 21). Prior to the emergence of Baconian science, natural philosophy had contented itself with studying phenomena that presented themselves unmediated to the senses, but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries phenomena that lay hidden began arousing the interest of natural philosophers. With the help of more and more intricate technical devices such as the microscope the invisible was made visible. The focus shifted toward empirical findings, first-hand experiences, and fact-gathering; Aristotelian scholasticism, which tended to draw conclusions from universals instead of particulars, came to be criticized.

The Baconian method of induction, which used individual examples—particulars—to reach general conclusions, is symptomatic of the “culture of dissection,” which lay the focus on ocular observation (Calbi 64). For Thomas Browne, whose often reprinted *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (first published in 1646) clearly was influenced by Francis Bacon’s work (see Campbell, *Wonder* 85-96; Robbins xxxi-xxxiv), vision was the decisive instrument for finding truth: “We are not Magisteriall in opinions . . . [but] have only proposed them unto more ocular discerners” (*Pseudodoxia* 4). Already antique and medieval philosophers such as Aristotle or Roger Bacon had given sight priority over the other senses, and the tendency to emphasize the visual sense even increased during the Age of Exploration.¹⁰⁷ Columbus and the early explorers stressed that they had seen the novelties of the New World with their own eyes. And the soldier and adventurer John

¹⁰⁶ John Sherman, Urian Oakes, Thomas Shepard, Epistle to the Reader, in Danforth’s *Cry of Sodom*, sig. A2.

¹⁰⁷ On the visual in the early modern period, see Biernoff; Bucher; Campbell, *Wonder* 51-67; Kleinspehn.

Smith, who had given New England its name, knew “no reason but to beleieve my own eies, before any mans imagination” (*Complete Works* I: 352). As the method of induction (which had the aim to “dissect the nature” of “this world,” see above), dissections promised to open up the secrets of life, as the iconic frontispiece of Vesalius’ path-breaking work on anatomy *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) demonstrates in an eye-catching way: it depicts a female corpse being dissected, the womb already opened, and a large crowd of onlookers watching the scene.¹⁰⁸ The practice of dissection combined the advantages of visual examination with a new, promising epistemological concept. The objects of dissection were disintegrated into singular constituents: dissection meant a “violent ‘reduction’ into parts,” a “brutal dismemberment of people, things, or ideas” (Sawday 1).

The culture of dissection covered not only the factual dismemberment of human bodies but a critical analysis of religious concepts and viewpoints. In the early 1640s, countless tracts and treatises promised to have “anatomized,” “dismantled,” or “unmask’d” Antinomianism or other heterodox beliefs.¹⁰⁹ A good example is Thomas Gataker’s *Antinomianism Discovered and Confuted* (1652), a refutation of accusations that Gataker held Antinomian viewpoints. Gataker, a pastor at Rotherhith in England, stated that he had on the contrary publicly preached against Antinomianism. His aim was “to unbowel and lay open some part of that unsound stuff that lies closely couched in this covert vault” (To the Christian Reader).¹¹⁰

Especially when authorized faith and deviating beliefs were so closely connected as in Puritanism and its variant Antinomianism, it was essential to have a closer look. Antinomians and mainstream Puritans in both Old and New England often enough justified their viewpoints referring to the very same principles, which made it sometimes difficult to clearly identify diverging opinions. There was no clear demarcation line between “Antinomians” and their opponents but rather a rhetoric deadlock. This could lead to the paradox situation that someone was “an Antinomian though he do not know it”—for example, when he or she inclined towards the belief

¹⁰⁸ Vesalius was one of a new type of anatomists, who preferred seeing with their own eyes to studying books. For a discussion of the title page of *Fabrica*, see Sawday 66-72. Nunn (12-19) expresses doubt as to whether the female womb forms the center of the frontispiece of Vesalius’s work.

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. John Sedgwick’s *Antinomianisme Anatomized* (1643), Edward Winslow’s *Hypocrisie Unmasked* (1647), or Samuel Mather’s *A Dead Faith Anatomized* (1697). For further examples, see T. Cooper 208-16 and passim.

¹¹⁰ Gataker’s work, probably published in a first edition in 1644, was part of the Mather library; see the filing box “Mather Family Library” in the American Antiquarian Society; cf. Tuttle 35-39.

that one could be justified even before being born, as the English Anti-Antinomian Richard Baxter explained in the late 1640s (“Undated Treatise” 205).¹¹¹ As described above, hypocrisy posed a great danger, and sects and supposed heretics like Hutchinson were accused of acting under the cloud of secrecy: According to Winthrop, Hutchinson managed to be admitted to the Church of Boston only because “shee cunningly dissembled and coloured her opinions,” and as soon as she “got over that block . . . shee began to goe to work” (*Short Story*, 1644, 31). Hull suggested that those “who before had been fellow-laborers to help forward the work of God in private, as others the faithful ministers did in public,” then “began secretly to undermine the pure doctrine of the gospel delivered in public” (170; cf. Hubbard, *General History* 282).

The efforts to find out about one’s own or others’ spiritual state, described as “anatomization,” shared similarities with the methods of “New Science.” Calvinist ideology called for continual inward scrutiny, which amounted to a painful process of dissecting and anatomizing the own self—an approach that Rivett termed the “science of the soul” (5; cf. Sawday 110-29). Reformed ministers and radical Protestants proceeded almost like those who followed Baconian methodology to reveal nature’s secrets: they “applied the experimental method to witness, observe, and record the manifestations of grace on the souls of others” (Rivett 6). The aim was in both cases to gain knowledge—of how God’s creation worked, and of God’s working in individuals. Due to the interrelated covenants of grace and of works (see above), also Puritans relied much upon visible signs, and since there was a great deal of mistrust regarding external appearances, there was a strong impetus to probe deeper.

Much as natural philosophers catalogued natural phenomena and bodily deformities, religiously minded persons put together catalogues of errors and heretical opinions. The more abnormal and unknown the body of a creature was, the more could be learned from it, and the more satisfaction and entertainment it brought. As has been formulated in a work on *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature*: “Amongst most of those things which merit Philosophicall contemplation . . . , I thinke such are moste wonderful, whose nature is furthest from our understanding and iudgment” (Boaistuau 47). And this applied also to abnormal souls—the greater the abnormality, the more was to be learned, as the author of *Pseudochristus* (1650) held: “great use

¹¹¹ On Richard Baxter, see chapter 3.4 and shortly in chapter 4.2.

may be made” of relations on “strange and blasphemous Opinions” that “came to such an high degree of blasphemy”: “there surely is much to be learned by us,” wherefore “such remarkable passages” should not “pass us without some serious consideration of them” (H. Ellis 54).

Both prodigious heresies and prodigious bodies were often described by help of metaphor and related stylistic devices, and also this practice can be seen in relation to the culture of dissection. Since the human mind has difficulties in grasping monstrous forms in their wholeness, it analyzes, that is, disassembles them into their singular constituents, until each part can be put into existing categories, such as claws or tails. Strange, composite beings are first reduced into single elements, which are then interpreted each in themselves. At the same time, a vice versa process is at work: known categories are enlarged or adapted. A focus on detail is combined with a quest for generalization (Harpham 4-6, 15-16, 122-4; P. Smith 136-7). Summarizing this process of differentiation, Paul Smith identifies a “metonymic” and an “analogic perspective” (137) in descriptions of monsters, which both serve the aim to provide an adequate picture of the object in question. The breaking down of the monstrous being “into recognizable parts” is “the metonymic aspect,” and the subsequent comparison of these parts to things the reader is familiar with, such as animals, is “the metaphoric or analogic aspect of the description” (P. Smith 136). As the seventeenth-century scholar John Smith remarked regarding metonymies in *The Mystery of Rhetorick Unveil’d* (1683): they are “enforcing the understanding of the hearers to a deeper consideration of the sense and meaning” (J. Smith, *Mystery* 30; cf. D. Williams 41, 77).¹¹²

Thus what Sievers (222) describes as being typical of the rhetoric of monstrous races—misplaced body parts, such as a face upon the breast, or parts of one species transposed upon the body of another, such as horns on a human head—should not be seen as an impediment to gaining knowledge—at least not if one takes into consideration what early moderns understood as valuable knowledge. Furthermore, resorting to stylistic devices such as metaphor did not rule out exact descriptions or the search for a natural cause. The author of *Gods Handy-worke* (1615), for example, provided detailed information on the deformed infant: the legs

¹¹² John Smith defined metaphor as the “translation of a word, from the proper signification, to another,” or “from one species to another” (8). A metonymy “puts one thing for another, which by nature are nigh knit together” (11).

were not of the same size, each foot had only four toes, and the right arm was “altogether formlesse and without bones, or the true shape of a hand, hauing two fingers onely, towards either side one.” “The length of this disproportioned creature was 13 inches, and in compasse 15 inches and a halfe.” Similarly, although the deformed child described in *Strange Newes* was “a caios [sic] of confusion, a mixture of things without any description,” the reader was informed that it had fifteen fingers in all and on each foot seven toes (sig. B ii).

The language used in Winthrop’s journal thus shows similarities with the medieval and early modern rhetoric of monstrous races, as Sievers (222) and Egan (71) suggested, but this finding needs to be interpreted with caution. For one, it had been Hawkins who had provided Winthrop with a first report on Dyer’s child, and Winthrop seems to have taken it over unaltered in his journal. Second, the use of metaphor and analogies was common practice at the time for someone trying to make meaning of a prodigious event. St. George, who analyzed Winthrop’s notes in the context of early modern reports on blemmyae, suggests that “Winthrop was merely following accepted wisdom in the Dyer and Hutchinson cases” (172; cf. 164-73). Third, the rhetoric of monstrous races did not rule out the possibility of a physiological cause for a birth defect.

The authors of medieval and early modern accounts of monstrous races at times tried to find natural causes for bodily deformities or ascribed their existence to illusions.¹¹³ In the report on the monstrous birth of Kent mentioned above the appalling “earthly” smell of the birthing scene (which had the effect that sickness fell upon the attendants, as at Dyer’s laboring scene, see chapter 1.1) was explained with the fact that the child had been “dead borne” (*Strange Newes*, sig. B ii verso, [B iii]). Similarly, Winthrop and later commentators could have considered a natural reason for Dyer’s shaking bed during labor, since a painful birth meant extreme strain to the body causing uncontrollable movements in the mother, which in turn could make the bed tremble.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ See Burns, “King’s” 196; J. Friedman, *Monstrous* 22-25; D. Williams 11-14; 76-77; Wunderlich 16-17. There was wide-spread awareness that not all reports on monsters referred to existing cases. Already one of the church fathers had admonished that “we are not bound to believe all we hear of these monstrosities” (Augustine 16:8, 531). Referring to the “Blemmyes,” the English cleric Samuel Purchas doubted in 1626 that they wanted a head: “the Authors” of such reports, he claimed, “had either no eyes to see the truth, or more head then they should to devise lyes” (727).

¹¹⁴ For an example of a report blaming fits caused by visions and revelations for the shaking of a bed, see H. Ellis’s *Pseudochristus* (1650); see chapter 3.1 on this publication.

That the oral statements of Hawkins and Hutchinson had been quite reliable (or possessed strong suggestive force) was confirmed by Winthrop himself after the exhumation of Dyer's stillborn child: "though it were much corrupted, yet most of those things [reported by Hutchinson and Hawkins] were to be seen, as the horns and claws, the scales, etc." (*Journal* 255). In *A Short Story*, published in London in 1644 (see chapter 3.1.), he noted similarly that "the horns, and claws, and holes in the back, and some scales, &c." that the midwife had described "were found and seen of above a hundred persons" (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, 45).¹¹⁵ That Hutchinson and Hawkins provided a reliable report is also confirmed by the fact that their description allows for a retrospective diagnosis. The birth defect of Dyer's daughter has been identified with high probability as an "anencephalic with spina bifida and other abnormalities" (Schutte 90). Anencephalus is characterized by "virtual absence of the forebrain and the skull vault"; the bones of the skull and the facial bones are deformed, and often other body parts show "patterns of disordered growth" (Elwood and Elwood 15-16). The defect can take on different variations with all or part of the brain missing. The infants are in most cases stillborn or die soon after being born.¹¹⁶

A text stored in the Public Record Office in London gives one additional piece of information not to be found in any other published source (although the remaining part of the text probably was taken from the initial report as quoted in Winthrop's journal) that supports this retrospective diagnosis: "the face had noe parte of heade behinde, but a hollowe place, yet unbroken" ([Winthrop], "A monstrous berth" 37). It is plausible that this description stems from one of the two midwives rather than Winthrop himself, or it may have been provided by another person who had been consulted on the matter, maybe because he or she possessed some medical knowledge. As shown in the first part of this chapter (and as also his dealing with Hutchinson's miscarriage shows, see the following chapter), Winthrop was intent on gathering reliable information from direct witnesses and from what would be termed today experts.

¹¹⁵ These testimonies call to mind a statement of Roger Williams (although its meaning is not easy to decipher): reporting on Hutchinson's explanation that she concealed the monstrous birth of Mary Dyer upon advice of John Cotton, Williams commented that "I can not belieue that he subscribes to her Applications of the Parts of it" ("Letter" 25).

¹¹⁶ Schutte (90n14) gives an overview on medical literature on this birth defect. Elwood and Elwood (5-12) describe it in historical perspective. On the dangers of retrospective diagnosis, especially in view of the socially constructed concept of disease, see Bates, *Emblematic* 175-8.

How would early moderns have interpreted such a birth defect, that is, what would they have read in the Book of Nature? It is a fortunate coincidence that there exists a text authored by an experienced medical authority (measured by the standards of his time) describing a human deformity that is said to represent the same medical defect as Dyer's miscarriage. Ambroise Paré, one of the surgeons of the French king, reported in his treatise *Of Monsters and Prodigies*, first published in French in 1573,¹¹⁷ on a "Monster, a headless," born in the region of Gascony in France in 1562 (Paré, *The Works of Ambrose Parey* 594). Paré claimed to have received the description from another physician, who had seen the "monster" with his own eyes. Paré's monster has been identified as hemicephalus (lacking brain and calvaria), or anencephalus with partial spina bifida (Pallister 179n24; cf. 36). The child depicted in Paré's text differs from Dyer's "monster" in some aspects, however; for example, it shows no "pricks" and "scales"; but, like Dyer's child, it was said to have a face on its back and ear-like pieces of flesh on its shoulders (see fig. 2).



Fig 2. Illustration in Ambroise Paré's *Of Monsters and Prodigies* as part of *The Works of Ambrose Parey* (London, [1691]; 595).

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¹¹⁷ Although he was not trained at university, Paré was very experienced in medical matters: he had taken care of severe injuries on countless battlefields; furthermore, Paré had a general distrust of the authenticity of seemingly monstrous body parts displayed in the streets of Paris for profit (Pender, "Bodyshop" 107-9; cf. Pallister).

As also the example of Paré shows, a common and wide-spread physiological explanation for children lacking body parts was “the defect of Seed,” as the relevant section in *Of Monsters and Prodigies* (Paré 594) is entitled. The seed of both man and women conjoined in the female womb and thereby formed a new being—a process that could easily be disturbed in its proper course by diverse internal and external influences. A child missing some limbs or body parts therefore often was attributed to “a want or default in the seede, as well in the qualitie, as in the quantitie of the same” (Boaistuau 141). Monsters resulted from “filthy corrupt seed,” or from “too much or too little seed” (Lemnius 22, 57; cf. Rueff 151).

We cannot tell for sure whether Hutchinson and Hawkins were familiar with these theories, but it seems probable. In England as in New England, women, and especially those acting as midwives, possessed far-reaching knowledge about birth and medical cures, all the more in areas where trained medicines were rarely or not at all available (Wertz and Wertz 6).¹¹⁸ In addition, as of the sixteenth century, the number of learned tracts on birth and generation had increased substantially. Knowledge gained from dissections came to be incorporated in learned treatises and midwifery manuals such as Thomas Raynalde’s *The Byrth of Mankynde* (1545 first ed.).¹¹⁹ In England, many began criticizing that medical texts printed in the vernacular were dealing too openly with this delicate topic and were circulating too freely among the population (Hill, *Intellectual* 27-30; Porter 272-3). The Puritan English physician James Hart of Northampton, for example (see also chapter 3.3), defended Latin as language of the learned in the early 1620s (371). Authors and printers of early modern midwifery manuals often felt compelled to start with an excuse or explanation that there were good reasons to publicize in the vernacular on this touchy subject (see e.g. Culpeper, *Directory* 3; Rueff sig. A 4). Giving birth turned into a public affair in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Blackman 71; Trubowitz, “Crossed-Dressed” 200-1)—also in the overseas colonies.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ See chapter 2.2 regarding the lack of trained medicines in early colonial New England.

¹¹⁹ On early modern tracts on birth and generation, see Blackman 71-72; Daston and Park 191-2; Needham 109, 111. As far as is known today, the 1560 edition of Raynalde’s *The Byrth of Mankynde* was the first book in the English language with copper engravings; it is also the first known birth manual published in English. It has been reprinted in several editions up to 1654 (see Fissell 14, 31, 33; Hobby 146; Needham 112).

¹²⁰ That also in New England knowledge on sexual organs and the genitals became available to ever larger parts of the population is illustrated by the so-called bad book episode of 1744: several young males of the church of Northampton were suspected of making fun of the genitals of girls, probably by quoting from *Aristoteles Master-Piece* (see Chamberlain 313-22).

The available sources confirm that Jane Hawkins and Anne Hutchinson possessed a reasonable amount of medical knowledge—at least as far as the state of pregnancy, the birthing process, and related fields are concerned. Anne Hutchinson was “skilfull” at “Childbirth-Travells” (Cotton, *Congregational Churches* 51) and “helpfull” in “occasions of bodily infirmities” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, 31). She probably even took care of John Winthrop’s wife, Margaret, when she suffered from menopausal symptoms or maybe a miscarriage (LaPlante 39; S. Williams 138-9). Hutchinson’s midwife colleague, Jane Hawkins, “practised physic” and distributed “medicines” (see Green 131); for example, she gave “young women oil of mandrakes and other stuff to cause conception,” as Winthrop noted in his journal (255). Hawkins had been so active in this field that she came under suspicion of being a witch and was banished from the colony (see above), and the General Court of Newtowne prohibited her “to meddle in surgery, or phisick, drinks, plaisters, or oyles, not to question matters of religion, except with the elders for satisfaction” before her departure from the colony (*Records of the Governor* 224). Winthrop’s journal contains no hint, however, that Jane Hawkins or Anne Hutchinson thought about the quality or amount of seed as having caused the birth defect of Dyer’s child, and whether they discussed this question in private conversations or as part of official questionings is not known.

As far as Winthrop is concerned, we know that he dutifully noted both the outward appearance and the setting of Dyer’s monstrous birth, but in the documents that have come down to us Winthrop did not ponder in written form on a “natural,” that is, physiological, cause of Dyer’s or Hutchinson’s deformed offspring. Scholarly literature does not give a clear picture on Winthrop’s level of knowledge on medical matters; early commentators are more convinced of Winthrop’s abilities in this field than modern scholars. The historian George E. Ellis maintained in 1847 that one could have expected from such an outstanding personage as Winthrop to have considered a natural cause for Hutchinson’s failed pregnancy, for example the emotional stress Hutchinson had had to endure (327-8); Green claimed in 1881 that Winthrop “was well versed in medicine” (25), while Pearl and Pearl suggested in 1990 that Winthrop probably “had only the vaguest idea of the state of malformation of the body at birth” (28).

Winthrop's early life fosters the assumption that he did not possess more than average knowledge of and interest in medical matters. Winthrop had grown up in rural Suffolk, England. In 1602, at the age of fourteen, he thought about becoming a minister and entered Trinity College at Cambridge University. After having received some training in the law, he became Lord of the Manor at Groton in his mid or late twenties, and as of 1627 he served as one of the common attorneys at the Court of Wards in London (Bremer, *Winthrop* 7-13; Morgan, *Puritan Dilemma* 12, 18-22). In London, Winthrop may have come into contact with cheap print reporting on human oddities that were sold in great numbers in London's streets, and he may well have heard some of the theories on monstrous births circulating in cheap print and learned tracts. In 1630, Winthrop left for New England, where he served several terms as governor up to his death in 1649.¹²¹

Considering Winthrop's biography and his role in the Antinomian Controversy reveals an ambiguous picture. On the one hand, one could argue that Winthrop shared an important characteristic with the "New Scientists": by having Dyer's child disinterred (and by requesting more detailed information on Hutchinson's miscarriage from John Clarke, who had dissected Hutchinson's mole, see the following chapter), Winthrop actively collected facts. Cheryl C. Smith therefore postulates that Winthrop's report as noted in his journal was "Baconian in its comprehensiveness and its drive to study the singularly curious and, through extensive and honest observations, assert a plausible explanation." (447). But on the other hand, Winthrop's doing seems to have been firmly grounded in the doctrine of providence, and his methods and motivations overlapped only partly with the ones of those early moderns who followed the example of Bacon. Sievers consequently denies that Winthrop followed a Baconian approach (227).

Especially Winthrop's order of disinterring Dyer's child should not be given too much weight. The order was based upon a communal decision, reached after consultation with the elders of the congregation, as was typical of communities organized along the congregational church order (see chapter 3.2). In the letter quoted in chapter 1.1, John Eliot wrote that Winthrop, Cotton, the Reverends Thomas Weld and John Wilson had "commanded" the disinterring of Dyer's daughter (31), and

¹²¹ For biographic details on John Winthrop, see Bremer, *Winthrop*; Morgan, *Puritan Dilemma*; Moseley; Schweninger.

Winthrop had noted that it had been “the governour [meaning himself],¹²² with advice of some other of the magistrates and of the elders of Boston” (*Journal* 255). The disinterring of a child with severe birth defects was not unusual at the time and could serve various purposes: to claim authority over birth, to learn more about the circumstances of a child’s death, or to put the body on public display for the curious—which offered distraction, an opportunity for moralizing lessons, or simply a welcome occasion for making a profit.¹²³ In 1609, for example, the curious multitude came to marvel at the headless child born in Kent mentioned above (*Strange Newes* sig. B iii). At another occasion a few years later, “thousands of people came from all places” and relieved “the misery of the sad mother . . . by much money, which out of Christian compassion, many bestowed upon her” (*Gods Handyworke*).

In the case of Dyer’s child, the officials’ main motivation probably had been to correct a mistake of those involved in the secret burial. Not notifying the authorities of a stillborn child could be interpreted as a form of disrespect towards the authorities and meant a form of severe misbehavior. The secret burial of a child was regarded almost as self-sustaining proof of crimes such as adultery or infanticide. Early moderns easily presumed a connection between the concealment of birth and immoral conduct (Hoffer and Hull 49-51; cf. Cressy, *Travesties* 51-72). Although such anti-secrecy rulings were applied more strictly when unmarried women were involved and although stillborn or short-lived infants of married couples were quite often not recorded officially in colonial America¹²⁴ the secret burial of a dead child clearly contradicted the duties Hutchinson and Hawkins had in their roles as midwives. In general, it was required that each birth was reported to the magistracy and registered in the church records and, if possible, presented to be baptized.¹²⁵ The officials depended on the midwives’ reliability since the birth chamber was strictly

¹²² Winthrop usually referred to himself in the third person, for example when he reported that “there came a letter . . . directed to Mr. Winthrop (the present governour)” (Winthrop, *Journal* 266).

¹²³ On the public display of monstrous births in the early modern period, see Bates, *Emblematic* 145-53; Pender, “Bodyshop,” esp. 95-6, 98-104; Semonin, “Monsters.”

¹²⁴ In such cases, the midwives had to take care that the infant’s body was disposed of in a suitable place; this often was a yard or nearby field, see Gowing 87-88, 108-11; Wertz and Wertz 19-20. As an English regulation made explicit: “If any child be dead-born, you yourselfe shall see it buried in such secret place as neither hogg nor dogg, nor any other beast may come unto it, and in such sort done, as it may not be found or perceived” (qtd. in Bates, *Emblematic* 142).

¹²⁵ On the duties and the role of early modern midwives, see Cressy, *Travesties* 13; 54-55, 88; M. Norton, *Founding* 225-31; Tannenbaum xii, xiii, 93-4; 110-1.

female: men were excluded from it until about mid-eighteenth century (M. Norton, *Founding* 222; Ulrich 131-5). Anne Hutchinson evidently had been well aware of her wrongdoing: she “excused” herself for not reporting on Dyer’s stillborn child (Winthrop, *Journal* 253).

By ordering the exhumation, John Winthrop (as probably the others who had been involved) intended to “prove” that the deformities of Dyer’s child were a sign of divine wrath in view of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s previous misconduct (Lutes 335). Cheryl C. Smith similarly points out that Winthrop’s guiding motivation was to “provide proof of Hutchinson’s sin” and to make the “case against her scientifically sound” by delivering “irrefutable evidence” (447; cf. 446-8). Also when describing Hutchinson’s mole (see chapter 2.2) “Winthrop cites concrete details [from Clarke] not as clinical point of interest but as markers that point toward a broader significance, a deeper truth” (Lutes 335). In taking up the stillborn child of Mary Dyer, the ruling elite and those assisting them studied in detail the Book of Nature, but their main intention was to compare it to the Book of Scriptures.

The proceedings of early modern anatomists differed not that much from Winthrop’s approach—the “opening” of a body in dissections paralleled the “opening” of a text by interpreting it (P. Smith 129-30; quotation: 130)—but their priorities lay more and more on the Book of Nature. Others took much bigger risks and made bigger efforts than Winthrop to learn about the secrets of the human body—and their motivation differed. The practice of dissecting human bodies had been only at its beginning, and there were moral and religious restraints, wherefore some anatomists resorted to the bodies of convicted criminals or even stole corpses from the cemeteries. Especially female bodies were rarely available, which prompted the English physician and astrologer Nicholas Culpeper to assert in 1651 that the “Formation of the Child in the Womb” (71) was “the difficultest piece of work . . . in the whol study of Anatomy” (*Directory* 55).¹²⁶ Winthrop, by contrast, was satisfied with viewing the corpse in order to compare it to the reports of witnesses.

¹²⁶ For an example of the body of a convicted criminal being handed over to anatomists for dissection, see Watkins’s *Newes from the Dead*, 1652 (see chapter 2.2 of this dissertation). On the history of dissections, see Sawday; for a special focus on monstrous births, see Bates, *Emblematic* 153-8, and “Good” 152-4; for examples of dissections in seventeenth-century New England, see Green 56-58.

Francis Bacon's approach was much more active and, it has been claimed, aggressive¹²⁷ than Winthrop's. Bacon had argued that nature needed to be forced to reveal her secrets: the object of natural history should not only be "nature free and at large (when she is left to her own course and does her work her own way)" but "nature under constraint and vexed; that is to say, when by art and the hand of man she is forced out of her natural state, and squeezed and moulded" (25). The doctrine of providence had an active component since it was required to be attentive and to actively collect stories of strange phenomena, but, as Rumsey pointed out, one needed to wait more or less passively until God revealed their hidden meaning (4-13). Interest in providence stories inspired large collections of specimens and countless reports on ruptures of the normal course of nature, and it was felt as a duty to record such happenings so that posterity might eventually find out about God's message that lay hidden in the Book of Nature; however, in most cases, these singular events were not systematically analyzed but simply mentioned in a row, as the writings of Winthrop and Hull show. Science in the Baconian sense meant exploring phenomena in a much more proactive and structured way. In sum, it is unlikely that Winthrop consciously followed Baconian methods, and his ordering the disinterring of the corpse of Dyer's child was not the act of a disinterested researcher.

Winthrop's role as a leading political figure seems to have eclipsed any other interests and abilities. For Winthrop, the private could not be separated from the public. Winthrop regarded the topics he wrote about as public matters, even if they concerned birth and private tragedies or affected his own life. Winthrop clearly conceived of himself as "a public man" in his journal (Moseley 45). Already in his "A Modell of Christian Charity," delivered in 1630 during the sea passage to New England, Winthrop had propounded that, if their project was to succeed, "the care of the public must oversway all private respects" ("A Modell" 89).

In having Dyer's child exhumed, Winthrop assumed interpretative authority and claimed for him and the magistrates the right to explore and decide about the meaning of Dyer's monstrous birth. Cotton's assumption that God had addressed only the Dyer family and the other witnesses went contrary to the practice of interpreting such prodigies as a sign for the community at large, and Winthrop (and other Puritan

¹²⁷ Merchant (esp. 149-90) argues that the Baconian approach reduced nature—conceived of as female—into a passive object. For a critique of Merchant's thesis of the "death of nature," see for

colonials) clearly shared this latter viewpoint. Childbearing was a public matter in Puritan New England and elsewhere in the Christian world (Pender “Bodyshop” 99): “The sexual intercourse of man and woman, then, is in the case of mortals a kind of seed-bed of the city” (Augustine 15:16, 502). As Nord rightly pointed out, for Winthrop, as an adherent of the doctrine of providence, the “interpretation of such an occurrence [as Dyer’s monster] must be a public, not a private, matter” (29).

One could argue that by not considering a medical explanation Winthrop acted like a professional: being neither a physician nor a preacher, he abstained from offering an explanation based upon physiological concepts, and he used the doctrine of providence with care. This restraint calls to mind the demonstrative humbleness of Thomas Gataker (see above), who left the detailed analysis of Antinomianism “to some other skilful *Anatomists*, of more strength, and of better abilities for such a businesse then my self” (To the Christian Reader). Winthrop stuck to what he considered his main duty—recording the fate of the Bay colony year after year and governing its body politic. And this included the right and even the duty to exert control over the bodies forming and reproducing this body politic, as the theory of the sociologist Turner on the problem of order implies: drawing mainly upon the writings of Thomas Hobbes and Michel Foucault, Turner argues that “the reproduction of populations through time” was one of “four related dimensions” with regard to the “problem of order” within communities (B. Turner 91).¹²⁸ Winthrop could not accept that Dyer’s monstrous birth had been “viewed of none but Mrs. Hutchinson and the midwife, one Hawkins’s wife” (Winthrop, *Journal* 253). Especially in view of the dangers of hypocrisy, the authorities needed to know about the loyalty of their subjects.¹²⁹ Governor Winthrop’s main motivation was not science but the well-being of the body politic.

example H. Cohen 183-4, 195-8. On parallels drawn between nature and the female sex, see chapter 3.3 of this dissertation.

¹²⁸ The other three dimensions are the “regulation” of populations “in space, the restraint of desire as an interior body problem and the representation of bodies in social space as an issue concerning the surface of the body” (B. Turner 91).

¹²⁹ It has been argued that the wish for knowing what happened inside bodies and minds (especially regarding those perceived as “others,” who were said to endanger communal loyalties in processes of national consolidation) had to do with the rise of democracy (and racism), see Campbell, *Wonder* 12; Trubowitz, “Crossed-Dressed” 195-6.

2.2 “some strange things”:¹³⁰ John Clarke, John Cotton, Thomas Shepard—a priest-physician and two colonial Puritan ministers on Anne Hutchinson’s “mole”

“It cannot be denied but we haue conceiued many monstrous imaginations of Christ Jesus, the one imagination sayes loe, here he is; the other sayes loe, there he is; multiplicitie of conceptions, but is there any one true shape of Him? and if one of many produce a shape, tis not the shape of the sonne of God man, but an vglie horridd [sic] Metamorphosis, neither is it a liuinge shape, but a dead one”

--Edward Howes, “Letter to John Winthrop Jr.” ([1639]), 506--

Winthrop’s journal entries on Dyer’s stillborn child are based upon the reports of two colonial midwives, and those on Hutchinson’s miscarriage on information provided by two colonial Puritan ministers; therefore, the focus of this chapter lies on the way prominent ministers of the Bay colony such as John Cotton and Thomas Shepard reacted to this episode and which role a “preacher-physician” such as John Clarke played in processes of news-spreading and in interpreting prodigious occurrences. That Puritan ministers were interested in human reproduction was not uncommon, but the stories of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s failed pregnancies offer “[t]he most dramatic example of ministerial interest in childbirth” in early colonial history (Ulrich 132). By analyzing the specific type of Hutchinson’s “monstrous birth” in all its facets and by choosing a transatlantic perspective it will be shown that Thomas Shepard and John Clarke belong to two contrary types of ministers as far as their relationship with medical topics is concerned, with John Cotton occupying a kind of middle position.

The entry on Hutchinson’s failed pregnancy in Winthrop’s journal is based upon a report provided by the Reverend John Clarke (1609–1676). Clarke was one of those who had been disarmed at the height of the Antinomian Controversy and left the jurisdiction afterwards. He moved on to Portsmouth, and in 1639 he co-founded the town of Newport, now Rhode Island; Anne Hutchinson lived in the same area. Upon a request by Winthrop, Clarke sent a first report on Hutchinson’s miscarriage to Winthrop some time before 21 September 1638: she had produced “several lumps, every one of them greatly confused,” and “altogether without form”:

¹³⁰ The quotation is from John Tombes (qtd. in Baxter, *Plain* 189); on Tombes, see chapter 3.4.

but if they were considered in respect of the parts of each lump of flesh, then there was a representation of innumerable distinct bodies in the form of a globe, not much unlike the swims of some fish, so confusedly knit together by so many several strings, (which I conceive were the beginning of veins and nerves) so that it was impossible either to number the small round pieces in every lump, much less to discern from whence every string did fetch its original, they were so snarled one within another. (Winthrop, *Journal* 265)

According to Clarke, there were “about twenty-six” “lumps” in all, and of these “six or seven of some bigness; the rest were small” (265).

Winthrop was “not satisfied with this relation” and requested more information. Whether he “spake after with the said Mr. Clarke” (266) rather than corresponding in written form is difficult to tell; it is known, however, that Clarke reacted quickly by describing in greater detail and slightly different wording the number of lumps as well as their size, adding that no afterbirth (“secundine”) came after:

The lumps were twenty-six or twenty-seven, distinct and not joined together; . . . six of them were as great as his fist, and one as great as two fists; the rest each less than other, and the smallest about the bigness of the top of his thumb. The globes were round things, included in the lumps, about the bigness of a small Indian bean, and like the pearl in a man’s eye. The two lumps, which differed from the rest, were like liver or congealed blood, and had no small globes in them, as the rest had. (Winthrop, *Journal* 266)

It may seem surprising that Clarke so willingly provided the Governor of the colony of which he had to depart shortly before with detailed information. But it was not unusual that those who had left due to earlier conflicts occasionally inter-acted on friendly terms with the colony’s authorities. Roger Williams, for example, who had been banished in October 1635 due to a conviction of sedition and heresy, was informed by Winthrop about the monstrous birth of Mary Dyer (see chapter 1.1)—maybe because Hutchinson and her party continued to spread their own versions of the Antinomian Controversy on Aquidneck Island in the Narragansett Bay, where Williams was living. While his correspondence with John Cotton was marked by their strong differences in opinion (Cotton regarded Williams as overtly stubborn and disliked his extreme viewpoints in religion),¹³¹ Williams’s relationship with Winthrop

¹³¹ Roger Williams had provoked the establishment with his unorthodox views on political and religious issues, questioning for example the legitimacy of the charter and the colonials’ dealing with the Native Americans; in addition, he was advocating radical separatism—both from the Church of England and of church and state. See chapter 3.1 and Gaustad; *Jordan III*: 472-506.

rested upon more friendly terms (see Gaustad 16-23, 49).¹³² As Timothy Hall put it: contrary to the wide-spread view of New England Puritans as narrow-minded fanatics they tended to “pragmatic compromise” (27). Often enough, colonial settlers depended on each other for getting and passing on information or profited from each other’s experiences. So even though Clarke later would criticize the Bay colonial authorities for their hostility to religious liberty in his *Ill Newes from New-England* (see Field, “Antinomians” 459-61), he was willing to satisfy Winthrop’s demand for news on Hutchinson’s fate.

Clarke was a valuable provider of information on Anne Hutchinson’s miscarriage because he possessed medical knowledge and had been a first-hand witness. When Hutchinson “perceived her body to be greatly distempered, and her spirits failing,” her husband, William, “sent” for Clarke (if we can trust his report as quoted in Winthrop’s *Journal*, see 265). We do not know whether Clarke was called to this complicated birth in his capacity as preacher or physician, but those who had sent for him were unlikely to have distinguished neatly between the two professions. Winthrop had described Clarke as “a physician and a preacher” in his journal (264), and Clarke is indeed a good example of a so-called preacher-physician.¹³³

The concept of preacher-physicians rested on the assumption that God had endowed ministers with the divine gift of healing power (Elmer 13-19). In the first half of the sixteenth century, the Swiss physician and alchemist Paracelsus, also known as Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, had challenged the Galenic viewpoint that medical practice and religion should be kept in separate spheres. The medical reformers in the Paracelsian and Helmontian tradition argued that medical practice and theory needed a grounding in religion (Elmer 13, 16-19; French and Wear, eds.). Spiritual and physical health were regarded as being mutually interdependent, wherefore ministers felt responsibility for both—they felt a “mixed calling.” The Puritan missionary to the Native Americans, John Eliot, for example, was also “skilled in medicine” (Green 32). The ministers’ interest in medicine was

¹³² In the same letter in which he wrote to Winthrop about Dyer’s monstrous birth, Williams remarked that “it is no small grieve that I am otherwise perswaded, and that some times you say (and I can say no lesse) that we differ” (25); Williams clearly distanced himself from Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomians: “The Lord mercifully redeeme them, and all of vs from all our delusions” (“Letter” 25).

¹³³ On preacher-physicians, see Elmer; Green 58-62; Henry, “Doctors” 199; Watson 2-4. Estimations range from ten percent of Puritan ministers having a strong interest in medical matters to suggestions that more or less all divines in colonial New England practiced the art of healing on singular occasions or on a regular basis (Watson 3-4).

additionally spurred by millennial thinking, which fostered expectations that the time was near when mankind would be restored to a state of complete harmony with God and nature such as it had existed before the fall. By getting to know the hidden secrets of the body, the possibility seemed near at hand to regain dominion over nature.

There also was a practical reason for ministers providing medical care. Learned physicians with a university degree were so rare in the early years of the British overseas colonies that they were practically non-existent. Although the basis for the foundation of Harvard College had already been laid in late 1636, medicine would for a long time not be officially taught on the North American continent. In the first decades after its founding, Harvard's main purpose had been the education of the future ministerial elite. Before the founding of the Medical School in the early 1780s, subjects like chemistry and biology were only taught as part of natural philosophy (Christianson 120-2; I. Cohen, *Some* 12-13, 100-3, 124; Reiss 19-20).¹³⁴ Due to this lack of institutions for medical training there were fewer restraints in the colonies than in England (see chapter 3.3) regarding ministers practicing medicine. Colonial clergymen often were the best-educated persons at hand, wherefore they sometimes gave medical advice or practiced on a limited scale.

It is hard to tell which level of medical knowledge Clarke had attained. Since the professionalization of medicine had not been much advanced yet, those medical practitioners who called themselves “doctor” or “physician,” like Clarke, did not necessarily hold a university degree, even less a doctorate of medicine. Only in the course of the eighteenth century the academic degree M.D. became a prerequisite for being recognized as medical practitioner (Green 15). Early modern doctors of “physicke” usually possessed at least a B.A. degree and knew the writings of Galen, Hippocrates, and Aristotle (J. Smith, *Complete Works* 224n8).¹³⁵ S. Williams doubts that Clarke had received medical training at all (187 note*); but Clarke's report on Hutchinson's miscarriage includes vocabulary of the learned, for example when he described that Hutchinson delivered “in immoderato fluore uterino” (Winthrop,

¹³⁴ Early colonials were well aware that they lacked theoretical and practical medical knowledge. In October 1647, the General Court pointed out the necessity that students of physics should be trained both theoretically and practically in anatomy (Green 31-32; cf. 38-40). One month earlier, in September 1647, John Eliot had written to Thomas Shepard that he hoped that “Our young Students in Physick may be trained up better than yet they bee, who have onely theoreticall knowledge, and are forced to fall to practice before ever they saw an Anatomy made” (qtd. in Green 31).

Journal 265), that is, in “a heavy discharge from the womb” (265n65, editors); furthermore, Clarke performed a dissection and “opened” the “small globes” of which the lumps consisted in order to get information on their build-up (Winthrop, *Journal* 265).

As the example of John Clarke confirms, ministers with a strong interest in medicine tried to examine prodigious births with their own eyes or, at occasions, even assisted in difficult child births. In 1647, for instance, the Reverend John Fiske of Wenham, MA., heard about an “unnatural birth” in his area and performed a partial autopsy on the body of the stillborn infant, of which he gave a detailed report in his journal (49-50). Fiske had been trained in divinity at Cambridge University before migrating to Massachusetts in 1637. Still in 1725, the Reverend Hugh Adams of Durham claimed with a sense of pride to have successfully ended more than three days of painful labor in December of the preceding year by moving the unborn child into another posture (“Narrative” 35-36).¹³⁶

All three examples of the involvement of preacher-physicians in difficult births—Clarke, Fiske, and Adams—confirm that in the seventeenth and up to the early eighteenth century “learned (usually male) and lay (often female) medical practices” were closely inter-tied in New England (Tannenbaum 7). There reigned a spirit of communal endeavor and cooperation. Clarke, for example, probably interacted closely with the women attending Hutchinson’s birthing scene. Although he was only “called to see” the “lumps” after they had been “brought to light,” Clarke came early enough to see them with his own eyes: “first unwashed, (and afterwards in warm water).” Clarke got to know the number of lumps “according to the relation of those, who more narrowly searched into the number of them” (Winthrop, *Journal* 265)—probably the midwife and female neighbors. Also Fiske seems to have cooperated with the women who were attending the laboring scene when examining the skull of the stillborn child. When he discerned two loose parts, he “caused the women . . . to feel likewise and they concluded with me that the skull was broken and turned one part into the other.” Fiske then “opened the head” and “smelled,” “as likewise after me the rest of the women,” he noted. Obviously Fiske and the women

¹³⁵ On medicine and the education of medical practitioners in England and New England in the seventeenth century, see Christianson 117-26; Green 25-34; Reiss 14-20; Tannenbaum 6-12; Wertz and Wertz (esp. 2-18); on Clarke, see Green 8.

¹³⁶ On John Fiske’s and Hugh Adams’s interest in childbirth, see Ulrich 132-3. On Fiske, see also the editor’s introduction to his diary (Fiske, ed. Pope, ix).

involved wanted to share their knowledge, wherefore they “left it to be seen of others” (50).

Based upon the report provided by Clarke, modern scholars have diagnosed Hutchinson’s delivery a “hydatidiform mole,” an abnormal, precancerous uterine growth that easily could be mistaken for pregnancy.¹³⁷ Already in writings of the classical antiquity and the early modern period, the “mola” was related to uncertainty regarding the state of pregnancy and abnormal growth: a mole was the product of a womb that became swollen without true conception; it was a “false Conception” that resulted in “a fleshy mass” (Aristotle IV, VII, 775b), in “a certaine hardned swelling or tumour” (Rueff 137, 138; cf. Guillemeau, *Child-Birth* 13).¹³⁸ As quoted in chapter 1.1, also Hutchinson’s “monstrous shape” was “reported to be many false conceptions in a lump” (Browne, “Letter” 230).

That moles were easily mistaken for pregnancy has to do with the theory of suppressed menses. In the Galenic body (see chapter 2.1) it was essential that the bodily fluids, for example menstrual and venal blood, flowed unobstructed to ensure good health. The balance of the bodily fluids influenced not only the well-being and character of each individual but also conception and the development of the fetus in the womb. A mole could be read as a sign that the fluids had been out of balance since this “ill shaped lump of flesh” was “fed by the Terms that flow to it,” so that it was growing “greater every day in the womb” (Sharp 106).

A good example of the influence of bodily fluids is the story of Anne Greene as narrated in Richard Watkins’s *Newes from the Dead* (1651), printed in London

¹³⁷ On this retrospective diagnosis, see Reid 531n30; Richardson and Hertig 545; Schutte 90, esp. n14. Battis (247-8) claims that Hutchinson suffered from a kind of menopausal hysteria, which, in his view, could also explain her deviant talk. Field strongly criticizes Richardson’s and Hertig’s essay of 1959, claiming that its authors “perpetuate the grotesque lack of regard for Hutchinson’s privacy” and fail to ask the “larger question of why Hutchinson’s political opponents were allowed to examine the contents of her womb, and why they wanted to” (“Ourselves”). Field recommends reading this study “as a historical document in itself, as a marker of the lack of progress in Boston between 1643 and 1959.” On Field’s critique of the essay of Richardson and Hertig, see also part V of this dissertation.

¹³⁸ See also chapter XVII of the often reprinted *Aristoteles Master-piece*, “Of false Conceptions, and how to know them” (124-30), and chapter 12, “Of the Mole or false conception” (122-79), in Sadler’s *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (1636). For additional primary sources, see Cressy, *Travesties* 287n11. On the mola in the early modern period, see Calbi 56-71.

thirteen years after Hutchinson had suffered her miscarriage.¹³⁹ Greene had given birth to a child that was said to have been “very unperfect, being not above a span in length, and the sexe hardly to be distinguished: so that [it] rather seemed a lump of flesh, then a well and duly formed Infant” (Watkins 6-7). Not only does the wording “lump of flesh” call to mind early modern descriptions of moles (including that of Anne Hutchinson) but Anne Greene’s testimony easily could be interpreted by early moderns as proof that there was suppressed menstrual flow involved. Greene claimed that she had been unaware of having been pregnant: although she had been “without the usual Courses of women” for almost ten weeks, there followed “continual Issues” for the duration of one month; these led her to the conclusion

that it was nothing else but a flux of those humors [that is, menstrual blood] which for ten weeks before had been suppressed; and that the childe which then fell from her unawares, was nothing but a lump of the same matter coagulated (Watkins 7)

The wording “matter coagulated” is almost synonymous with the “blood congealed” of which Hutchinson’s fleshy “lumps” consisted according to Clarke (Winthrop, *Journal* 266).

In the early modern period, the type of a mole was determined by taking into consideration the number of lumps and the matter of which the lumps were built. Usually, a mole was said to consist of a single “piece or lump of mishapen flesh” (Rueff 137), but there were also cases with several distinguishable lumps, and there circulated stories of multiple pregnancies attributed nowadays to the same medical phenomenon in which it was claimed that a woman had brought forth dozens and hundreds of babies at one birth.¹⁴⁰ Thus the statement that Anne Hutchinson had produced “about twenty-six” “lumps” (Winthrop, *Journal* 265) is not that uncommon when compared to such reports. Regarding the matter of which the mole consisted, contemporary tracts usually distinguished between “true” and “false” moles, with

¹³⁹ On this newssheet see Dolan 133-5; J. Friedman, *Miracles* 26-29. Although moles form part of almost any early modern tract on birth and midwifery, there have come down to us significantly fewer broadsheets dealing with moles than with headless births. One reason may have been that formless lumps of flesh were not well suited for being depicted in woodcuts—also *Newes from the Dead* carries no illustration on the title page. Evidently the story of Anne Greene nonetheless had a great appeal to the masses: in the first year of publication there was done a second impression, with several ballads composed on the occasion added to the main part.

¹⁴⁰ For examples, see Bondeson 64-94; Richardson and Hertig 545; Strachan 273-6; for an early modern source, see Clarke’s *A Mirrour or Looking-Glass Both for Saints, and Sinners* (496).

various sub-categories. As one of the earliest extensive discussions of moles stated,¹⁴¹ a “true Mola” was “fleshy, being nothing else but an vnprofitable masse, without shape or forme, hard and firme,” while a “false Mola” was “of three sorts, the one windy, being a collection of grosse winds: the second watrish, or a heaping together of waters: the third humorall, or a meeting of many humors” (Guillemeau, *Child-birth* 12-13). Sometimes, however, the mole was “nothing but a bag full of blood” (Sharp 108).

Thus there was one sort of “true” moles—commonly called “fleshy” or “membranous”—and there were three types of “false” moles: “windy,” “humourous,” and “watery.” A “true” mole (that is, a “fleshy” or “membranous” one) was “a mishapen [sic] piece of flesh without figure or order, it is full of Veins and Vessels with discoloured veins or membranes of almost all colours, without any entrails or bones, or motion”; its form was either long or round, and there were cases when women “have cast forth three at a time” (Sharp 106, 107). Both the father and the mother were responsible for creating a “true” mole, as Guillemeau pointed out in 1612: “the man must adde somewhat thereunto” (*Child-birth* 14). The origin of “false” moles was to be found within the maternal body, in particular in the matrix: the “windie Mole” was “ingendred through want of heate in the Matrice,” the “watry Mole proceeds from the abundance of watrie thowres” from the liver or “the weaknes of the Matrice,” and the “humorall Mole” was created when there came down “too much moisture . . . through the vessels of the Matrice” (Guillemeau, *Child-birth* 15; cf. Sharp 108).

It is hard to tell which type of mole early modern physicians would have ascribed to Hutchinson’s miscarriage. Clarke’s statement that “the matter” of the lumps “seemed to be blood congealed” (Winthrop, *Journal* 266) calls to mind Sharp’s “bag full of blood” (see above), which did not belong to one of the frequent types of moles. Clarke’s comment that the lumps were “brought to light” (265) “in a heavy discharge from the womb” (*Journal* editors, 265n65) suggests that it was a watery mole belonging to the class of “false” moles, and Clarke himself had stated that the matter of the “small globes” he had opened were “partly wind and partly water” (265). But Hutchinson’s multiple births also displayed characteristics of

¹⁴¹ The midwifery treatise *Child-Birth, or The Happy Deliverie of Women* (1612) was authored by Jacques Guillemeau (or “James Guillimeau”), a former disciple of Ambroise Paré (see chapter 2.1) and one of the surgeons of the French king. The work was translated into English in 1612 (Calbi 57).

“membranous,” or “fleshy,” that is, “true” moles: the lumps were “confusedly knit together” by “several strings” and “veins,” and a “membrane” was found (Winthrop, *Journal* 265), which was considered by early moderns a sign of a “true” mole.

A mole carried enormous potential for metaphoric interpretation and polemic. In many publications the sections dealing with moles also dealt with monsters, and “these monstrous creatures” (Boaistuau 12 verso) were most often presented as the result of God’s wrath and as judgment on the horrible sins of the parents.¹⁴² A frequent explanation for moles were parents giving themselves over to unconstrained lust, “suffering themselves to run headlong, as do brute beasts without guide to the puddle or sinke of their filthie appetites, hauing no respecte or regarde to the age, place, tyme or other lawes ordeined of nature” (Boaistuau 12 verso).¹⁴³ Moles happened more than usual, Sharp noted, when “Men and Women ly together when they have their courses,” wherefore the blood was “not fit” to be formed into a child “by reason of impurity” and “the uncleanness of the matter” (107). Although the “monthly terms” (that is, menstruation) were considered a necessary and health-pertaining process (Rueff 10-11), many tracts on monstrosity listed sexual intercourse at the time of menstruation as one possible cause of deformed newborn children. Menstruation was intimately linked to the punishment of Eve for seducing Adam to taste of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, and menstruating women were described as being polluted in the Old Testament; some even took recourse to etymology to establish a link between the terms *menstruation* and *monstrous*.¹⁴⁴ Due to these negative connotations, the term *mola*, or “Moon-Calf” (Sharp 106), as a mole also was called,¹⁴⁵ was sometimes used as a pejorative term aimed at discrediting others. Cotton Mather (see chapters 4.3 and 4.4), for example, criticized the Quakers in a 1702 publication for railing against “the best Men in the *English Nation*” with

¹⁴² See the Fifth Book in Rueff’s *Expert Midwife*, “of the false conception named *Mola* . . . : Also of aborcements and certaine Monsters” (1637), and chapter iv in Sharp’s *The Midwives Book* (1671). On monstrous births as divine judgment on sinning, see chapters 1.1 and 2.1.

¹⁴³ Lemnius wrote in the context of moles of sexually active women who “snatch the seed” from their husbands “as hungry dogs do a bone” (First Book, chapter 8, 23). For a discussion of how moles were seen in relation to female sexual pleasure in early modern tracts, see Calbi 64-70.

¹⁴⁴ See Lev. 15.19-33, Isa. 30.22, Lam. 1.17, Ezek. 18.6, and esp. 2 Esd. v, 4-9. It has been claimed that Sharp’s *The Midwives Book* (1671) is an example of the frequent association of the word *menstrua* with *monstrous* (P. Crawford 70), but Sharp described the “Monthly courses of women” (“in Latin *Menstrua*”) as “*quasi Monstrua*, for it is a Monstrous thing, that no creature but a women [sic] hath them” (288). On seventeenth-century attitudes toward menstruation, see P. Crawford, esp. 59-63, 70.

¹⁴⁵ For other examples for the use of the term *moon-calf*, see Guillemeau, *Child-birth* 13; Rueff 137-8; see also the title of Michael Drayton’s *The Moone-Calfe* [1627].

expressions such as “*thou Mole; . . . thou Cow-Dung; thou Moon-Calf*” (*Magnalia* VII, 26).

That a mole was associated with unruly sexual behavior made it a very suitable potential rhetoric weapon against Anne Hutchinson and those supporting her. During her church trial of March 1638, the minister John Davenport presented it as a logical consequence of Hutchinson’s belief in mortalism of the soul (see chapter 1.1) that Hutchinson would become unfaithful to her husband: a denial of the immortality of the soul surely would lead to “Libertanisme,”¹⁴⁶ “Licentiousnesse,” and “sinfull Liberty” (D. Hall, ed. 358). It was common belief that awareness of a sure death without the possibility of resurrection would lead towards unrestrained sexual conduct. Also John Cotton warned of the consequences that a denial of resurrection could have:

. . . *if the Resurrection be past than you cannot Evade the Argument . . . that filthie Sinne of the Communitie of Woemen without Distinction or Relation of Marriage, will necessarily follow. And though I have not herd, nayther do I think, you have bine unfaythfull to your Husband in his Marriage Covenant, yea that will follow upon it.* (D. Hall, ed. 372)

At about the time when news of Hutchinson’s miscarriage spread across the Bay colony and beyond, the members of the Boston church learned about another episode that offered itself for moralizing gossiping. One of the followers of Anne Hutchinson, Captain John Underhill, who had been prominently involved in the war against the Pequot tribe, was accused of having had an unlawful relationship with the “young, and beautiful” wife of his neighbor (Winthrop, *Journal* 264). That Underhill’s adultery coincided with news on Hutchinson’s monstrous birth (both were reported upon in Winthrop’s *Journal* in September 1638) reinforced the inherent connection between unconstrained sexual desires, disregard of religious authorities, and failed pregnancies.

The sexual connotations of moles come up once in a while in the reception history of Anne Hutchinson’s mole,¹⁴⁷ but another connotation proved even more influential. In addition to sexual misbehavior, a mole was closely associated with

¹⁴⁶ The term *libertine* covered a whole range of possible meanings in early modern Europe—from “a challenge to orthodox religion” to “a loosening of family bonds” (J. Turner x). Also the reputed nearness of the “Hutchinsonians” to the Family of Love (see chapter 2.2) played in the hands of the opponents of Antinomianism due to the association of Familism with sexual license.

intellectual misconceptions, not the least because of the double meaning of the term *conception*, referring to both biological and mental offspring. Thomas Browne, for example, confessed in his treatise on erroneous beliefs, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1672), that the frequent occurrence of “Mola’s and false conceptions” was a “monstrosity” to him (141, 112). Both in the biological and metaphorical sense monstrous false conceptions were characterized by a lack of order and direction. The mental conceiving of ideas was an active process; it was necessary to give form and structure to unformed material, and this resembled the process of generation: one was “laboring” an idea, giving form to it, and birthing it (see Todd 197-203). Monsters were created when one avoided this labor of thinking since then imagination was not formed into an idea but retained its raw, shapeless form, as the famous Renaissance thinker Montaigne explained with regard to poetry: when people were unable to clearly express their thoughts, these remained “nothing but shadows of some imperfect Images and Conceptions” difficult to pronounce; and when these people tried as much with much stammering “you will soon conclude, that their Labour is not to Delivery, but about Conception, and that they are but licking their formless Embrio” (Book I, 288).¹⁴⁸

That birth defects and defective opinions were often described with a similar wording is illustrated by a passage in Winthrop’s journal. During the court trial of November 1637 (when Hutchinson showed signs of pregnancy, see chapter 1.1), Winthrop presented Hutchinson as having become so filled up with heretical thinking—as if she had been pregnant with it—that its eruptive outflow was unavoidable: “And, after many speeches to and fro, at last she was so full as she could not contain, but vented her revelations” (*Journal* 241). The wording reminds of Clarke’s report on Hutchinson’s mole that entered the world in “a heavy discharge from the womb” (see above). Lemnius had explained similarly in *The Secret Miracles of Nature* (1658) that moles were produced when “sometimes after three Moneths space, that filthy matter runs forth, and an undigested heap comes out by pieces, as filthy water out of a Ship by the Pump” (First Book, chapter 8, 23).

¹⁴⁷ See for example the second part of this chapter, when Thomas Shepard’s writings are analyzed; see also chapter 3.3.

Bodily fluids that were out of balance served not only to explain how moles came into being but also how mental and biological misconceptions were related. René Descartes and the Cambridge Platonists had revived the ancient mind-body division as two independent entities, and the complex system of humoral fluids, spirit, and solids within the human body helped explain how external impressions, which were gathered with the corporeal senses, were transformed into immaterial ideas. Imagination was an intermediary agent between the mind and the body, so that both could exert influence upon each other. In pregnant women, for example, the mental condition of the mother-to-be was transformed into matter and made visible at the moment of birth—a process that has been summarized as the theory of maternal imagination (see Todd 108-9, 118-26). According to this theory, there was a connection between inner longings and the outward shape of a newborn child; the passions of the mother were replicated in material form. As Lemnius formulated it in the Fourth Book of his *The Secret Miracles of Nature* (1658): “For the force of imagination is so strong, that if a woman once fasten her eyes and thoughts upon any object, all the faculties of nature, and that force that serves to form the Child, the humours running from all parts, which are at her command, fall down thither, and imagination is wholly intent to do the businesse” (253).

The concept of the potentially disastrous effects of maternal imagination on the unborn child was one of the most influential theories for explaining monstrous births in the early modern period.¹⁴⁹ The supposed connection between the womb and the brain may have tempted William Harvey to wonder in the final chapter of his *Anatomical Exercitations* (1653) “whether, as we see with our *eyes*, and think with our *braines*, so a *female* doth conceive with her *Vterus*?” (540). Similarly, the authors of treatises on birth pondered on the origin of seed—both male and female—in the

¹⁴⁸ The passage is part of the section “Of the Education of Children” in Montaigne’s *Essays*. In another translation of the *Essays* there is even stronger resonance of formless “lumps”: “they doe but licke that imperfect and shapeless lump of matter” (qtd. in Todd 202). In 1713, Baxter (or Calamy) similarly described the doctrines of Vane and Hutchinson as “Notions” that were “raw and undigested” (98); on Calamy, see shortly in chapter 3.4. The trope of wrong conceptions will be taken up in chapter 3.3.

¹⁴⁹ On the concept of maternal imagination, see chapters 3.3 and 4.3; cf. Huet; Shildrick; Todd 108-9, 118-26. The theory was listed in countless publications as a possible cause of monstrous births; see for example Lemnius’s *The Secret Miracles of Nature* (1658), First Book, ch. IV, 14-15 and passim; Sharp’s *The Midwives Book* (1671, 111). Although in mid-seventeenth century doubts about the theory of maternal imagination increased, belief in the effects of the mother’s thoughts on the unborn child has lingered on until our own days (Halpert 233-7).

body, and some claimed that it was partly “ingendred of the braine” (Rueff 7; cf. Crooke 279-86).¹⁵⁰

Theological versus medical interpretations of monstrous births

As far as is known today, John Cotton (c. 1584–1652)¹⁵¹ was one of the first (if not the first) to explicitly parallel Anne Hutchinson’s bodily outflow with the abilities of her mind and her religious thinking. In September 1638, John Winthrop noted in his *Journal* a comment made by Cotton “in the open assembly at Boston, upon a lecture day” (264). Cotton “declared” that, according to rumor, Hutchinson’s delivery consisted of

twenty-seven several lumps of man’s seed, without any alteration, or mixture of any thing from the woman, and [Cotton] thereupon gathered, that it might signify her error in denying inherent righteousness, but that all was Christ in us, and nothing of ours in our faith, love, etc. (Winthrop, *Journal* 264-5)

It was this comment that initiated Winthrop to write to John Clarke and ask for the report quoted above “to know the certainty thereof” (*Journal* 265).

Referring to Cotton’s comment on Hutchinson’s miscarriage as given in Winthrop’s journal, Traister claims that Cotton thereby implicitly pointed out the child’s “lack of female attributes” as well as “the female withdrawal into the confined space of midwifery and the midwife’s removal from overt patriarchal supervision,” so that “the monstrous birth metaphorically signals the female withdrawal from the anatomy of reproduction” (145; cf. 145-6). I agree that at the bottom of Cotton’s statement lay differing conceptions of the private and the public sphere and of the role ascribed to women in the process of reproduction (and also that these motifs affected early interpretations of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s miscarriages)—but, at least as this quotation is concerned, in another sense than suggested by Traister.

Evidently, Cotton had tried to connect theories on moles to his main field of expertise: Protestant theology. John Cotton was one of the most influential Puritan

¹⁵⁰ In Rueff’s view (7-8), seed was mostly “collected and gathered together from . . . the whole body.” The theory that male seed, that is, semen, originates in the brain and the spinal marrow goes back to Hippocrates (or his son-in-law, Polybus); other prominent adherents were Aristotle (I, XVII 721b) and Galen. See Preus 70-71.

¹⁵¹ For basic biographic details, see Bremer, “Cotton”; Winship, *Making Heretics* 44-49.

preachers in New England.¹⁵² He regarded it as divinely ordained duty to study the works of nature, since a good Christian was obliged to honor nature as the outflow of divine wisdom. Cotton's education at the University of Cambridge had been dominated by "Christian humanism," and, like many early Puritans, he approached medicine on a rather theoretical and utilitarian basis (Emerson, *John* 2). To study nature served the benefit of mankind not only by increasing "the knowledge of many medicinall things" but by providing "Instruction" for the soul (Cotton, *Briefe Exposition* 23). This religious grounding of his interest in medicine is also reflected in Cotton's epistemological method, which belonged to the medieval and early modern custom of citing classic authorities and testing their writings against the Bible (Hornberger 507-10, 513).

Cotton's statement that Hutchinson's miscarriage "might signify her error in denying inherent righteousness, but that all was Christ in us," refers to a theological dispute. In Boston, the question whether the Holy Ghost dwelled in person in a true believer had been much debated in late October 1636. It was agreed "that the Holy Ghost is God, and that he doth dwell in the believers," but whether he did so "by his gifts and power only, or by any other manner of presence" was subject to debate; it was "earnestly desired, that the word person might be forborn, being a term of human intervention" (Winthrop, *Journal* 201). Anne Hutchinson did not only believe in "the indwelling of the person of the Holy Ghost" but that it entered a "personal union" with the believer (Winthrop, *Journal* 195)—which was one reason why many adversaries labelled Hutchinson and her followers *Familists*. The Familists were a religious sect that had sprung up in Holland around mid-sixteenth century. Its founder, Henry Niclaes, based his preaching on the Christian mystic idea that a part of God resided in every person (Como 5; Valerius 183).

Rather than hinting at Hutchinson's withdrawal from biological reproduction, as Traister proposed, Cotton probably implied with his initial statement that Hutchinson did not contribute enough on the *spiritual* level. The elders demanded active participation of the believer in the process of justification, while Anne Hutchinson's standpoint (and that of John Wheelwright, Henry Vane, and, at least in

¹⁵² Already back in England, Cotton had built up some reputation at St. Botolph's in Boston, Lincolnshire. When in 1633 the cause of Puritan religious dissidents had received a severe setback due to the appointment of William Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury, John Cotton and his family joined the "Great Migration" to New England. After his arrival in September 1633, Cotton became teacher of the First Church of Boston, where John Wilson dealt with church discipline.

the early phase of the Antinomian Controversy, John Cotton) meant a passive waiting for regeneration—they trusted completely on the workings of the Holy Spirit in them. The tendency to passively await salvation had been much debated and in parts strongly criticized at least up to the mid-forties. For Thomas Weld (who contributed a key text on Dyer's and Hutchinson's monstrous births, see part III of this study), taking such a stance would mean that nobody needed to "be troubled by the Law," and individual faith would be "only a discerning that Christ is his owne already, and is only an act of the Spirit upon him, no act of his owne done by him" (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). In his tract *A Short View of the Antinomian Errours* (published in London in 1643), Thomas Bakewell compared Antinomians to "dead stones," waiting passively that "the spirit of God doe his owne worke in them and by them"; but in order to "be made a living stone," Bakewell pointed out, one needed to "worke actively by the movings of the spirit of God in thee" (21; 11).

At the height of the controversies, Hutchinson had been able to draw upon the respected authority of John Cotton who also proclaimed man's passivity in salvation. Cotton held that no one could know for sure whether he or she was elected and part of the covenant of grace. Even faith was no sure sign of salvation, wherefore one had to await the divine promise of salvation to reach assurance. For Cotton, sanctification could only be secondary evidence of assurance; however, he never denied that sanctification existed and conceded that a first stirring of faith sufficed to make someone a "visible saint," that is, eligible as a member of the Boston church. This allowed him to find a common basis with John Wilson, his fellow minister at the First Church of Boston. However, when Cotton distanced himself from Hutchinson in the fall of 1637, he remained true to his earlier claim that outward and visible circumstances provided no sure evidence of spiritual grace (Winship, *Making Heretics* 32-36), which put him in opposition to Hooker and other ministerial colleagues. The Reverend Thomas Hooker held that one needed to actively prepare the soul for saving grace, and over time this concept of preparation would become the dominating one in New England (Shuffelton 83).

The Antinomian Controversy and the transatlantic debates that followed upon it may have been one reason why Cotton moved nearer to Hooker's position in the late 1640s and early 1650s. Like Clarke, John Cotton took an active role in spreading the news of Hutchinson's miscarriage, contrary to his passive behavior regarding

Dyer's monstrous birth only a few months earlier (see chapter 2.1). One motivation for Cotton going public this time may have been the wish to make good his initial support of Anne Hutchinson. After the Cambridge Synod of September 1637, in which Hutchinson's practice of informally discussing the ministers' sermons had been officially condemned, Cotton still restrained from distancing him completely from the disputed viewpoints, which allowed the Hutchinsonians to continue drawing upon his authority. Only when Hutchinson had claimed to be able to prophesize during the court trial of November 1637 and propagated belief in mortalism during her confinement in the winter of 1637/38 (see chapter 1.1), Cotton finally became convinced that Hutchinson had gone too far. Public opinion within the Boston congregation seems to have shifted more on the side of the elders, and also Cotton dissociated himself from Hutchinson and her followers (D. Hall, ed. 369). During the church trial of March 1638, Cotton explained that he had "not bine ready to beleieve Reports" and had "bine slowe of proseedinge agaynst any of our Members for want of sufficient Testimony to prove that which hath bine layd to thear Charge" (D. Hall, ed. 369). This may have been motivation for him to prove that he had learned the lesson (cf. Winship, *Making Heretics* 167): he condemned Hutchinson's heretical viewpoints by drawing a parallel to the deformed outcome of her pregnancy. In a text published in 1651, Cotton demanded "a strong and hearty desire to meet him [Christ] in the bed of loves" for attaining salvation (36). It was necessary that the believer wished nothing more than "to have the seeds of his grace shed abroad in your hearts, and bring forth the fruits of grace to him" (*Christ* 36-37). This required a much more active approach than merely awaiting the experience of "free grace."

That Cotton referred to a birth defect to clarify his theological viewpoints had not been unusual. The motifs of biological reproduction and spiritual conversion were closely related in Puritan religious discourse (see J. Crawford 146-7). The rebirth of the soul as part of the conversion experience (which was a prerequisite for becoming a full member of the Church) was described with birth imagery, and in the 1740s the metaphor of a "new birth" was a popular one in the rhetoric of the Great Awakening (see Mahaffey 69-87, 252-4). Regeneration and conversion were metaphorically described as seed being planted in a hospitable surrounding—as male semen was planted in the female womb: sanctification was "an inward work wrought in a mans own bowels" (Bulkeley 233-4), and it was exactly there—in the bowels, or womb—

that the “principle of life” was “put into Gods people” and “the child of God is quickned” (Bakewell 21). The womb, or alternatively the heart, needed to be actively prepared for sanctification, leading to a quickening of the heart and soul. Still in the late seventeenth century, Edward Taylor, the colonial poet, minister and physician, described in his *Preparatory Meditations*, composed from the early 1680s onwards, how the congregation (the bride of Christ, so to say) became impregnated by divine seed: “The Soule’s the Wombe. Christ is the spermodote / And Saving Grace the seed cast thereinto” (80th Meditation, 356).

Especially the concepts of “preformationism” and “pre-existence” influenced Protestant covenant theology in the early modern period. The theory of pre-existence held that all parts of the fetus had already been formed at the moment of the creation of the universe. While the covenant of grace was made “only with the faithful” (Bulkeley 98), the covenant of works applied to all since all mankind had been stored in the first set of parents, Adam and Eve: the covenant of works “was made with all men, all men being in *Adams* loins, and he standing as a publick person in the room of all his children, when God made that covenant with him” (Bulkeley 98; cf. J. Edwards 416, Entry 769). The theory of preformation, which would become the predominant theory as of the early eighteenth century, suggested that the embryonic parts were formed *after* the creation of the universe but before conception; embryonic life existed in miniature form within the parent, and conception initiated a developmental process that was activated through the spirit or soul in the parent’s body.¹⁵³

As mentioned above, Cotton’s remark, made upon occasion of a lecture day, prompted Winthrop to demand more information from Clarke, and it is noteworthy that Cotton felt the need to change his initial interpretation after Clarke had provided the two reports quoted in the first part of this chapter: “Mr. Cotton, next lecture day, acknowledged his error,” and added that “he had his information by a letter from her [Hutchinson’s] husband, etc.” (*Journal* 266). Winthrop does not further explain Cotton’s error, which is all the more unfortunate since this “error” may have been the

¹⁵³ The concepts of preformation and pre-existence were closely related to the theory of “encasement” (or “emboîtement”). It provided an explanation of how the infinite number of embryos was stored until the moment of conception, holding that all embryos were encased in miniature inside one another. The main rival of both preformation and pre-existence was the theory of “epigenesis,” which propagated an automatic, sequential production of the individual parts of the embryo and therefore suited well mechanistic thinking. On these theories, see also chapter 4.4.

reason why Cotton, as far as is known today, never again referred to Dyer's or Hutchinson's miscarriage in his writings (cf. Schutte 100-1).

John Clarke's detailed description of Hutchinson's mole seems to have contradicted Cotton's earlier conclusions, and we can only speculate about the reasons. Cotton's statement (probably quoted from the report given by William Hutchinson via letter writing) that the "monstrous birth" consisted only "of man's seed" but lacked "any thing from the woman" corresponds with the so-called dual or two-seed theory that postulated that both males and females needed to contribute seed for gestation (see Boylan, 92-110; Fissell 187; Laqueur 25-62). Medical authorities such as Hippocrates and Galen had argued that both the mother and the father produced and contributed seed and that the child was the result of the combination of these two fluids. As Culpeper formulated it in his popular midwifery manual, "[i]n the act of Copulation, the Woman spends her Seed aswel as the Man, and both are united to make the Conception" (*Directory* 56). Male seed, however, was regarded as stronger than female seed: it possessed more heat (Crooke 216-7; Rueff 10), wherefore it had the greater part in forming the new being. Female seed depended on the heat and impetus of the male for conception: the seed of man was "the chief efficient, and the beginning of action, motion, and generation" (Lemnius, First Book, VI, 18). It was the male who provided the necessary "movement" and the "form" of the fetus (Aristotle I, XX, 729a; cf. IV, I, 766a); therefore, claimed Aristotle, "a male is male in virtue of a particular ability, and a female in virtue of a particular inability" (IV, I, 766a).¹⁵⁴ Although male seed was attributed the greater part in generation, early embryologists took pains to stress that "the womans seed doth yeeld and afford the like help and furtherance, in framing the Feature" (Rueff 10; cf. Lemnius, First Book, VI, 18). Also Crooke maintained that women produced seed "which hath in it some operative or actiue faculty" (285; cf. 283-6). Even in Aristotelian theory women contributed substantially to the forming of the fetus: they provided the raw material to which male seed gave form: "the female provides the body, in other words, the material" (Aristotle I, XX, 729a).

¹⁵⁴ Aristotle is said to have propagated the so-called one-seed theory, holding that only males contributed seed, but there are also passages in Aristotle's work indicating the possibility of women producing seed, too (Aristotle I, II, 716 a; I, XIX, 727a; II, III, 737a); see Boylan 83-4, 92-110. Aristotle postulated that monstrosity was caused "when the movements [that come from the male] relapse and the material [that come from the female] does not get mastered" (IV, III, 769b).

John Cotton may have come across the two-seed theory in one of the many learned tracts he had read. Cotton held a Bachelor of Divinity degree, which was awarded after seven years of study in addition to the Master of Arts. He was familiar with Galenic physiology, Aristotelian physics, and medieval natural philosophers. The early colonials' state of knowledge on medicine was heterogeneous. Many possessed at least a reasonable amount of lay knowledge, and there was an eclectic combination of theories of ancient Greece and Rome and medieval and early modern European learned culture and cheap print. The writings of Aristotle or Galen as well as occult doctrines continued to exert influence up to the eighteenth century.¹⁵⁵ The dual-seed theory, for example, was known due to works such as Helkiah Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia*, an influential treaty on conception and fetal nourishment. Several works on midwifery, generation, and anatomy circulated in Puritan New England from 1630 onwards, e.g. the anonymously published *Aristoteles Master-piece* (first ed. 1615), a crude version of Aristotelian theories, or Nicholas Culpeper's popular *English Physician* (or, *English Physician Enlarged*; first published in 1652).¹⁵⁶ And, last but not least, Cotton "had known other monstrous births" than that of Dyer, as Winthrop noted in his journal (*Journal* 254), so the topic was not completely new to him.

Cotton may have implied with his statement that the "twenty-seven several lumps of man's seed" were "without any alteration, or mixture of any thing from the woman" that only the father had contributed seed when Hutchinson's child was conceived. But while Cotton's statement suited early modern theories on seed (that demanded that women, too, contributed to the forming of the fetus), it contradicted common theories of moles. As shown in the first part of this chapter, Clarke's detailed reports (of which Cotton learned after his initial comment) amounted to the diagnosis that Hutchinson's "lumps" were to be considered a mole, and Hutchinson's failed pregnancy showed characteristics of both true and false moles. Although writers like Guillemneau stressed that "the man must adde somewhat" to "true" moles, he stated that these were created *not* due to an overabundance of male seed but

¹⁵⁵ On the influence of these concepts on colonial settlers, see Bodemer, "Natural"; Burns, *Science* 121-32; D. Hall, *Worlds* 5-6; Stearns, *Science* 8-18.

corrupt or lack of male seed—and precisely not lack of “any thing from the woman”: such moles were “bred when the mans seed is weake, barren, imperfect, or in little quantitie”; the seed then was “choked through the abundance of the monstrous bloud,” which was “vnfit for the framing of a child” (*Child-birth* 14). The cause of the “Veins and Membranes” that were produced in the case of “true” moles thus was “a fault in the forming faculty” of “the mans seed” (Sharp 107). Since male seed—“the formal cause,” that is, “the Work-master” guiding the framing—was missing, the woman produced “a strange deformed shape,” explained Lemnius (First Book, chapter 8, 23; cf. Rueff 138-9). Also theories on “false” moles are not fully compatible with Cotton’s statement, since with false moles the mother contributed rather too much (water, or moisture), or lacked heat, which was a common characteristic of female bodies according to early modern physicians.

In the early modern period, many a Protestant theologian struggled with medical theories of conception. Galen’s view that women, too, contributed seed, for example, endangered the concept of Christ being born free of sin. If Mary had contributed seed in the procreation of Jesus, she would have passed on her corrupt human nature to the incarnation of God on earth. John Calvin, however, favored Galen’s two-seed theory, since it allowed arguing for the full humanity of Christ (Chamberlain 296-8). In the first half of the eighteenth century, Jonathan Edwards, the preacher and missionary who played an important role in the Great Awakening (see Lang 72-106), combined theories on embryology with his views on redemption. Edwards, too, stressed Mary’s sinful nature, but he found a way to argue nevertheless for Christ’s superior holiness, stating that although “Christ was conceived . . . of the substance of a mother that was one of the corrupt race of mankind,” yet “that which was conceived and formed must needs be a perfectly holy thing,” the reason being that it was “conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost” (414, Entry 767; cf. Chamberlain 301-6).

To conclude, Cotton’s statement quoted above was with high probability primarily motivated by his theological viewpoints, although medical theories may have had some influence. Maybe Cotton became aware that his interpretation did not

¹⁵⁶ Culpeper was an influential medical writer at the time, wherefore it can be assumed that also his *Directory for Midwives* (1651), which includes a summary of contemporary explanations of monstrous births, had been circulating in the Bay colony and adjacent areas. On these publications and their availability in New England, see Beall, “Aristotle’s”; Dillon 135-6; Stearns, *Science* 15-17; Watson 75-79, 88.

fit common theories on moles after Clarke had provided his second report, which caused him to revise his statement. Cotton adapted his interpretation, as the commentators of Anne Greene's failed pregnancy had done according to *Newes from the Dead* (1651): Greene had been hanged for infanticide in 1650 but came to live again shortly before being dissected, which was not only considered a "divine providence" (Watkins 3) but changed the interpretation of the whole case—while at first it had been believed that Greene had killed her child, afterwards it was resolved that the child must have been stillborn.

Burnham ("Anne"), who, like Traister, analyzed the passage in Winthrop's journal dealt with here, links Cotton's initial conclusion regarding Hutchinson's "monstrous birth" said to consist of "twenty-seven several lump's of man's seed" (Winthrop, *Journal* II: 264) with the frequent use of the term *to vent* and the occasional use of the metaphor of strangers in the context of the Antinomian Controversy. Already during the November court examination, Winthrop had stated that Hutchinson "had vented divers of her strange opinions" (D. Hall, ed. 317). In the church trial, she was said to have "vented herself" by her claim of immediate revelation (D. Hall, ed. 344; cf. 343).¹⁵⁷ In Burnham's view, the usage of terms such as *to vent* hints at underlying conflicts caused by differing economic and theological viewpoints; these terms

suggest the dangers to reproduction posed by circulation among and penetration by strangers, dangers linked consistently in contemporary accounts of the Antinomian Controversy with the mixed economic, theological, and social associations of venting. ("Anne" 354).

To vent had various meanings in the seventeenth century; the two dominating ones were "uttering, discharging, or emitting words" and "to sell or vend, to dispose of commodities by sale, by finding purchasers in a market" (Burnham, "Anne" 342; cf. D. Hall, "Readers" 128; Round 148-50). As far as socio-economic associations are concerned, the charge that Hutchinson "vented" her opinions on the public marketplace reflects the conflict between the Godly and the merchant class, a conflict that troubled the Bay colony from its founding up to the Salem witchcraft crisis and

¹⁵⁷ The term *to vent* and related expressions reappeared in various narratives of the Antinomian Controversy, see for example Hubbard, *General History* 281; Johnson 122; *New Englands First Fruits* 21; Winthrop, *Short Story* (1644), The Preface.

beyond.¹⁵⁸ The merchants were, in the view of the Godly, constantly tempted to the sin of greed by disposing of goods on which the settlers were dependent: “This evil was very notorious among all sorts of people,” Winthrop noted in late 1640, “that most men walked by in all their commerce, to buy as cheap as they could, and to sell as dear” (*Journal* 342). A large proportion of the merchant class was supporting the Hutchinsonian faction, and, like Anne Hutchinson, they were focusing on the private sphere and on private interests—Hutchinson by laying the focus on the covenant of grace,¹⁵⁹ and the merchants on personal profit.

The critique of “venting” thus had not only an economic but a religious and socio-political dimension. By venting her opinions, Hutchinson entered the male-dominated public space, thereby overstepping her role as married woman and female member of the congregation. In the Christian hemisphere, women were restricted to a specific form of production: wives were expected to produce offspring, domestic goods, and a caring home (N. Miller 161). Hutchinson and Dyer failed in these duties and displayed an inappropriate degree of activeness. Hutchinson’s mole, consisting of multiple lumps of flesh, seemed to point out that she had been too active sexually and in planting seed in others. Also in making up her mind on religious matters she seems to have lacked the restraint deemed appropriate for females—a topic that will be explored more deeply in chapter 3.3. During the church trial of March 1638, Anne Hutchinson was accused by Hugh Peters of defying her proper role: she had “stept out of your place, *you have rather bine a Husband than a Wife and a preacher than a Hearer; and a Magistrate than a Subject*” (D. Hall, ed. 383). Hutchinson had been addicted too much to secrecy both as far as the state of salvation and the burial of Dyer’s stillborn daughter were concerned (see the previous chapter) and too active in the public sphere.

A telling example of this way of thinking is provided by Thomas Shepard (1605–1649), minister of Cambridge and a dedicated opponent of the Hutchinsonians.

¹⁵⁸ See for example Bailyn 20-21, 40-43; Breen 17-56; Burnham, “Anne”; T. Cooper 196-7; Demos; Gura, “Early” 600; Staloff 40-42; Ziff 49-77.

¹⁵⁹ Burnham maintains that Hutchinson’s belief in the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost in a person (see above) highlights the emergence of the concept of subjectivity that locates religious experience invisibly within the self (“Anne” 344, 347-8). In this context it is noteworthy that Peter Bulkeley resorted to the term *to vent* in 1646 when criticizing what could be termed the individualization of religion as a consequence of subjective experiences: “Whiles every one is forward to vent his own imagination, and hath libertie so to doe, every one saying, I have seene, I have seene, (when indeed they have seene nothing but the vanitie and lying imagination of their own heart) they fill the world with idle fancies, which breed questions, rather then [sic] godly edifying.” (104).

During the church trial of March 1638, Shepard had accounted Anne Hutchinson “a verye dayngerous Woman” because of “the Flewentness of her Tonge and her Willingness to open herselfe and to divulge her Opinions and to sowe her seed in us that are but . . . Strayngers to her” (D. Hall, ed. 353). In Shepard’s view, Hutchinson’s seed was not used for producing offspring (as would have suited her role as a female member of the congregation) but for corrupting others. A similar standpoint was taken by Peter Bulkeley, who had sided with Shepard in the fight against the Antinomians: he attributed in hindsight the “trouble in these American Churches” to “the inordinate activeness, and impetuous violence of some busie spirits” who were “deeming all others (except themselves) to be wholly ignorant of the Covenant of grace, and to be shut up under a Covenant of workes” (To the Reader). Instead of sticking to “sound doctrine,” everybody made up his or her own ideas and “fables” “after their owne lusts” and assumed the role of “teachers,” as Bakewell formulated it in 1643 (sig. A2).

Hutchinson wrongfully took over the role of Christ, claiming all the while to plant the seed of grace in the heart of believers. In Hutchinson, there consequently was not the seed of grace involved but rather the contrary: “Satan” had been sowing “evil seed,” that is, “the seeds of error in the hearts of some that was of very good esteem,” as John Hull noted in his diary when writing on the Antinomian Controversy (170); and, even worse, the Hutchinsonians spread this “evil seed.” Had God not stopped Hutchinson in disseminating her dangerous opinions, the whole church would have been infected and defeated.

While ministers such as John Clarke obviously possessed far-reaching medical knowledge, Thomas Shepard was all but a preacher-physician. The decisive parameters regarding medical knowledge of individuals were gender, personal interest, and previous education. Shepard seems to have had only basic knowledge of medicine and showed no heightened interest in the field, apart from the various occasions when disease and death affected his private life¹⁶⁰ or when he could make

¹⁶⁰ For examples, see Shepard’s “The Autobiography” (38, 42). It is only a conjecture, but maybe Shepard felt a certain restraint to use personal tragedies such as failed pregnancies for religious disputes. Shepard knew how it was to fear for the well-being of an unborn child. When his wife had been pregnant with their son Thomas, to whom his autobiography is dedicated, she fell down the stairs, which led to great worries about the infant in her womb (“The Autobiography” 36). However, Cotton Mather is known to have lost his first-born son soon after birth due to a severe birth defect, and this did not hinder him to comment critically twice in written form on Dyer’s miscarriage a few years thereafter (see chapters 4.3 and 4.4).

use of medical or bodily theories for enriching his sermons with powerful metaphors. Shepard had grown up in a rural area in England, in Towcester, a “profane, ignorant town” (Shepard, “The Autobiography” 42), and in his youth he dedicated himself to the study of Latin and Greek. In 1620, at the age of fifteen, he entered Emmanuel College in Cambridge. Like John Cotton, Shepard was mainly concerned with theological issues.

Shepard’s comment that Hutchinson posed a danger to the colony because she sowed “her seed” to “Strayngers” was made during the church trial, in the context of a debate on the public versus the private sphere. In both trials, Hutchinson’s opponents had had their troubles in proving that she had overstepped her role by preaching publicly. During the November trial, Hutchinson had displayed an acute awareness of the fine differences between the public and the private sphere: “It is one thing for me to come before a public magistracy and there to speak what they would have me to speak and another when a man comes to me in a way of friendship privately” (D. Hall, ed. 319; cf. 314-9). Winthrop countered that she had “not spoken in a corner but in a public assembly, and though things were spoken in private yet now coming to us, we are to deal with them as public” (319). During the church trial the problem resurfaced. One of the issues dealt with was the “question of whether the ministers could testify publicly if they had not first dealt with her ‘privately’” (349). Hutchinson continued to insist that her counseling was done in private and, therefore, not to be used against her in court. She accused her opponents of bringing to public her opinions on for example mortalism that were meant and asked for in a private setting (D. Hall, ed. 349-54).¹⁶¹

In England, private meetings to pray and discuss Scripture verses had been quite common for nonconformist Congregational churches, and that these meetings were led by women had not been unusual either. The established church in England did not support Puritans in practicing their religion openly, so religious matters were often discussed privately in half-secret circles as part of an underground scene. Furthermore, common prayer and Scripture reading was deemed good practice in Puritan households. Early colonial families were urged to teach their children “perfectly to read the English tongue” and to “catechize” them in religion (*Book of the General Laws* 11). Literacy and knowledge of the Bible was the best weapon

¹⁶¹ On the private versus public topic, see also chapter 3.1.

against “popish tyranny” (D. Hall, “Readers” 119-31; cf. D. Hall, *Cultures* 93-95). However, that the meetings at Hutchinson’s home were at times attended by 60 and more people—including males and females—was a practice considered “disorderly”: the Cambridge Synod of September 1637 reached the conclusion that

though women might meet (some few together) to pray and edify one another; yet such a set assembly, (as was then in practice at Boston) where sixty or more did meet every week, and one woman (in a prophetical way, by resolving questions of doctrine, and expounding scripture) took upon her the whole exercise, was agreed to be disorderly, and without rule. (Winthrop, *Journal* 234)

As it later was codified in the *General Laws of Massachusetts* of 1648, it was allowed to hold “private meetings for edification in Religion amongst christians of all sorts of people,” if it were “without just offence, both for number, time, place and other circumstances” (19).

Shepard clearly regarded it as inappropriate that an ordinary, female member of the congregation offered theological interpretations, no matter whether it was done publicly or in a private setting. For him, the Scriptures contained the only legitimate version of God’s words, and it was unconceivable for him that someone other than a minister took it upon him or her to interpret the Scriptures. Shepard clarified his standpoint regarding lay persons making up their own mind on theological issues when preaching on the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.¹⁶² Shepard addressed in particular the questions of assurance and salvation, and in doing so, he played on the double meaning of the term *misconception* (which was often referred to in descriptions of moles and other birth defects, as shown above). In one of his weekly sermons on Matthew 25.1-13, delivered between June 1636 and May 1640 (see *The Parable of the Ten Virgins Opened and Applied*, 1796), Shepard reminded his listeners that “Christ is not revealed, but in his word of the gospel preached; all your conceptions without it, are idolatrous and monstrous; you neither see nor apprehend Christ, nor Christ you” (325).

Whether Shepard thereby referred to the “monstrous birth” of Dyer or Hutchinson cannot be determined with full certainty. Later, in a letter published in London in 1645, Shepard again used expressions that could be brought into connection with these widely known prodigies by attentive readers (see chapter 3.2).

¹⁶² On Shepard’s sermons preached during the Antinomian Controversy, see Valerius 198; Winship, *Marking Heretics* 84-6.

It is certain, however, that Edward Howes, an English Antinomian who frequently exchanged letters with John Winthrop Jr. (see chapter 3.1), used a similar stylistic device in the spring of 1639 when commenting on the failed pregnancies of Dyer and Hutchinson: there were “many monstrous imaginations of Christ,” he remarked, leading to a “multiplicitie of conceptions” (506).¹⁶³ Setting his priorities on theology may have been the reason why no explicit comment on one or both of the monstrous births is known by Shepard.¹⁶⁴

The motif of wrong conceptions that turned up in Shepard’s sermons was closely associated with the notion of distorted speech. The Antinomian Controversy also was a battle over words confronting two different ways of speaking, as various scholars have pointed out.¹⁶⁵ Already early modern contemporaries had been aware that there were conflicting styles of speech involved. In a letter to John Winthrop Jr., Edward Howes wrote on 21 March 1637 that he had “heard much” about “the fight amonge yourselues, *Bellum linguarum*, the strife of tongues” (504). The method that Hutchinson had used for building her follow-up was despicable to her opponents, since she seemed to combine words and meanings just as it suited her aims. In the course of the November trial, after Hutchinson had claimed to have had immediate revelations, Winthrop commented:

Ey it is the most desperate enthusiasm in the world, for nothing but a word comes to her mind and then an application is made which is nothing to the purpose, and this is her revelations when it is impossible but that the word and spirit should speak the same thing. (D. Hall, ed. 342)¹⁶⁶

During the Church trial, when Hutchinson was confronted by Shepard with her view “that the spirit of God was in Beleevers,” she claimed to have “mistake[n]” certain words: “My Judgment is not altered though my Expression alters,” which John Wilson considered “most dayngerous” (D. Hall, ed. 378). For Hutchinson, words and

¹⁶³ In the same letter Howes had established a connection between Dyer’s monstrous birth and an earthquake, see chapter 2.1.

¹⁶⁴ Also Shepard’s journal (starting only in 1640, see “The Journal,” ed. McGiffert, 8, 82) contains no reference to the failed pregnancies of Dyer and Hutchinson. For Schutte, Shepard therefore is an example of the restraint and reserve with which Puritans interpreted prodigious events such as the two monstrous births (99, incl. n46).

¹⁶⁵ See Burnham, “Anne,” e.g. 347-50; Caldwell 345-58; Koehler; Tobin 253. The power of speech will turn up again in chapters 3.3 and 4.3.

expressions were not the same as judgments, the thing represented was not the same as the word representing it. Decades later, the English philosopher John Locke would postulate similarly in his famous *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (1690) that words were signs of ideas and that the connection between words and ideas was arbitrary (187-9; cf. 208-27). Puritan ministers, however, could not accept such loose connections between word and meaning: giving up the referential bond between word and denoted object would lead to the creation of vain idols and misleading conclusions (Roberts-Miller 115-6).¹⁶⁷ As advocates of the plain style, New England Puritans showed distrust towards the use of stylistic devices such as metaphors, even though they used them for their sermons. To Puritans, metaphor implied a discontinuity between a word and its context and thus opened up a dangerous array of interpretive possibilities.¹⁶⁸

Fear of religious misconceptions uttered and spread by females may have contributed to the founding of today's Harvard College. In late 1637, at the time of Wheelwright's and Hutchinson's trial, the Court reached the decision that a college should be erected in Newtown. The location was chosen in recognition of Thomas Shepard's fight against the Antinomian dangers: Shepard, a graduate of Emmanuel College at Cambridge in England, lived in Newton, which soon would be renamed Cambridge.¹⁶⁹ Harvard had been established so that "a Learned and Able *Ministry* might be Educated" (I. Mather, *Magnalia* IV, Part I, 126) and strengthened against lay attacks. Thomas Shepard and those involved in founding the college favored a hierarchical form of dissemination of knowledge that could be controlled by Puritan ministers (Cassuto 68). By contrast, the Antinomians tended more to what could be termed a vertical model of knowledge spreading—one that was neither authorized nor controllable. The orthodoxy wanted an institution that provided one legitimate

¹⁶⁶ Years later, in 1653, Edward Johnson commented similarly on Anne Hutchinson in his *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England* that she was a woman "being very bold in her strange Revelations and mis-applications" (132); Johnson possibly referred to the wrong application of meanings. On Johnson, see chapter 3.2.

¹⁶⁷ As Burnham points out, the accusation that Hutchinson did not equate opinions with words found a contemporary equivalent in writings on commerce where it was increasingly argued that the value and the exact weight of a coin need not correspond. Winthrop and others tried to counter this development by insisting on fixed prices ("Anne" 347-50).

¹⁶⁸ On colonial Puritan concepts of speech and rhetoric, see for example Bercovitch, *American*, esp. chapters two and three; Kamensky 17-42; Kibbey 27-35, 65-91; Roberts-Miller 98-108. On metaphor in discourses on monstrosity, see chapter 2.1.

¹⁶⁹ On the founding history of Harvard, see I. Cohen, *Some* 23-25; Hoeveler 24-8; Morison; Winship, *Making Heretics* 186.

version of Scripture interpretation. This was all the more important since those who “bought” the wares Hutchinson vended lacked a deeper understanding and thus needed all the more a guiding hand.

Shepard was concerned that Hutchinson corrupted the souls of those who were instable in their religious convictions. During the church trial, when Hutchinson’s belief in mortalism of the soul was discussed, Shepard expressed his worries that Hutchinson was “likely with her fluent Tongue and forwardnes in Expressions to seduce and draw away many, Espetially simple Weomen of her owne sex” (D. Hall, ed. 365). During the November trial, Hutchinson had been accused that her meetings “may seduce many simple souls that resort unto you” (D. Hall, ed. 316). Edmund Browne sent this viewpoint across the Atlantic Ocean in September 1638 (see chapter 3.1), writing in a letter that “Mrs. Hutchinson was and is a woman who led aside silly men and women into strange conclusions” by her revelations (229).

Hutchinson spoke a different language and thus created a different narrative than those clinging to more “orthodox” theological doctrines. This narrative was not based on paternal authority but authored by a woman who came to be accused of having mothered heretical opinions. For men like Thomas Shepard, a churchman, or John Winthrop, a colonial official concerned with maintaining order within the colony, this was not to be tolerated, all the more since the reputation of the Bay colony was at risk. Soon, a comprehensive report of the events would be published that presented the ruling elite’s version of the Antinomian Controversy. This narrative and the various texts that challenged it in the contested transatlantic public sphere will be analyzed in the following part of this study.

III A *Short Story* turns into a long controversy (1637–1651)

3.1 Publishing New World prodigies:¹⁷⁰ John Winthrop's and Thomas Weld's *A Short Story*

“For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.”

--John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity” (1630), 91--

By mid-seventeenth century, the story of the two monstrous births had become part of both oral and print culture in England and New England. News on Dyer's miscarriage was passed on in stages, moving slowly but surely from female circles of gossiping and oral ways of news-spreading to the local, male-dominated public sphere. In this respect, Dyer's case resembles English reports on monstrous births, in which testimonies usually were given first in oral form by women attending the laboring scene and then were passed on via a local minister to noteworthy town dwellers. The circle widened—from local village to neighboring regions—and the social level rose. An oral report was transformed into a written account by males and processed up to the highest strata of authority, just to be consumed again by ordinary men and women. Similarly, news on the two New England prodigious births quickly traveled from the small town of Boston across the Atlantic Ocean by way of letters, manuscripts, and oral reports, finally to reach the London metropolis where it was incorporated into printed records and possibly discussed anew in private households and public places. As a nineteenth-century historian put it, the two monstrous births “were not only thoroughly examined by physicians and magistrates, but were even

¹⁷⁰ Sievers chose a similar title for the chapter in which she delineates how news of Mary Dyer's monstrous birth was passed along: “‘Famously Known as Any Thing’: Publishing a New England Natural Wonder” (214-31). While Sievers focuses on “the processes whereby colonial wonder narratives became transformed into elite philosophical discourse” in the period from the late 1630s up to the 1710s (230), I focus in this chapter solely on how the tale of the two monstrous births found its way into print for the first time, focusing on the late 1630s up to the mid-1640s; for the period thereafter, see chapter 3.4 and Part IV (esp. chapters 4.2 and 4.3), including an exploration of what Sievers calls “elite philosophical discourse.”

discoursed from pulpits, and made public over Christendom” (G. Ellis 328). The decisive factor for this transatlantic exchange of monster lore was a text printed in London in several editions: *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines, that Infected the Churches of New England* (1644). The various discourses in which it was embedded as well as its reception history form the subject of Part III of this study, its publication history being the main topic of interest of this chapter.

Publishing the events of the Antinomian Controversy was a strategic move whereby the monster story was turned into “authoritative public news” (Nord 11). As shown in chapter 2.1, Winthrop regarded birth as a realm with relevance for the public sphere, and as shown in chapter 2.2, Hutchinson had already been accused during her trials of having preached publicly. *A Short Story* served to make clear that what Hutchinson had considered private matters had public relevance.¹⁷¹ Even if there may have been some reservation whether it was legitimate “to have revived” the names of those “that acted in our troubles,” as was explained in “To the Reader” of *A Short Story*, they were published nevertheless: the “names” of those who may have repented in the meantime “are already in Print,” and “the necessity of the times call for it, and it’s requisite that Gods great works should be make knowne” (Weld, in Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, A2). Since Anne Hutchinson had broached her heresies both publicly and privately, these errors had to be countered both in the public and the private sphere, it was claimed: Hutchinson’s multiple monstrous births as well as her erroneous opinions “were publike, and not in a corner mentioned, so this is now come to bee known and famous over all these Churches, and a great part of the world” (Weld, in Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface).

The basis for publication of *A Short Story* had already been laid at the height of the Antinomian Controversy. Winthrop seems to have sent documentation of Hutchinson’s November trial of 1637 to London immediately after its conclusion, with the intention of making it accessible to a broader public:

All the proceedings of this court against these persons were set down at large, with the reasons and other observations, and were sent into England to be published there, to the

¹⁷¹ On the public versus private topic in relation to the trials, the monstrous births, and the publication history of *A Short Story*, see Breen 17-56, esp. 49-56; Ingebreetsen; Lang 3-4, 35-36; Nord 11, 29-32; M. Norton, *Founding* 378-85; cf. 20-24; Round 150; C. Smith 448; Valerius 181-2; Winship, *Making Heretics* 171. On the “gendered definitions of *public* and *private*” in the Anglo-American world from 1640 to 1760, see M. Norton, *Separated* passim.

end that <all> our godly friends might not be discouraged from coming to us, etc.
(Winthrop, *Journal* 242)

Dyer's miscarriage, which is included in the first edition of *A Short Story* (published with a different title), had become known to a wider public only in the second half of March 1638 (see chapter 1.1), so Winthrop must have sent further material—including Dyer's monster tale—to England in late March or early April of that year (C. Adams 19). The contents of this mailing probably also formed the basis of the text stored in the Public Record Office in London mentioned in chapter 2.1; it gives October 1637 as date (when Dyer's child was born) and "John Wentthrop" as author. This description of Dyer's malformed infant ([Winthrop], "A monstrous birth" 37)¹⁷² strongly resembles Winthrop's report in his journal, wherefore it seems credible that it is based upon a text authored by Winthrop.

It is safe to assume that Winthrop had in mind a publication with persuasive intent. From the beginning of settlement, the Bay colonials had been aware of being under critical observation in England. During the court trial of Anne Hutchinson (see chapter 1.1), when it was discussed whether unanimous consent of the church members was necessary for officially admonishing her, the Reverend Zechariah Symmes had called for taking unanimous and vigorous action in view of the bad reputation that a lack of a firm stance could lead to abroad:

I fear that if by any meanes this should be carried over into England, that in New England and in such a Congregation there was soe much spoken and soe many Questions made about *soe playne an Article of our fayth as the Resurrection is*, it will be one of the greatest Dishonors to Jesus Christ and of Reproch to these [sic] Churches that hath bine done since we came heather. (D. Hall, ed. 367)

These worries were not without reason. From the onset, both the congregational model of church order as practiced in the Bay colony and the legitimacy of its ruling body have been put into doubt. In the spring of 1637, the Board of Lords Commission for Foreign Plantations maintained that "there was no lawful authority in force" in the colony "from his majesty" (neither "mediate" nor "immediate"), and Governor Winthrop received a commission issued by the Board creating a provisional government for New England (221). About one year later, the colonists feared that "a

¹⁷² Almost no context information is given, apart from a short description of the child's mother: "One Mary Dyer wife of William Dyer sometymes Milliner in the New Exchange in London, being both young and very comely persons" ([Winthrop], "A monstrous birth" 37).

general governour” would be sent from England (256), and the Board demanded the patent of the colony to be returned (Winthrop, *Journal* 266-7). The colony was in danger of losing much of its independence by being subjected more directly to the authority of the king, which would inevitably result in the disempowering of the civil and spiritual authorities.

As will be elaborated upon in this and the following chapter, starting in the mid-1630s and intensifying in the 1640s, a transatlantic dispute on the way of gathering churches unfolded. The two basic forms of church government within Reformed Calvinist theology were Congregationalism and Presbyterianism.¹⁷³ As the term *Presbyterian* (derived from the Greek word for “elder”) suggests, Presbyterian churches were governed by an assembly of elders. Elders of differing local congregations formed synods and assemblies that were responsible for church discipline within the various congregations. In the late 1630s, reformers had begun arguing for organizing the Church of England in the same way as the Church of Scotland, from where Presbyterianism originated primarily, and in the early Civil War years Presbyterianism became more and more influential in England. The alternative form of church organization, Congregationalism, is closely related to the nonconformist religious movement that arose in the wake of the Puritan Reformation. In Congregationalist church governance as practiced in the Bay colony each local church congregation decided autonomously on ecclesiastical affairs and chose its ministers and elders. In church matters external authorities were repudiated; the only guidance accepted was the word of God as laid out in the Scriptures. The theoretical foundations of Congregationalism had been laid in the late sixteenth century by the Elizabethan theologian Robert Browne; in the decades following, John Cotton shaped the New England variant of Congregationalism.

Winthrop probably prepared the material published later as the main part of *A Short Story* with the intention to anticipate criticism of the colony’s dealing with the Antinomian Controversy, because this dispute could easily be interpreted as a failure of the congregational system. But it was difficult to influence public opinion in England in a systematic way. First of all, when Winthrop wanted the material to be published, he had to rely on printers in London: in 1638 there had not yet been

¹⁷³ For a good overview on the differences between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, see J. Cooper, *Tenacious* 68-87, and Middlekauff 44-45.

established a printing press in the colonies (see chapter 1.2).¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, in the late 1630s and early 1640s, public interest in England had been diverted. Charles I and Archbishop Laud tried to establish the Episcopalian system of the Church of England in Scotland, homeland of Presbyterianism. The ensuing conflicts of 1639 and 1640, known as the Bishops' Wars due to the Presbyterians' opposition to this form of church organization, demanded their part of attention (see Coffey, "Toleration" 44). England was on the brink of civil war, wherefore the public in England did rather not focus on potential disorders within a colony on the eastern shore of the North American continent. This diversion of public interest in England may have been the reason why Winthrop's manuscript remained unpublished from 1638 to 1644 (C. Adams 17-22).

However, news on the two miscarriages reached England in multiple ways and through diverse channels of oral and informal communication. In June 1638, the famous English sea traveler John Josselyn learned about Dyer's monstrous birth soon after it had become publicly known during one of his voyages, shortly before his arrival at Boston harbor. Frequent travelers such as sailors, merchants, colonial officials or other seafaring gentlemen played an important part in gathering and passing on news. The harbors were not only ideal places for the exchange of goods but also of information from adjacent territories or regions beyond the sea. On 29 June, Josselyn noted that he and his crew were told by other sailors "of a general Earth-quake in *New England*" and "of the Birth of a Monster at *Boston*, in the *Massachusetts-Bay* a mortality" (11). On 30 September 1638, Josselyn received a more detailed report (and his short description of the person who delivered it suits common clichés of Puritans as "grave and sober"):

. . . a grave and sober person described the Monster to me, that was born at *Boston* of one Mrs. *Dyer* a great Sectarie, the *Nine and twentieth of June*, it was (*it should seem*) *without a head, but having horns like a Beast, and ears, scales on a rough skin like a fish called a Thornback, legs and claws like a Hawke, and in other respects as a Woman-child.* (17-18)¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Even when this had happened in 1639, large volumes still had to be printed in England for decades since they exceeded the available resources in the colonies. Until about 1740, the printers of early New England produced mostly small-scale imprints dealing with local topics (Reese 356).

¹⁷⁵ The 29th of June is identical to the date of Josselyn's first note on the "monster," so the date refers rather to this entry than to the date of birth.

By June 1638, at about the time when Josselyn heard about Dyer's monster for the first time, news of it had already reached the shores of England. Walter Yonge, a Puritan lawyer and landowner situated in Devon with a financial interest in the colonies,¹⁷⁶ noted a description of the dead infant in his journal. The passage by ship took about two months, thus the report must have been sent to England by end of April the latest (Pearl and Pearl 22), wherefore it is possible that the content of the letter is identical to the material sent to England in late March or early April, as described above.

Yonge's journal entry "A Monster borne" gives a good impression of how information on prodigious events was passed on through a network of correspondents and how letters including news from the New World were passed on from hand to hand. The report, Yonge noted, "was in a letter to Mr. Hookes 19 of June 1638, related unto him by S[i]r W. Earle, who sawe Mr Wynthrops letter" (Yonge 36). Thus Dyer's miscarriage was dealt with in a letter from Winthrop, which somehow found its way to Sir Walter Earle (or "Erle"), a wealthy landowner in the county of Dorset; Sir Earle, like Yonge a man with a strong interest in colonial matters,¹⁷⁷ then related the story via a letter to the Reverend William Hooke, the vicar of Axmouth in Devon, who would leave for the North American continent in 1639.¹⁷⁸ According to Yonge, Winthrop's letter was "with the governors hande to it and therein the picture of the monster" (Yonge 36)—apparently one of the many witnesses had made a sketch of the corpse, but, unfortunately, this drawing has not come down to us (Pearl and Pearl 24).

A few months after news on Dyer's monstrous birth had reached England, reports on Hutchinson's miscarriage followed. About the time when Winthrop started his communications with John Clarke on Hutchinson's failed pregnancy (see chapters 1.1 and 2.2), Edmund Browne, co-founder of the town of Sudbury, south of Concord,

¹⁷⁶ Yonge served as a justice in local government and later was elected to the Long Parliament. He participated in American colonial investment, and also his journal, covering the years 1627 through 1642, testifies to his continued interest in the colonies (Pearl and Pearl 22-23).

¹⁷⁷ Sir Earle had been a shareholder in the Virginia Company. In March 1625, he was chosen governor of the Adventurers, a kind of precursor of the Massachusetts Bay Company. In 1614, he was elected to the Commons and turned into a leader of the Puritan group; as a MP for Weymouth of the Long Parliament he belonged to the extreme radicals; in 1640 he was imprisoned (Pearl and Pearl 23-24).

¹⁷⁸ Hooke was a devoted Independent and anti-Episcopalian Puritan who attracted rising criticism by Laud and his bishop, Joseph Hall. In the overseas colonies, he served as pastor and teacher. Later, he returned to England, where he became chaplain under Cromwell and a congregational minister and served as an agent for the Bay colony (Pearl and Pearl 24).

where he served as a minister,¹⁷⁹ mentioned the episode in a letter dated 7 September 1638 to Sir Simonds D'Ewes of Suffolk, England. D'Ewes was a wealthy and devoted Puritan learned in law with a strong interest in news from abroad. Around 1637 the latest, D'Ewes thought about travelling to Massachusetts, wherefore he requested information on the political situation in New England and its potential for investment and business.¹⁸⁰ D'Ewes opposed Anabaptism and Arminianism (McGee 149-59, 166-7), wherefore it is not surprising that Browne informed D'Ewes about the “many false conceptions in a lump” (E. Browne 230) of a woman who increasingly came to be seen in connection with Anabaptism (see chapter 3.4). In the letter to D'Ewes, Edmund Browne also reported on Dyer's malformed infant, sticking basically to the details provided by the two midwives (see chapter 2.1). Browne commented that the women attending the laboring scene were “taken with great vomiting (although fasting) before the very act of bringing forth, and were sent for home with all speed because (then and not before or since) their children were taken with convulsions” (230). Browne also mentioned that at the time of delivery “there was a great stink and the bed shaken” and that the child “was stillborn, yet alive two hours before birth” (230).

By 1639, both of the New England monstrous births were known in various parts of England, as the correspondence of John Winthrop the Younger with Edward Howes confirms. Winthrop, until 1639 Governor of the Saybrook Colony and later Governor of Connecticut, spent a considerable amount of time in England and corresponded extensively across the Atlantic Ocean, among others with Sir Kenelm Digby (Cressy, *Coming Over* 209-10), an English diplomat and a founding member of the Royal Society of London. Winthrop the Younger had a strong interest in natural philosophy and alchemy as well as in spiritual matters,¹⁸¹ which explains his friendly relationship with his former fellow law student at London's Inner Temple,

¹⁷⁹ For basic biographic information on Browne, see Browne, “Letter,” ed. Emerson, 223-4. On the contents of the letter, see also chapter 1.1.

¹⁸⁰ However, D'Ewes remained in England and later became involved in the religious Wars and the Long Parliament, taking the side of the Parliamentarians. As of 1640, D'Ewes was MP for Sudbury. In 1641, he was awarded a baronetcy by Charles I, maybe to bring him on the side of the Royalists (Jordan IV: 19-24; McGee).

¹⁸¹ John Winthrop Jr. possessed quite far-reaching medical knowledge and once in a while gave advice on medical topics. He belonged to the Paracelsian group of physicians (see chapters 2.2 and 4.3), practicing alchemy and creating medical drugs on his own. He had attended some medical lectures at the University of Amsterdam, but he did not possess a doctorate of medicine (Tannenbaum 4, 5, 10-12, 14-21, 77-84; Woodward). For biographic information on Winthrop the Younger, see Black.

Edward Howes, an English alchemist and mystic who would become part of the London Antinomian underground in the 1640s. From 1637 to 1639, Winthrop and Howes (who thought about emigrating to the Bay colony), exchanged letters on the Antinomian Controversy in New England.¹⁸² Winthrop Jr. obviously had sent “2 relations of monstrous births [with high probability those of Dyer and Hutchinson] and a general earthquake” (that of 1 June 1638, see chapter 2.1) to Howes. Probably in April 1639 (Como 422),¹⁸³ Howes commented on the monstrous births in his return letter to Winthrop (“[1639]” 506), bringing them into connection with man-made notions of God (see chapter 2.2).

As these sources show, Winthrop’s letter and the material destined for publication circulated among people in England who were strongly involved in the religious and political conflicts of the time and who had a strong interest in the fate of the colonies. The passing on of letters, manuscripts and books was common practice both in Old and New England. Among the “Antinomians,” for example, books were “passed privately amongst themselves” (Bakewell flyleaf), and also during the colonial Antinomian Controversy handwritten texts related to the conflict circulated widely (Hall and Walsham 349-50). Books and manuscripts were being lent or given to each other within a network of readers with common interest.¹⁸⁴ That news of the two New England monstrous births was spread orally and via manuscript in the London metropolis is most evident, however, by two publications of the early 1640s, one including the story of Dyer’s headless baby, the other that of Hutchinson’s multiple miscarriages.

The story of Dyer’s failed pregnancy was put into print for the first time we know of in London in April 1642, rendering the work “one of the first publications of a ‘strange occurrence’ to come out of New England” (Nord 9). The tract, *Newes from New-England: Of a Most Strange and Prodigious Birth, Brought to Boston in New-England, October the 17* (n. pag.), quotes almost verbatim from Winthrop’s journal in describing Dyer’s child (see chapter 2.1), mentioning the “ears which were like an

¹⁸² On Winthrop’s relationship with Howes and for biographic information on the latter, see R. Anderson; Como 7-8; 415-23; 426; 432; 441-2; Woodward 44-50.

¹⁸³ St. George (425n81) dates the letter even more precisely: 14 April 1639.

¹⁸⁴ In “A Catalogue of Books belonging vnto Mr Increase Mather” (1664) are listed several titles that were “lent to” others (see Tuttle 24). Ginzburg showed that also members of the lower classes had access to books on a quite regular basis through reading networks (30-32); although his study covers another region (today’s Italy), Ginzburg’s findings suggest that similar networks were at work in other regions as well in the early modern period.

Apes ears”, the nose that “grew hooking upwards,” the “horns,” the “scales,” and the “sharp Talones like a fowl.” At the beginning it was pointed out that the parents were “*Mary wife of William Dier, sometimes a Citisen and Milliner in the New-Exchange, neer the city of London.*” This information obviously was taken from Winthrop’s report stored in the Public Record Office in London (see above, n172). The report is the first of six reports on monstrous births in the text.

It has been suggested that the anonymously published work was authored by Thomas Weld (c. 1595–1661), minister in Roxbury during the Antinomian Controversy (Winsser 27, incl. n34).¹⁸⁵ It was at the house of his brother, Joseph Weld, where Hutchinson had spent the winter of 1637 to 1638, between her first and second trial (see chapter 1.1). Thomas Weld therefore probably had access to more or less first-hand knowledge of both Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s miscarriage; furthermore, the subtitle of the publication gives a hint at the origin of the publication: “being a true and exact Relation, brought over April 19 1642 by a Gentleman of good worth, now resident in London.” It is known that Weld was in London when *Newes from New-England* was published; he had been dispatched to England in August 1641 with the task of securing financial support for the colony. Weld never returned to New England but remained committed to the Bay colony (Cressy, *Coming Over* 200; Winship, “Weld”).

It is improbable that Weld was responsible for the publication in its entirety. First of all, even considering the duration of the passage at sea it is difficult to explain the time gap between Weld’s arrival in London in the summer of 1641 and the date when the “Relation” was said to have been “brought over”: “April 19 1642.” Another indicator for Weld not being the sole person involved in the publication project is that the work contains examples of monstrous births from all over the European continent: from “Quieres,” Ravenna, Paris (two cases), and “the Forest Biera.” It is more plausible that it had been the printer or another person involved in the project rather than Weld who put together stories from such diverse regions. Finally, Weld himself claims in *A Short Story*, published two years later than the *Newes from New-England* (see below), that the “names” of those responsible for the disorder “are already in Print without any act of mine” (Weld, in Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, To the

¹⁸⁵ Back in England, Weld had been vicar of Terling as of 1625; as a non-conformist minister, he soon became involved in religious controversies. After a short stay in the Netherlands, he left for the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1632, where he became pastor at the church of Roxbury. On Weld’s biography see Winship, “Weld.”

Reader).¹⁸⁶ It is noteworthy that the tale of Mary Dyer's headless child was included in *Newes from New-England* as part of a range of examples stemming from areas where monstrous births were frequently dealt with in print: today's France, Italy, and Germany; there was no example from England, where monstrous births also belonged to one of the most popular themes of broadsides and related forms of cheap print, so in a way New England served as a substitute.

What is striking about the title page of *Newes from New-England* is that Dyer's "prodigious Birth" figures prominently in the heading while the accompanying woodcut represents a different case: "a child having two heads, two arms, and four legs" born in Paris in 1546; it is given as "Fourth" example in the text (see fig. 3).

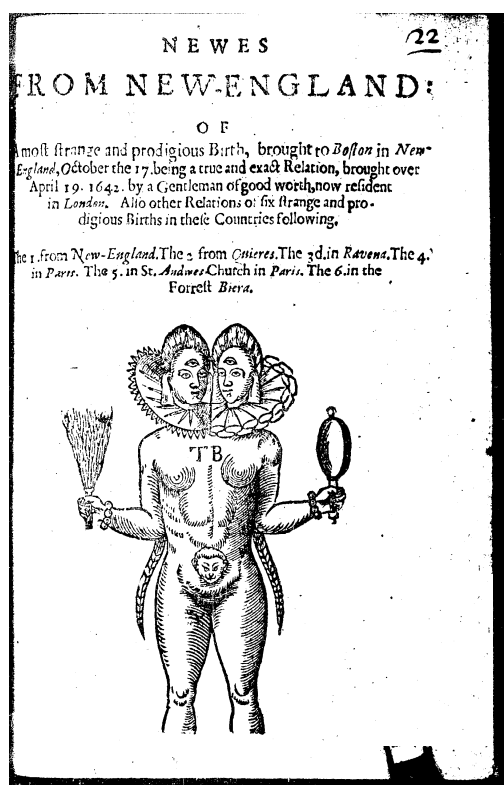


Fig. 3. Title page of *Newes from New-England* (London, 1642).

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This mismatching is all the more astounding considering that a drawing of Dyer's stillborn daughter verifiably had been sent to England (see above), which could have formed the basis for a woodcut illustration. But maybe the quality was too bad, or the printer did not have it available or did not even know about it—or it did not suit the

¹⁸⁶ Weld stressed that he was not the first to make these things known: "they have been made use of in publike, by the reverend Teacher of *Boston* [John Cotton], and testified by so many letters to Friends here, that the things are past question" (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface).

interests of the publisher. The underlying motivation for choosing this combination of title and woodcut is difficult to find out about because it is unclear today who initiated publication of Dyer's monster story as part of *Newes from New-England*. The last two pages of the text were dedicated to a theoretical discussion of multiple births, so maybe the compiler chose the illustration, showing conjoined twins, according to his main interest.

It is plausible that the printer consciously wanted to heighten the print's appeal to readers of the London metropolis by offering news from the overseas colonies and a picture of a prodigious birth. As shown above, many in England had a strong interest in the fate of the Bay colony; and as far as the double birth on the title page is concerned, both its outward appearance as well as its lively posture seemed like a promise that it had some message to tell: the breast is covered with letters, and there is a face on the womb; on the forehead of each of the two heads there is placed a third eye; the neck is adorned with a ruff, and in each of its two hands it holds an object—a mirror and a rod.

The message that this double birth was possibly meant to convey can be reconstructed by help of another publication that re-used exactly the same woodcut decades later. The author of *Pride's Fall; Or, A Warning to All English Women* (1700) explicitly warns of cultural degeneration by presenting "a strange monster born by a merchant's proud wife at Vienna in Germany" (title): "Every Part" of the creature, it is claimed, "had the Shape Of fashions daily worn"; the mirror stood for "vain Beauty" and the rod was used for "Scourging" the proud woman for her "Sin." The prodigy is presented as a warning to "*England's* fair dainty Dames" who are so fond of fashion and possibly inclined towards even more despicable vices, such as adultery. Protestant reformers used monstrous births in the wake of the Reformation of Manners for their moralizing purposes, railing against pride in fashion by drawing a parallel between bodily deformities and the latest fashion hypes. Through face-painting, cross-dressing, stage-playing, or sodomy, mankind were "barbarously diuerting *Nature*, and defacing Gods owne image, by metamorphising [sic] humane shape into bestiall forme" (I. H. sig. B2). God reacted to these sinful acts by creating infants whose outward shape reflected these monstrous aberrations—sinning destroyed the likeness of mankind to God. The prodigy displayed on the title page of *Newes from New-England* thus can be seen in the context of the popular lamentations

at excessive pride and wantonness.¹⁸⁷ The texts assembled in *Newes from New-England*, however, do not contain any hint at wantonness or excessive pride, and although Anne Hutchinson was described as being “of a very proud spirit” (Winthrop, *Journal* 253; see also chapter 4.3) no connection is made between Dyer’s or Hutchinson’s personality or conduct and Dyer’s failed pregnancy.

The illustrations on the title page of publications such as *Newes from New-England* and *Pride’s Fall* are typical of what William B. Ashworth Jr. calls an “emblematic world view,” characterized by allegory and analogy (142; cf. N. Smith 279-81). The strong sign character of monstrous births was reinforced by their being presented as if they were living. To give them persuasive force, prodigious creatures—most of them stillborn or dying soon after delivery—usually were not represented as dead, passive objects but as signs talking to the living, directly confronting the viewer. Especially in the first half of the seventeenth century, monstrous births commonly were depicted out-of-doors, not in the private sphere of the birthing chamber, which stressed the miraculous nature of the event: the child may have been the product of a woman’s body, but in truth it was created by God, forcing mankind to look at these creatures and, like in a mirror, see their own corruption.

A famous example of the emblematic style is the so-called Monster of Ravenna, a prodigy publicized widely in the early sixteenth century in central and Southern Europe (see fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Woodcut representing the “Monster of Ravenna” in Pierre Boaistuau’s *Secrete Wonders of Nature* (London, 1569; 139).

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¹⁸⁷ Other seventeenth-century examples of a polemical critique on the decline of manners are *The Phantastick age: Or, The Anatomy of Englands Vanity* (1634) and *Englands Vanity* (1683).

The hermaphroditic prodigy possessed wings instead of arms, only one leg with claws, an eye at the knee, and a horn on the head. The hybrid creature was an allegory of sinfulness: the horn was held to signify “pride,” the wings “inconstancy,” the lack of arms was taken as a sign of “defect of good workes,” the “ravenous foot” represented “covetousnesse,” the eye on the knee “a respect and regard alone to earthly things,” and that it was both male and female pointed out “filthy Sodomy”; due to “these sinnes,” it was conjectured, there was raging war (Rueff 159).¹⁸⁸ Both the compiler(s) and the recipients of *Newes from New-England* must have been familiar with this monster tale; not only is it with high certainty one of “the best known of all monstrous births” of the early modern period (Bates, *Emblematic* 22) but it is included as third example in *Newes from New-England*.

The emblematic function of the illustration adorning the title page of *Newes from New-England* is heightened by the fact that the woodcut on the last page of the publication displays the very same monstrous birth as depicted on the title page, but this time indoors, in the birthing room, including the mother in childbed (see fig. 5).



Fig. 5. The last page of *Newes from New-England* (London, 1642).

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¹⁸⁸ The creature is commonly linked with the conquest of Ravenna by the French in 1512. On its emblematic function, see Bates, *Emblematic* 22-27; N. Smith 278-9; Wunderlich 17.

The double birth depicted in this woodcut lacks all the symbolic elements that adorn the version on the title page. The engraver had added the additional two legs mentioned in the text, while the figure on the title page shows only two legs in all. That the woodcut on the title page does not include any hint at the actual birthing scene reinforces its symbolic outlook and heightens its appeal to the public audience. The second woodcut clearly is more realistic than the first one (although the size, the proportions, and the lively posture of the conjoined twins would rather not be termed realistic today).

This example confirms that early modern narratives of monstrous births usually represented existing and not fictitious cases (or that they often contained an element of truth) and that compilers of collections of prodigies consciously distinguished between different functions of tales of prodigious beings. Early modern writers and publishers used discourse on monstrous births according to their needs. In *Newes from New-England* the same example is used for two differing purposes—reporting on the birth of conjoined twins and conveying a moralizing message in a symbolic way. In this respect, *Newes from New-England* resembles texts like Rueff’s *The Expert Midwife* (see chapter 1.2) and medieval and early modern reports on monstrous races (see chapter 2.1) that were characterized by combining symbolic and “realistic” elements. Printers and woodcut makers usually took care that the descriptions and illustrations were accurate and were trusted to give a reliable report. Although many monstrous births were used as a sign, the majority of reports on these cases represented not merely “allegorical monsters” but “monsters” that existed as real bodies (Bates *Emblematic* 7).

In 1643, it was the failed pregnancy of Anne Hutchinson that turned up in a publication focusing on the sign character of monsters: John Vicars’s *Prodigies and Apparitions*. This was a collection of contemporary blazing stars, comets, and monstrous births,¹⁸⁹ all of which were interpreted as the consequence of divine wrath incited by sins like idolatry and papistry. Monstrous births and other prodigious events were explicitly presented as “Figures or Emblemes” (39) in the text. As with *Newes from New-England*, the symbolic focus of the publication already becomes

¹⁸⁹ That monstrous births were presented in a row with other types of prodigious natural phenomena has not been unusual: all of these possessed divinatory potential. Fenton, for example, listed in his *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature* (1659) tempests, comets, and signs in the heaven as “monsters” (148-9). Monstrous births meant a clearer warning, however, since they affected *human* bodies (Céard, 1991, 183; Moscoso 59).

evident on the title page, and, again, conjoined twins play a prominent role: the illustration on the title page shows a male double birth with two heads, holding in its two stretched out arms a linen on which the title is given (see fig. 6).

Fig. 6. Title page of John Vicars's *Prodigies and Apparitions* (London, 1643).

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The joined twins, born in 1633, are interpreted by Vicars as an emblem of God's wrath caused by the English Civil War: the double heads signified the king and the Parliament, the two hearts the Protestant and the Papist cause; the three arms represented England, Scotland, and Ireland. Vicars, a devout Presbyterian (see Gasper), even played on the similar sound of the terms *arms* and *armies*: the two arms stood for the "armies for just defence in England and Scotland," while the "miserable and monstrous stump of an arme" represented "lamentably torne and mangled Ireland" (26).

Immediately following the discussion of this double birth, Vicars turned to the deformed offspring of Anne Hutchinson, and, again, he used its bodily shape as an indicator of the immaterial world. For Vicars, monstrous births like this were to be regarded as a sign of God's wrath:

And this use, I remember our brethren in New England, not long since made of another most prodigious and misshapen and monstrous birth, brought forth by a Gentlewoman of that New Plantation, who had beene a maine fautrix, if not originall broacher of very many most wicked, dangerous, & damnable opinions in their Church (*Prodigies* 26-7)

Vicars stressed that God sent many signs of his discontent and explained that God had “declared his high displeasure thereat, by her so fearfull monstrous and mis-shapen birth, which . . . had as many externall and corporall deformities in its body, as she maintained diversities of most dangerous opinions” (27). The proposition that the external form of the body reflected the mental and religious state of the mother would turn up again in *A Short Story*, and also the assertion that Hutchinson had been the “maine faulx” of the disorders strongly resembles the wording in the later publication (see chapter 3.3). It is difficult to tell whether Vicars had knowledge of the material that later would be published as *A Short Story*—or whether the material forming the basis for *A Short Story* had been changed or influenced by Vicars’s text. In any case, there obviously was an intensive exchange of written material or oral reports, resulting in a high degree of intertextual references.

This is confirmed by Vicars’s insertion that he had received the report from “a godly Minister their [sic]” (*Prodigies* 27), which can be read as a hint that he received the information via Thomas Weld or another colonial, possibly through personal communication or exchange of manuscripts or letters. Vicars stressed that Hutchinson’s “mis-shapen birth” had been “testified for most true, by some of the most learned and godly Pastours and people amongst them” (*Prodigies* 27). But it is also possible that Vicars used the same strategy to heighten the authenticity and attractiveness of his report that was used on the title page of *Newes from New-England*, published shortly before: there it is also pointed out that news on the monster had been “brought over” across the Atlantic Ocean “by a Gentleman of good worth.” Maybe both authors simply wanted to heighten the authority of their report by referring to reliable witnesses of high standing who lived near to the place where the event had occurred. As will be shown below with regard to another publication, this was common practice in early modern reports on monstrous births.

The title pages of both *Newes from New-England* (1642) and Vicars’s *Prodigies* (1643) display double births, which often formed part of discourses touching upon questions of authority and legitimate ruling as well as the integrity of the body politic. Double births could be both a symbol of separation and unity, as Vicars’s interpretation of the joined twins born in 1633 aptly shows. Similarly, in his influential treatise on political authority, John Ponet (see also chapter 3.2) took twins with two heads born near Oxford in 1552 as a sign that “our one swete [sic] head,

king Edward should be taken away (as he was in dede)” and that soon there would be “two headdes, diverse gouvernours, and a towarde division of the people” (sig. K iij verso). Double births signified both the disruptive forces of religious dissent and military conflict (representing for example the fissures of the Christian church or a kingdom divided, Foucault, *Anormaux* 61) as well as a longing for re-establishing unity.¹⁹⁰

In general, prodigies carried a strong temporal component, wherefore they were an ideal symbol of change, and this applies in particular to conjoined twins. Both the classical tradition as well as Reformation polemics conceived of prodigies as signalling some form of upcoming disaster threatening the body politic. Examples of monstrous births served to “propound some knowledge of the Iudgements of God by divers monsters against Nature, as it were prognosticating things to come” (Rueff 151). Although prodigies most often were connected to sinning, religious conflict, and socio-political disruptions (D. Hall, *Worlds* 80), the possibility of change also had a positive side. As the example of the Monster of Ravenna shows, symbolic monstrous births often contained a restorative element for the nation as a whole: the Greeke Letter “y” was interpreted “to be a signe of Vertue,” and the cross “to be a signe of Salvation: Wherefore, if these vices being forsaken they would have recourse to vertues and the Crosse of Christ . . . and have calme peace.” (Rueff 159). Also the headless baby in *God’s Handy-worke* (see chapter 2.1) was considered a sign of God’s “Fatherly affection”: God was sending his people a warning to give them a chance to repent and return to Him (sig. A2). Conjoined twins pointed out in visual form that the future held in store alternative routes. Possessing two heads, double births carried a sense of evolution and change over time; they dissolved the separation of past, present, and the future, collapsing the three modes of times into one (see J. Crawford 94; D. Williams 4-7).

The symbolic content of the woodcuts adorning the title pages of *Newes from New-England* and *Prodigies and Apparitions* fits well with the recurring debate in the transatlantic sphere of the early 1640s on whether the Congregationalist churches of

¹⁹⁰ A good example of conjoined twins used as a symbol of unity is the story of Chang and Eng, the double births born in Siam on whom the term *Siamese twins* was coined. The twins arrived in Boston in 1829 as young men, and in post-Civil War discourse they were turned into a powerful symbol of the young nation once divided and then re-united (see Pingree). On the symbolic potential of double births, see J. Crawford 88-113. For a famous early modern double birth used in a similar political setting, born in Worms in 1495, see Hsia.

the Bay colony had separated from the Church of England. Robert Browne, who had laid the theoretical foundation for Congregationalism, had called for a full break with the Church of England, wherefore the early Congregationalists (and New England Puritans in particular) were not only called Brownists but Separatists by their opponents. The first Puritan settlers of the Bay colony did indeed share some of the Separatists' viewpoints—for example, they regarded the Church of England as still too much addicted to Roman ritual—but they took care to stress that the Church could be reformed and freed from Popish remnants and hypocrites. Non-Separatist Congregationalists assured their English brethren that they remained a part of the Church, even though they were situated in another part of the world. The Separatists feared a fissure of the true Church, too, but they regarded the failures of the Church of England as incurable, wherefore a fresh start seemed unavoidable. In short, those who still had hope that the Church of England was or could be the true church were non-Separatists, while those who regarded it as hopelessly defective were Separatists (T. Hall 19; Lovejoy 29-33; Middlekauff 39-44).

Critique on the New England Congregational churches and their alleged separatist tendencies had already become virulent during the Antinomian Controversy. Two works by Richard Bernard, an English minister at Batcombe in Somersetshire, had been sent to the Bay colony, and in both texts it was maintained that turning away from the Church of England would inevitably destroy the unity of the Church. In *Christian Advertisements and Counsels of Peace* (1608), Bernard argued against “separatists schisme, commonly called Brownisme” (title). The second book, *Plaine Euidences The Church of England is Apostolicall, the Separation Schismaticall* (1610), was driven by the same rationale. Winthrop explained in his *Journal* in October 1638 that the elders of the colony could not react earlier to such publications “by reason of the many troubles about Mrs. Hutchinson’s opinions, etc.” (268). In 1641, the question of separation was addressed by John Cotton in a letter sent to England, published in London as *A Coppy of a Letter of Mr. Cotton of Boston, in New England, Sent in Answer of Certaine Objections Made against Their Discipline and Orders there*. Cotton intended to defend the Bay colony against the rumor that its churches admitted only those for membership who completely renounced the Church of England. One year later, Cotton answered a book by the Puritan John Ball, probably *A Friendly Triall of the Grounds Tending to Separation*,

published in 1640. Ball's aim was to reclaim those tending to Separatism due to different views on the form of prayer and worship, so that "we might joyn together with one heart and soul to advance religion" (To the Reader). In *A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr Balls Discourse of Set Formes of Prayer* (1642), Cotton formulated the aim to "thinke and judge, and speake and write the same thing" (sig. A2 verso).¹⁹¹

Much as Antinomianism was perceived as diverging from Puritan doctrine, so the Congregationalist churches seemed on the brink of breaking apart from the Church of England. To counter such associations, John Cotton evoked in his *A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr Balls Discourse* the notion of a body whose members were distinct but connected through vital veins. At this point in history the question was whether New England would opt for unity or for separation from the Church of England—and the two monstrous births, in combination with representations of conjoined twins, were an integral part of the rhetoric and narratives used in describing this dilemma.

The first printed summary of both monstrous births

In 1644, the Bay colonials began turning their attention away from the Antinomian Controversy. After the death of her husband in 1642, Anne Hutchinson had moved with six of her children to Pelham Bay on Long Island Sound, within Dutch territory. One year later, Hutchinson and most of her family were killed in an exceptionally violent Indian raid. John Wheelwright, who had stayed in contact with the colony's officials and had constantly worked at restoring his reputation, had his banishment lifted in May 1644. The Bay colonials now were preoccupied with the reorganization of their legislature and conflicts with the Narragansett Indians and with neighboring settlements. But early that year, in January 1644, less than one year after publication of *Prodigies and Apparitions*, an anonymous tract was published in London that would subsequently be reprinted three times under the title *A Short Story*, bringing the Antinomian Controversy and the monstrous births back on the agenda: *Antinomians and Familists Condemned By the Synod of Elders in New-England: with the Proceedings of the Magistrates against Them, and their Apology for the Same.*

¹⁹¹ See also Winthrop, *Journal* 268, incl. notes 75, 76. Still in 1702, Cotton Mather stressed that "the First Planters of *New England*" considered "the Church of *England*, their *Dear Mother*" and hoped to be seen by their English brethren "as a *Church* now springing out of their own Bowels" (*Magnalia* III, 12).

Together with a Memorable Example of Gods Iudgments upon Some of Those Persons so Proceeded against (1644).

The documentary material seems to have been written and put together by John Winthrop himself, but who finally initiated publication years after the material had been prepared is unknown. When shortly thereafter a second edition appeared, Thomas Weld forthrightly came out as initiator, claiming to publish a book that had “newly come forth of the Presse” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). Weld supplied the text with a “To the Reader,” a preface (followed by a short “Postscript”), and a new title: *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines, that Infected the Churches of New-England* (London, 1644). The title page of *A Short Story* did not bear Winthrop’s name, and Weld’s introduction did not explicitly mention Winthrop as author and compiler of the material, wherefore the work initially had been attributed completely to Weld. A third edition was printed in 1644, and the text was re-published a fourth time in 1692, coinciding with the Salem witchcraft trials.¹⁹²

The structure of the main part of the work and Weld’s preface to the second edition suggest that Winthrop’s initial manuscript was printed without substantial changes. Dyer’s failed pregnancy is retold in the passage on the convening of the General Court at Cambridge in November 1637 (in the course of which Wheelwright and others were sentenced to banishment) (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, 43-45). Events that occurred after the height of the Antinomian Controversy, for example Hutchinson’s miscarriage, have not been added to the main part; instead, Weld addressed them in the preface. While Weld summarizes Dyer’s monstrous birth as “a woman child, a fish, a beast, and a fowle, all woven together in one, and without an head,” referring his readers to the more detailed description given by Winthrop later in the text, he describes Hutchinson’s failed pregnancy more at length. Weld points out that “shee brought forth not one (as Mistris *Dier* did) but (which was more strange to amazement) thirty monstrous births or thereabouts, at once” (The Preface). By comparing it to the number of Dyer’s singular monster, Weld heightened the degree of monstrosity of Hutchinson’s multiple offspring.

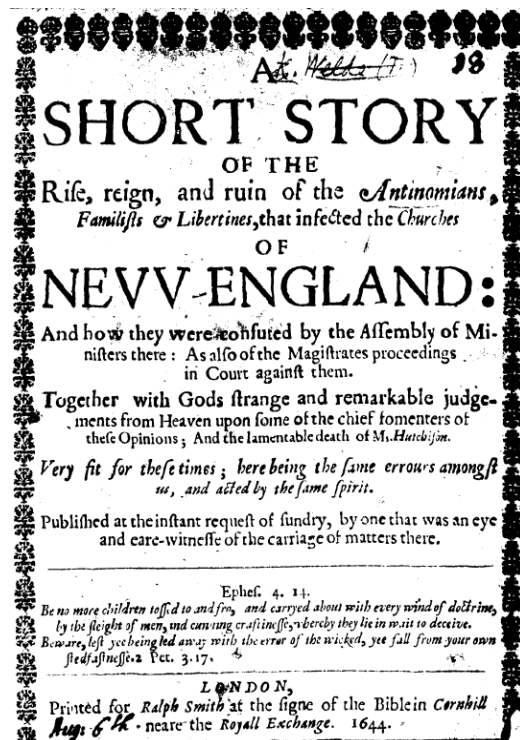
¹⁹² On the publication history of *A Short Story*, see C. Adams; D. Hall, ed. 199-200; Savage 459-73; Winsser 27. James Savage, a descendant of Anne Hutchinson and an admirer of John Winthrop, disputed authorship of *A Short Story* in the early 1850s (459, 461). On Savage’s editions of Winthrop’s works, see C. Adams 37-64; Moseley 121-9.

On the title page of *A Short Story* it is announced that the work was “[p]ublished at the instant request of sundry, by one that was an eye and eare-witnesse of the carriage of matters there.” This formula, often to be found in publications on monstrous births, served to point out that the report was credible. Eyewitnesses heightened the authenticity of a report, and the higher their social rank the better. If possible, the names of the persons involved were given as well as information on their profession, whereby a kind of social hierarchy of witnesses was created. The degree of credibility increased the higher the social rank and the more immediate the testimonial had been. Especially trustworthy were local authorities, such as a minister or a midwife (Cressy, *Travesties* 25, 35, 46-50; Shapiro 117-27). A typical example can be found on the title page of *A True Relation of a Monstrous Female-Child* (1680): “As it was faithfully Communicated in a Letter, by a person of worth, living in *Taunton-Dean*, to a Gentleman here in *London*, and Attested by many hundreds of no mean Rank; and well known to several Gentlemen in and about *LONDON*.” In another publication the narrative was “[a]ttested by Mr. Fleetwood, Minister of the same Parish, under his own hand; and Mrs. Gattaker the Mid-wife, and divers other eye-witnesses” (*Declaration*). In stressing the reliability of the witnesses, the person who had authored the text on the title page of *A Short Story* used much the same strategies for giving the report on the New England monstrous births authenticity as was common in English broadsides on prodigies—and as the Puritan missionary John Eliot (see chapter 1.1) later would do: Eliot stressed that it were “credible persons (men you know of great integrity” who witnessed the exhumation of Dyer’s stillborn child (31).

The claim of truthfulness was reinforced by usage of the popular metaphor of light for truth and the plain style of the title page, which stands in stark contrast to the emblematic style of *Newes from New-England* (1642) and Vicars’s *Prodigies and Apparitions* (1643). By comparison, *A Short Story* seems at first sight much less sensationalist and more fact-oriented (see fig. 7).

Fig. 7. Title page of John Winthrop's *A Short Story* (London, 1644).

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Even without detailed knowledge of the historic setting in which *A Short Story* was published it is obvious that this was a work of polemic. The preface was added, Weld explained, for “laying downe the order and sense of this story (which in the Book is omitted)” (A2). Weld announced that he put into print the tenets of the Antinomians in order to hang them “up against the Sunne,” that is, to put them to the test. Thomas Shepard similarly deplored in hindsight the Antinomians’ “obstinacy against the light” (*New Englands Lamentation* 4). Many a contemporary intended to expose the Antinomians’ errors to “the sun-beams of truth” in order to see if they could “endure it” (Bakewell title).

Also the main part of *A Short Story*, which includes the material Winthrop had put together, is not free of rhetoric and polemic. Metaphors related to monstrosity were transferred from the bodily realm onto the doctrinal errors of Hutchinson and her followers. While Winthrop had described William Dyer’s—but not Anne Hutchinson’s—errors as “monstrous” in his *Journal* (255), in *A Short Story* Winthrop asserted that the reasons for which Anne Hutchinson “was cast out of the Church” were “her monstrous errors” (and, Winthrop added, the “Father of this [Dyer’s] Monster” had been admonished “for some of his monstrous opinions,” 44, 45).

In the years before *A Short Story* finally got published, England had been torn in religious-political conflicts. The relationship between Charles I and Parliament

deteriorated increasingly, and there was a deep-going conflict over the right way to organize the Church of England and on how to deal with dissenting religious viewpoints. In 1641, official censorship broke down after the Court of Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission had been dissolved. Cheap print and the number of petitions increased substantially, and satirical pamphlets on the King and Parliament and differing groups and sects were published. Heretical beliefs such as mortalism of the human soul were on the rise, for example due to Richard Overton's *Mans mortallitie*, first published in 1643 and subsequently reprinted up to the 1670s. Countless sects and political and religious groupings came up or gained in prominence, ranging from Anabaptists, Antinomians, and Familists to Separatists and Levellers (J. Friedman, *Miracles* 83-112).

The publication history of *A Short Story* is closely connected to the dispute over church order and toleration in England, which reached its height in the early 1640s.¹⁹³ In England, there were basically two opposing parties in Parliament at the time: the Presbyterian clergy opposing toleration and propagating uniformity of the church on the one side and Independents in favor of toleration on the other. The Independents were divided into a conservative and a radical strand; while the former wanted to restrict toleration to Protestants, the latter were prepared to grant liberty of conscience irrespective of the denomination. Among the topics debated were the question of liberty of conscience (including the way how dissenting religious viewpoints should be dealt with), the degree of religious uniformity (including the option to establish a comprehensive national church), and authority in civil and religious matters (including the legitimization to correct what was regarded as disorderly behavior by corporeal punishments). The tolerance controversy had strong political implications because it touched upon questions of church membership, the attitude towards communal organization, and the relationship of small communal entities among themselves. As Nathaniel Ward put it in *The Simple Cobler of Aggawam in America* (1647): "that State which will permit Errors in Religion, shall admit Errors in Policy unavoidable" (21). Politics and religion formed an inseparable entity: "Religious diversity" endangered "national cohesion," as Coffey puts it ("Toleration" 45).

¹⁹³ Regarding the controversy over toleration I drew mainly upon Coffey, "Toleration"; Jordan; Murphy. See also Field, "Antinomian," who claims that the Antinomian Controversy was less important as a local theological crisis but as the focal point of transatlantic debates between the Congregationalist (or Independent) party and the Presbyterians.

From the early 1640s to the mid-1640s the lines of conflict hardened. Parliament dissolved the church courts and aimed at removing the authority over the maintaining of morals from the church to civil authorities. A compromise seemed out of reach, so Parliament entrusted a group of divines—the Westminster Assembly—with the task to devise a new system. The assembly on church reform formally was called in (without the consent of Charles I) in June 1643 by the Long Parliament, and it met countless times up to 1649. The most influential group within the Assembly was formed by the Presbyterians. They were supported by commissioners representing the Church of Scotland such as Robert Baillie and Samuel Rutherford¹⁹⁴ who were not formal members of the Westminster Assembly but followed its debates and agitated behind the scenes. Rutherford (c.1600–1661) was Professor of Divinity at St. Andrews and minister of the Church of Scotland. He strongly criticized New England Congregationalism and vehemently opposed liberty of conscience. Baillie (1602–1662), a minister of the Church of Scotland, supported the covenanting cause. Baillie’s party had reached a first success in 1643 with the *Solemn League and Covenant*, in which the Covenanters and the English Parliamentarians joined in opposition to the Royalists and aimed at establishing the Presbyterian form of church order in England, Scotland and Ireland, which was an important step for “uniformity in religion” (Coffey, “Toleration” 45).

Another faction in the Westminster Assembly was a determined group of dissenters opposing the Presbyterian Church settlement and advocating the independence of self-organizing congregations. These “Independents” wanted all authority to stay with the members of each congregation and rejected control through presbyteries; therefore, the term *Independents* often was used as a synonym for Congregationalists, although strictly speaking it denoted a specific grouping in the English Civil War period (J. Crawford 164-7; Fissell 158n3; 136-7; cf. Baillie, *Dissuasive* 58; T. Edwards, *Antapologia* 34). Important spokesmen for the Independent party were Sir Henry Vane, who had been governor of the Bay colony at the height of the Antinomian crisis, and Roger Williams (who shortly had commented upon Dyer’s monstrous birth in a letter to John Winthrop, see chapter 2.2). Williams had traveled to London in 1643 to secure a charter for Rhode Island and returned the following year; from 1651 to 1654 he stayed a second time in England (Jordan III:

¹⁹⁴ On Baillie, see Stevenson; on Rutherford, see Coffey, “Rutherford.”

472). No minister of New England attended the Westminster Assembly of Divines: the Reverends John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, and John Davenport had been invited to participate but declined the offer (Bush Jr., *Writings* 96-97).

The New England Congregationalists hoped to convince the members of the Assembly the advantages of the congregational way of church order and to influence public opinion by publishing a series of treatises. New England authors such as John Davenport, Richard Mather, Thomas Weld, John Cotton, Thomas Shepard, Thomas Hooker, or John Norton entered into written debate with authors from across the Atlantic Ocean, among them John Paget, Charles Herle, William Rathband, Samuel Rutherford, Robert Baillie, or Daniel Cawdrey.¹⁹⁵ In 1643, Richard Mather's response to Bernard's *Plaine Euidences* (see above), *An Apologie for the Churches in New-England* (written already in 1639), was printed. Cotton, hoping to reach a compromise with the Presbyterians (Bremer, "Cotton"), contributed several texts from 1641 onwards, among them *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (1648).

Around the mid-1640s, the public dispute reached a climax. When the supporters of Independency in the Westminster Assembly (Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughs, and William Bridge), who supported the printing activities of John Cotton and his colleagues in London (Bremer, "Cotton"), saw defeat impending, they published the tract *An Apologeticall Narration* (1643), proposing a kind of middle way between Presbyterianism and separatism by promoting toleration of Congregational churches and opposing radical viewpoints (Jordan III: 368-71). The tract was promptly answered critically by Thomas Edwards's *Antapologia, or, A Full Answer to the Apologeticall Narration* (1644). Edwards, a minister of the Church of England strictly opposing Independency and toleration, feared political instability due to religious radicalism, wherefore he

¹⁹⁵ The lengthy subtitles of the works often include hints as to which work was referred to. William Rathband's *Briefe Narration* (1644), dealing with the nature of the visible Churches, was answered by Thomas Weld's *Answer to W.R. His Narration* (1644) and the *Brief Narration of the Practices of the Churches in New-England* (1647). Samuel Rutherford's *The Due Right of Presbyteries* (1644) was followed by Richard Mather's *A Reply to Mr. Rutherford* (1647) and Thomas Hooker's *Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline* (1648). And John Cotton replied with *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (1648) to Baillie's *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time* (1646).

vehemently rejected any form of compromise as that proposed by the apologists (Baker).¹⁹⁶

The debate between the Presbyterian majority and the Independents on the principle of church organization became most virulent in the very year *A Short Story* finally got published. The person(s) responsible for its publication obviously assumed that England's religious and political leaders might profit from the Bay colony's experiences in dealing with such a threat to "the publick peace" (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, 21). On the title page of *A Short Story*, which was published in London, it was pointed out accordingly that this account of the New England Antinomian crisis was "[v]ery fit for these times; here being the same errors amongst us." The New England Congregationalists wanted to demonstrate that they were able to deal with diverging viewpoints and maintain order and that their model of church governance was able to contain the dangers posed by heretics. *A Short Story* was not simply a collection of documents or a provider of facts; its account of the Antinomian Controversy served as a strategic tool for Weld and Winthrop and those associated with them to reaffirm to a large readership that their version of Puritanism was the only legitimate one in the Bay colony and that heretical groupings such as "*Antinomians, Familists & Libertines*" (title) were not tolerated.

A good indicator for this endeavor is the change of titles of the publication now referred to as *A Short Story*. The title of the first edition had been much more descriptive and informative. It announced that the topic of the publication was how "*Antinomians and Familists*" were "*Condemned By the Synod of Elders in New-England,*" including "*the Proceedings of the Magistrates against them*"; for those who hoped for some entertainment it was added that the text contained "*a memorable example of Gods Iudgments upon some of those Persons so proceeded against.*" The new title presented the events almost like a stage play, announcing the three acts of "*Rise, reign, and ruine*" of "*the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines, that infected the Churches of New-England*" (London, 1644). While the initial heading sounded almost like a justification and seemed to present a process that still was unfinished, the new title stressed that the sects had been given over to "ruine," so that all that

¹⁹⁶ It is a noticeable side story that, like Winthrop and the Boston clergy, Thomas Edwards was challenged by a female Puritan, Katherine Chidley; see Baker; Gentles. On Chidley, see shortly in chapter 3.3.

remained was a “Short Story” quickly to tell.¹⁹⁷ Thereby it was implicitly argued that the New England way of ordering churches had been able to suppress heretics and that the authors of *A Short Story* were active and effective shapers of the Bay colony’s fate.

Another motivation for publication may have been the wish to clear the congregational system and its most famous proponent, John Cotton, of the suspicion that he had something to do with the monstrosities of Anne Hutchinson and her supporters. In his 1637 narration of the events, *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (printed in 1648 for an English audience), Cotton bemoaned “the injury done to my self in fathering them [those “corrupt Tenents,” “which they had vented here and there, in my name,” 39] upon mee” (39-40). Cotton felt that “he had been abused, and made . . . their stalking horse (for they pretended to hold nothing but what Mr. Cotton held, and himself did think the same)” (Winthrop, *Journal* 245). That the birth of Dyer’s daughter had been kept a secret could easily create the impression of a female conspiracy, and that Cotton had assisted in this endeavor made him a potential accomplice of the women involved. As Traister summarizes it, the “hyper-masculine iconography” of Dyer’s monstrous birth, complete with claws and horns, represents “the widespread belief that antinomian sentiment originated not entirely with Anne Hutchinson, but with Boston’s own minister, John Cotton, as well” (146).¹⁹⁸ In 1644, Thomas Weld felt obliged to “vindicate” the accusations that were “fathered” upon New England Congregationalism by Rathband’s *A Briefe Narration* (1644) (Weld, *An Answer*). As will be shown in the two following chapters, Weld and Winthrop tried to “mother” all monstrosities upon Hutchinson instead of allowing them to be “fathered” upon John Cotton, while Hutchinson was accused of having “mothered” heretical opinions.

One of Weld’s guiding motifs for publishing *A Short Story*¹⁹⁹ possibly was the wish to clarify the Bay colonials’ standpoint within the toleration debate and to create distance to Sir Henry Vane the Younger (even though Vane is not mentioned in *A*

¹⁹⁷ Maybe the new title had been inspired by Thomas Bakewell’s tract *A Short View of the Antinomian Errours* (London, 1643), see passim in this dissertation.

¹⁹⁸ However, as shown in chapter 2.1, there were many aberrant births similar to Dyer’s, and in these cases the horns were seen rather in connection with the devil. Traister may have been guided by his intention to widen the concept of gender in studies on the Antinomian Controversy by focusing on “male gender roles and sexuality” (136) and by his wish to counter the tendency to identify heresy and social subversion with the female body (136-7).

¹⁹⁹ For conjectures on Weld’s motivation, see also Moseley (124-5); Schutte (97n38).

Short Story), who became ever more radical. The Reverend Thomas Weld, “an orthodox nonconformist” (C. Adams 34), was, by comparison, rather moderate. Vane, a “noble gentleman” (Winthrop, *Journal* 157) descending from an influential English family, had been elected governor of the Bay colony in May 1636. He endorsed Antinomian viewpoints and sided with Anne Hutchinson, which significantly weakened the position of Hutchinson’s opponents; however, one year later, Vane lost the election for governorship to Winthrop, and the balance of power shifted. In August 1637, Vane departed for England, where he quickly turned into the leader and mouthpiece of the Independents.²⁰⁰ The Independents turned more and more radical (see Jordan III: 376-412), which contradicted the interests of the official agents of the Bay colony who feared that their cause might be discredited.

In short, Vane offered an easy target for polemic, which is also confirmed by later evidence. In 1667, Vane’s earlier affiliation with the colonial Antinomians was explicitly brought into connection with the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson. Sir Joseph Williamson, then Under-Secretary of State and, under Charles II, Secretary of State, stated in a memorandum stored at the Public Record Office of England that Vane had arrived as governor in New England in 1637, “desbauched” both Dyer and Hutchinson, “& both were delivered of monsters.”²⁰¹ A few years earlier, in June 1662, Vane had been beheaded in London upon a Parliamentary charge of high treason. In 1702, the story was taken up by the Presbyterian minister and historian Edmund Calamy, who put together (and amended) the writings of Richard Baxter (see chapter 3.4): referring to the New England Antinomians, it was held that Sir Vane had been “the Life of their Cause” (and Hutchinson and the others his “Disciples”) and did “steal away by Night” in order to leave for England (Baxter, 99; cf. Baxter, 1713, 98).

²⁰⁰ In 1639, Charles I appointed Vane secretary of the navy. He represented Kingston upon Hull in the Short Parliament (spring of 1640) as well as in the Long Parliament (September 1640). In the same year he was knighted by Charles I. When Civil War broke out in 1642, Vane became an opponent of the king and turned towards radicalism, siding for some time with Oliver Cromwell (Jordan IV: 52-61; cf. Winship, *Making Heretics* 44, 49-51, 147, 211-2, 226, 243-6). Parnham and Sikes (a contemporary of Vane) offer studies on Vane’s religious viewpoints.

²⁰¹ Williamson claimed to have learned the details “[f]rom Major Scott’s mouth” about the year 1667 (132); see also Pearl and Pearl 26n16; Winsser 32. John Scott was an English adventurer and soldier who possessed land on Long Island. In October 1660, Scott returned to England, and, if we are to believe the source, told the story of Dyer’s previous life to Sir Joseph Williamson (Winsser 32). In Williamson’s note there is mentioned a “Mr. Cotton,” but it is stated that he “died in 1654” (132), wherefore it is improbable that the passage refers to John Cotton, who died in late 1652.

But it is also possible that Weld had been urged by the Presbyterian leaders to publish the manuscript to further their own cause. The claim on the title page that *A Short Story* had been published “at the instant request of sundry” thus may be read either as an attempt to stress the objectivity and usefulness of the report (as described above) or as a hint that a subtle form of pressure had been exerted. In a letter dated 17 September 1646, the Reverend Thomas Hooker suggested exactly this possibility to Thomas Shepard. He held that Robert Baillie, “a man of a subtile and shrewd head,” and the Scottish Presbyterians may have “had a secret hand to provoke Mr. Weld to set forth his short story touching occasions here in Mr. Vane his reigne” in order to discredit New England Puritans as well as the English Independents (qtd. in Bush Jr., *Writings* 80). And indeed, in his preface to *A Short Story*, Weld stated that he had pursued publication only reluctantly and only after “being earnestly pressed by diverse to perfect it” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, A2). Although this was a conventional gesture aimed at stressing the truthfulness of the record and the modesty of the author,²⁰² the possibility that there was some form of external pressure on Weld cannot be ruled out. Robert Baillie was a dedicated opponent of John Cotton, and his recommendation that “we may not reject the witness of Master Winthrop, the wisest of all the *New English* Governours hitherto, and of Master *Wels* [sic], a gracious Minister of that Land, in their printed relations of the Schisms there” (*Dissuasive* 57), may not have been completely free of irony and delight at his own clever move.²⁰³

Weld, Winthrop, and Shepard had done their best to present themselves as effective shapers of the colony’s fate, being able to suppress heretics and disturbers of the peace, but with limited success. On the one hand, as will be further elaborated upon in the following chapter, the Presbyterians used *A Short Story* for their own ends in the then ongoing war of propaganda. Modern scholars have described this situation with war rhetoric: “Weld simply sharpened Winthrop’s ax and handed it to the

²⁰² On the title page of the newssheet on Anne Greene (see chapter 2.2), for example, it is claimed that the publication was intended “for the Satisfaction of a friend, who desired to be informed concerning the truth of the businesse” (Watkins). Similarly, the author of the *Pseudochristus* (see below), stated to have been “necessitated unto” publishing it “by the importunity of Friends” due to the “desire of many Christian Friends, Ministers . . . living at a distance, even in remote parts of the Nation from us of this place, unto whom some rumor of these things have come” (H. Ellis 3).

²⁰³ Baillie even used footnotes referring to the exact page numbers of *A Short Story*; see for example the passages in which he recounts that God was “punishing Mistresse *Hutchinson* with a monstrous birth of more then thirty mis-shapen creatures at one time (BBB), and Mistresse *Dyer* her principall assistant, with another monstrous birth (CCC) of one creature, mixed of a Beast, of a Fish, and a Fowl” (Baillie, *Dissuasive* 63; cf. 72). On Baillie’s critique of Cotton, see chapter 3.2.

English Presbyterians, who used it for their own purposes.” (Moseley 125; cf. Gura, *Glimpse* 220). *A Short Story*, one of its modern editors noted, “supplied the Presbyterian leaders with exactly the ammunition they wanted” (C. Adams 31; cf. 35-36); it demonstrated that toleration did not work, and, what was particularly pleasing to the opponents of the Independents, all this had happened with Vane as governor, who was one of the strongest supporters of the Independent cause in England and whom Winthrop regarded as a valuable supporter of New England.²⁰⁴ On the other hand, *A Short Story* exerted a strong impact on mid-seventeenth-century transatlantic public debate. Due to its wide circulation, it helped establishing the term *Antinomian* in historiography (Winthrop, *Journal*, eds., 206n57). It was the first published overall description of the Antinomian controversy, which was “arguably the single most important event in seventeenth-century American colonial history” as far as the impact on the public debates in England is concerned (Winship, *Making Heretics* 1). Weld’s preface (and the “To the Reader” preceding it) is of outstanding importance for the collective self-representation of New England in the 1640s (Hebel, *Images* 89; Round 149-52), and the transatlantic debate following upon publication of *A Short Story* had profound impact on New England identity building.²⁰⁵

Both the strong influence of the New England monster tales and the atmosphere of religious dissent are discernible in publications on headless births that were printed in London around mid-century. In 1646 and 1652, there appeared two reports on prodigious births that shared many characteristics with the tale of Dyer’s stillborn child and the overall context of both New England monstrous births. *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster* (1646) told of a child said to be born with the face upon its breast in Lancashire, England, in 1646 (see Burns, “King’s” 190-1; Cressy, “Lamentable,” passim; Fissell 159-60). The mother, a papist often railing against the Parliamentary faction in the Civil War, was said to have uttered while pregnant that she would “bring forth a Childe without a head” rather than being “a Roundhead, or bear a Roundhead” (6).²⁰⁶ When she actually gave birth

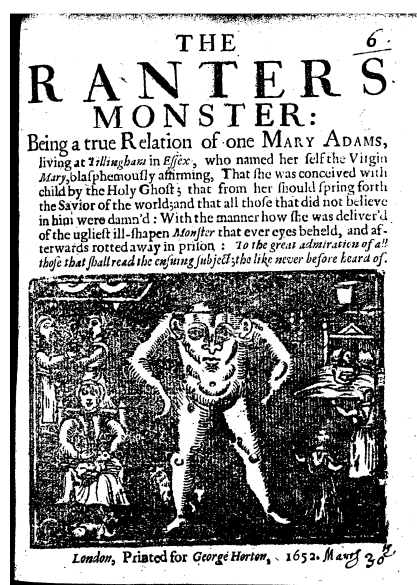
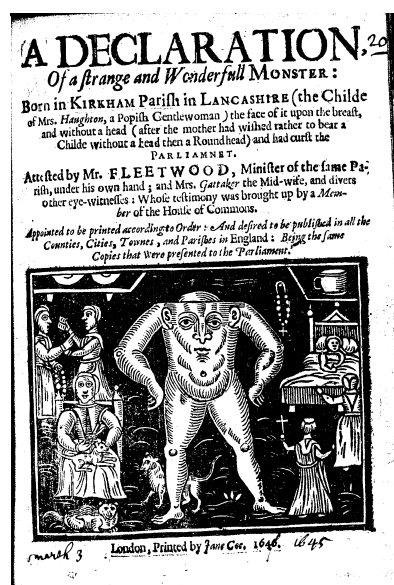
²⁰⁴ Despite all differences of opinion, Winthrop remained in friendly contact with Vane, who had retained a strong interest in the fate of New England. In 1645, Winthrop noted in his *Journal* that Vane “shewed himselfe a true frend” to New England and was “a man of a noble & generous minde” (608).

²⁰⁵ See Field, “Antinomian”; Hebel, *Images* 6, 120, and passim; Hebel, “Negotiation” 106-11; Middlekauff 45-47; Round 142-52.

²⁰⁶ The term *Roundhead* originally referred to the close-cropped hairstyles of the Parliamentary troops, but over time it turned into a term denoting monstrosity used by both sides in the conflict during Civil War; see Fissell 158.

to a seemingly headless child, the woman turned into an exemplar of misguided female imagination.

The author of *A Declaration* stated that the “Picture” of “this Monster” was “in the Title-page of this Book” (6; cf. 7); however, the publisher of a later pamphlet, *The Ranters Monster* (1652), reused exactly the same woodcut for illustrating a text describing a completely different case (see figs. 8 and 9). That the illustration on the title page does not correspond with the accompanying text reminds of the title page of *Newes from New-England* (1642), where the title does not suit the illustrating woodcut on the cover sheet (see above). The reappearance of the woodcut may have had practical reasons, though. The high number of sensational pamphlets issued in the 1640s and 1650s surpassed the capabilities of printers and woodcut makers, so motifs were re-used in differing contexts, and often one and the same woodblock was used to illustrate similar stories (Cressy, “Lamentable” 53-4; cf. D. Hall, *Worlds* 74-76).



Figs. 8 and 9. Title pages of *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster* (London, 1646), and *The Ranters Monster* (London, 1652).

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According to the anonymous author of *The Ranters Monster* (1652), Mary Adams of Tillingham in Essex was delivered of “the most ugliest ill-shapen *Monster*,” having “neither hands nor feet, but claws like a Toad in the place where the hands should

have been” (4). Since it “was so loathsome to behold,” the child was buried “with speed” (4).²⁰⁷

It has been suggested that the narrative of Mary Adams as told in *The Ranters Monster* (1652) had been influenced in one way or another by the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson.²⁰⁸ But, as also Pearl and Pearl have remarked (34n37), as far as its outward appearance is concerned, it is rather the child reported upon in *A Declaration* (1646) who resembles Dyer’s “headless” daughter. The text does not offer a detailed description of the child, but other publications dealing with the same prodigy provide some more information. According to *A Looking-Glasse for Malignants* (1643) it was

a child still-borne, which had no head, yet two eares, two eyes, and a mouth in the breast of it, and the hands turning backwards to the elbowes, with a cleft down the back; so as it was not discernable whether it were male or female. (15).

The text was authored by John Vicars—who had published in the very same year his viewpoints on Anne Hutchinson’s multiple monsters in his *Prodigies and Apparitions* (1643, see above). And, as he had done similarly in his report on Hutchinson’s miscarriage, he interpreted the occurrence as one of many examples of “*Gods* most just *vindicative hand* and avenging indignation . . . upon the outrageous maligners” (Vicars, *Looking* 10).

The way the monstrous birth of *A Declaration* (1646) became publicly known resembles the process of news-spreading on Dyer’s aberrant child (see chapters 1.1 and 2.1): rumors on “a Monster, which had no head” and “a face upon the breast,” taking their origin with one of the midwives involved, reached the authorities, who then ordered the exhumation of the child; proof of the birth was presented to divers Members of the House of Commons in London, who then “commanded” the story “to

²⁰⁷ On *The Ranters Monster*, see Burns, “King’s” 190-1; J. Crawford 147-8; Cressy, “Lamentable” 53-4; Fissell 157-60.

²⁰⁸ According to J. Crawford, “there are specific parallels in the physical descriptions” of Mary Adams’s and Mary Dyer’s prodigious births (162). Also J. Turner suggests a connection between the New England monstrous births and that of Mary Adams (80-81). Both the Hutchinsonians and the mother of the *The Ranters Monster* (1652) had been accused of having fallen for “the most Heretical and undeniable way of *Anabaptisme*” and had “turned *Ranter*,” “one of the *Familists of Love*” (*Ranters Monster* 4, 5); see chapters 2.2 (Familism) and 3.4 (Anabaptism) of this dissertation regarding Anne Hutchinson and her followers.

be printed” (*Declaration* 7).²⁰⁹ According to Cressy, both the exhumation of the child and the subsequent publication of the story were done with a specific purpose in mind: the narrative served the interests of the Parliamentary faction and therefore was printed widely (“Lamentable” 53, 55), turning up in several publications, among them Vicars’s *A Looking-Glasse for Malignants*. It can be assumed that, as *A Short Story*, neither *A Declaration* (1646) nor *Newes from New-England* (1642) was the product of only one person and that none of the authors had “full control of the publication” (Cressy, “Lamentable” 61).²¹⁰

As shown in Part II of this study, early reports of the two famous New England monstrous births probably had been influenced by contemporary English discourse on similar cases, but, as publications such as *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster* (1646) and *The Ranters Monster* (1652) show, the failed pregnancies of Dyer and Hutchinson as reported in *A Short Story* just as likely did have some effect on mid-seventeenth century English public discourse on monstrous births. And there could be mentioned even more examples for this transatlantic exchange of religious motifs and rhetoric. In Ellis’s 1650 relation *Pseudochristus*, debate on the presence of the Holy Spirit, fear of immoral conduct, terms like “venting,” “fluent tongues,” “silly women” as well as reference to enthusiastic language (see chapter 2.2) and uncontrollable direct revelations resurfaced, and the female protagonist was said to have delivered “a Serpent, or some such monstrous birth” (22).²¹¹ Still another example is *The Declaration of John Robins*, published in 1651 by “G.H.”²¹² All these publications show in exemplary form that Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s monster tale possibly influenced English pamphlet makers or shared many characteristics of English religious discourse at the time.

²⁰⁹ Those attending the exhumation of the child found a corpse that suited quite well the report previously given by the midwife—as had been the case with Dyer’s child (see chapter 2.1): “After this child had beene buried two or three daies, the Midwife reporting its monstrous and prodigious shape & not being credited, it was thereupon taken out of the grave and reviewed, and was apparently found to be as is already described, & as was reported to be” (Vicars, *Looking* 15).

²¹⁰ Furthermore, both Dyer’s monstrous birth and that reported upon in *A Declaration* (see Cressy, “Lamentable” 58-62) occurred at times of severe religious and military conflicts. In the Bay colony there had been smoldering conflict with the Pequot tribe of southern Connecticut since 1635, which would evolve into the first war-like conflict between the Puritan settlers and Native Americans as of 1637 (see Cave; Kibbey 92-120).

²¹¹ On the various similarities of the relation *Pseudochristus* to Hutchinson’s story, see for example Bradford 23; D. Hall, ed., 389-95; Rutherford, *Survey* 182.

²¹² See J. Crawford 164, and J. Friedman, *Miracles*, 125-30. For additional examples, see chapter 3.3 (the *Mistis Parliament* series) and John Taylor’s *Ranters of both Sexes* (1651).

3.2 The “hand of Civill Justice”: debate on the New England Way—from Scottish Presbyterians to colonial historiographers

“Say such a childe should liue to call him father, how vnpleasing were the sound?”

--Anonymous, *Gods handy-worke in wonders* (1615), sig. A 3 verso--

Winthrop, Weld and similar minded colonial Puritans tried to present the Bay colonial authorities in a favorable light to a metropolitan audience by help of the stories of the two monstrous births. It was propagated that it was not the “New England Way” but the indulgence of individuals led by this “American Jesabel,” Anne Hutchinson, that caused disorder and that it was the *male* establishment, “the hand of Civill Justice,” that finally “laid hold on her” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, 66) and vanquished all disturbers of the peace. As Field (“Antinomian” 451) summarized this persuasive strategy: “The true church, beset by a Jezebel, is a story suitable for export; chronic arguments and defections within the body of New England clergy are not.” But soon the Bay colony’s authorities had to struggle not to lose control over what they themselves had brought to public view. Scottish Presbyterians used *A Short Story* and the narrative of the monstrous births to substantiate their critique of the congregational way of church order. In the first part of this chapter, the basic lines of conflict between New England Congregationalists and their trans-Atlantic counterparts will be explored by taking into account mid-seventeenth century notions of the body politic. In the second part it will be analyzed whether Weld, Winthrop, and other New England Puritans were successful in presenting the body politic of the Bay colony as being unaffected by monstrosity—be it in the form of heterodox opinions, malformed human bodies, or aberrant behavior—and how colonial historiographers such as Edward Johnson and William Hubbard continued with this endeavor.

As sketched in chapter 3.1, Robert Baillie and other Presbyterians vehemently attacked the “Independents” and in particular John Cotton for the way they had ordered the New England churches. One aspect of their critique concerned the relations of congregations among themselves. The Presbyterians criticized the congregational system for denying elders the right to intervene in the affairs of

neighboring churches and to censure other congregations. New England churches were gathered on a voluntary basis. Each individual assembly—even if only a few dozen persons were involved—constituted an independent ecclesiastical organization with the right to choose its own minister and to exercise censures such as admonition and excommunication. The congregations had the right to observe and criticize but not to interfere in the jurisdiction of other congregations. To opponents of the Independent faction the congregational system therefore was an aberration of established orders and hierarchies: whereas in Presbyterian Church government “each part and every particular is ruled by the whole and in common, the lesse by the greater,” in congregational churches “an equall part must take upon them cognizance and call to an account an equall,” or, even worse, “the lesse [ordered] the greater, and what a rule is this” (T. Edwards, *Antapologia* 136). The Presbyterians feared that conflicts could easily turn into deep crises if it were not for regular meetings of the elders of the various congregations in synods, where binding resolutions would be reached. All congregations should be closely inter-connected by church-judicatories, and the proceedings of any congregation should be reviewed on a regular basis (C. Adams 28-29).

Also as far as authority within a congregation is concerned the congregational way of church order offered an easy target. For Bay colonial Puritans central authority lay with Christ, “the Head and King of the church,” as the Cambridge Platform of 1648—the official codification of the New England Way—maintained; it delineated the congregational church government as “a mixed government,” with Christ exercising “the sovereign power” as in a “monarchy.” Christ, however, granted power to “the holy brotherhood of the church,” which “resembles a democracy” (“Cambridge Platform” X, 3, p. 105). In Congregational churches the “multitude” had a large share in deciding upon communal matters.²¹³ The government of the church lay in the hands of the ordained ministry, but formal church decisions needed the consent of the lay members. The Bay colonial Puritan Nathaniel Ward, who hoped to find a middle way between “the Presbyterianism and Independent way” (39),

²¹³ On the question whether New England Congregationalism could be regarded as democratic, see J. Cooper, *Tenacious* 3-10; D. Hall, *Reforming* 8-9, and *passim*.

therefore termed the latter “plebsbyterian” (35).²¹⁴ While the congregational system gave the laity quite some influence and stood for the power of the many, Presbyterianism assigned the authority over church admissions and questions of discipline solely to the elders.

Distrust of communal decisions was a popular theme in early modern political tracts. The people were believed to act irrationally, like a “headless multitude,” or they were compared to a “many-headed monster,” lacking rule or direction; having many heads amounted to having no head at all (Hill, “Many-Headed” 296).²¹⁵ Both Catholic and Protestant theologians and political writers held that some form of central authority was necessary. For many a late medieval or early modern writer

a people does not deserve to be called a body whilst it is acephalous, i. e. without a head. Because, just as in natural bodies, what is left over after decapitation is not a body, but is what we call a trunk, so in bodies politic a community without a head is not by any means a body. (qtd. in O’Neill 75)²¹⁶

A strong sovereign power was considered by many a *sine qua non* for a lawful body politic. The king was regarded as indispensable part of the body, as head giving directions and maintaining the body’s integrity. For James I, for example, the king possessed the divinely ordained power and legitimization “of directing all the members of the body to that vse which the iudgement in the head thinkes most conuenient. It may apply sharp eures, or cut off corrupt members” (sig. B2 verso).

“Multiheaded” or “headless” symbolized a lack of authority, and a deformed head a corrupted form of government, and all these variants could be used accordingly in propagandistic ways.²¹⁷ Small wonder, then, that headless births belonged to the most popular categories of monstrous births with authors and printers of broadside ballads in the Renaissance period, their popularity reaching a high point

²¹⁴ As Richard Bernard formulated it in 1608, “the Brownist” (as Congregationalists often were called by their opponents, see chapter 3.1) claimed that “Christ’s ruling power” was “in the body of the Congregation, the multitude, called the Church”; for a Catholic it rested in “the Pope,” for the Protestant “in the Ecclesiasticall gouernours,” the bishops, and for the Puritan “in the Presbyterie” (*Christian Advertisements* Epistle to the Reader).

²¹⁵ The topic of uncontrollable masses would be taken up again in the nineteenth century, when writers such as Melville, Hawthorne, and Emerson created a male ideal based upon singular mental capacities, which stood in sharp contrast to the seemingly threatening masses of immigrant workers, argues Tichi 18-23, 44-45 and *passim*.

²¹⁶ In the medieval period and thereafter, the term *acephali*, from Latin *monstrum acephalon*, referred to peoples who preferred living without a political head to accepting an unloved ruler (Congar 9-10).

²¹⁷ On anthropomorphic conceptions of the state focusing on the monstrosity of the head, see Burns, “King’s” 189-92, 195 and *passim*; Hill, “Many-Headed.” See also Schramer and Sweet 3-4, 10-11 and *passim*, who focus on New England and the Pequot War.

during the English Civil War. As shown in chapter 2.1, the “headless child” was a standard element of discourse on monstrosity that appeared in various variants and differing text sorts from antiquity to the early modern period. When in the 1640s the question of the legitimate head of the body politic became more pressing than ever, countless pamphlets and broadsides reported upon headless children who easily could be put in relation to the ongoing religious and political turmoil, as *A Declaration* and *The Ranters Monster* illustrate (see chapter 3.1). Infants without heads seemed to parallel a body politic lacking a ruler: “If the head signifies reason, guiding the members and governing the state, a headless monster could point to a commonwealth that had lost its way and lost its mind.” A headless child was an “emblem for a world turned upside down” (Cressy, “Lamentable” 63; cf. J. Crawford 114-45; Purkiss 163-85).²¹⁸

The fierce religious-political conflicts and the ongoing debates on the legitimate head of the body politic culminated in the removal of the “head” of the English body politic, Charles I, in 1649. Symptomatic of these troubled times is Thomas Hobbes’s influential publication *Leviathan* (1651), printed several years after *A Short Story* had been published for the first time. The tract evidently was written under the impression of the English Civil War and the beheading of Charles I. Like many of his contemporaries, Hobbes had the intention to protect the body politic against a headless multitude. The giant figure on the title page—a monarch holding the insignia of both worldly and religious power and wearing a crown on his head—stood for the sovereign head reigning over the state, its torso, which was presented as consisting of countless individual bodies.

At first sight, this icon of the body politic shares many characteristics with a monstrous body: it is a hybrid being, a combination of seemingly disparate elements; but contrary to monstrous births, Hobbes’s *Leviathan* is a man-made, not a God-given monster: it was created by mankind in order to protect themselves, because, as the famous dictum “Homo homini Lupus” (Hobbes, *Elementa Philosophica* sig. 3 verso) suggests, mankind was unable to live together peacefully. Chaos or civil war could

²¹⁸ The intense debates whether the King still could be seen as the only legitimate source of political identity were also reflected in some of the embryological theories brought forward around mid-century. In 1651, the English anatomist Nathaniel Highmore offered a theory that fostered a concept of identity formed and guided by patriarchal conceptions—a concept that easily could be transferred to the King. William Harvey’s theory of an artificer inherent to the infant creature, published in the same year, can be seen in connection with the emerging self-determining, autonomous citizen (see Keller, “Embryonic” 335). On the embryo as an “adventurer,” see chapter 4.4.

only be averted by a strong central government. By entering a social contract, the individuals voluntarily submitted themselves to a higher form of authority; they traded in individual freedoms for the protection of their natural rights by an absolute sovereign. The illustration on the title page of *Leviathan* offers the iconic visualization of the body politic conceived of as a “multitude” united in one body and guided by a sovereign head.

John Winthrop and other Bay colonials adapted early modern theories of the body politic according to their needs. They presented the church elders and the magistrates of the colony as an effective substitute for the king and the Church of England as protectors of the social order (Egan 68-76). Similar to monarchs like King James I, who had created an image of himself as an androgynous symbol of national unity (Trubowitz, “Crossed-Dressed” 202), Puritan ministers and colonial magistrates were described with the rhetoric of maternal breast-feeding: they were presented as care-giving mothers providing their flock with spiritual milk. John Cotton, for example, offered his catechism under the title *Spirituell Milk for Boston Babes* (1657), and, according to Cotton Mather, the “Magistrates” of the colony were its “Nursing-Fathers and Nursing-Mothers” (*Magnalia* V, chapter XI, 31).²¹⁹ To counter the impression that the New England Congregationalist churches lacked order and guidance, the monarch as head of the body politic was replaced by individual men who were turned into the heads of their own “little commonwealth” (Egan 8-11)—the head of the king was replaced by the body possessing authority: “The royal ‘We’ became the ‘wee’ of the religious and political compact.” (Schramer and Sweet 5).

In a congregation that acts as one body no additional authority is needed. In “A Modell of Christian Charity,” presented during the passage at sea, John Winthrop had provided the group of emigrants with the guiding mission for their endeavor: “we must be knit together in this work as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection” (91). The Cambridge Platform of 1648 codified this concept and stated that the Congregational church is “consisting of a company of saints by calling, united into one body by an holy covenant” (“Cambridge Platform” II, 6; p. 99). An important precondition for the functioning of the “holy covenant” was homogeneity. It was stressed that the covenantal body could only thrive if it displayed unity. In

²¹⁹ In 1719, Edward Taylor described himself as an infant receiving spiritual nourishment from God: “‘Lord put these nibbles then my mouth into / And suckle me therewith I humbly pray. / Then with this milk thy Spirituall Babe I’st grow.” (482; Preparatory Meditations, Second Series, 150).

order to be successful, the group needed “to gather together as one Man in a Synodically way, with a decisive power to undoe all the cunning twisted knots of Satans Malignity to the truths of *Christ*” (Johnson 118). The “whole multitude” needed to be “of one heart, and of one mind,” demanded William Hubbard in his Election Day sermon of 1676:

Thus in the body politick, where it is animated with one entire spirit of love and unity, and settled upon lasting and sure foundations of quietness and peace, all the several members, must and will conspire together to deny, or forbear the exercise of their own proper inclinations, to preserve the union of the whole; that there be no Schisme in the body (*Happiness* 16)

For Hubbard, it usually was not an outward threat “that ruins a commonwealth” but “a spirit of division” (*Happiness* 16). Winthrop had claimed similarly in 1630 that what “knits” all the “several parts of this body” together was Christ’s “spirit and love,” making it “the most perfect and best proportioned body in the world” (“Modell” 86). While in the body politic as conceived by Thomas Hobbes a central authority provided for the functioning of each part in its proper sphere, in the Bay colonial covenantal body it was the spirit of love; it united all in one covenant, and everyone had to strive for sanctification and was responsible that the other members did so, too.

The unity of the body politic, which was meant to be protected by the system of interrelated covenants (see chapter 2.1), was threatened when church members departed from the community, either by moving away to other territories or departing from “orthodox” doctrine: “Such Departure tends to the Dissolution and Ruine of the Body, as the pulling of Stones and pieces of Timber from the Building, and of Members from the Natural Body tend to the Destruction of the whole.” (C. Mather, *Magnalia* V, 33). Especially the Antinomians were perceived or presented by their opponents as damaging the coherence of the body politic, and Hutchinson’s scattered offspring was a powerful symbol of this threat (see chapter 2.2). Hutchinson and her followers seemed to disrupt each individual household—the basic unit of political communities: the “disturbances, divisions, contentions” that the Antinomians “raised amongst us, both in Church and State, and in Families, [were] setting division betwixt husband and wife!” (Weld, in Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). Anne Hutchinson’s claim of immediate revelation during the November trial raised

unsettling memories of the regimes of Thomas Müntzer or Jan Bockelson, who had supported Anabaptism and believed in revelations and prophecies in early Reformation Germany:

These disturbances that have come among the Germans have been all grounded upon revelations, and so they that have vented them have stirred up their hearers to take up arms against their prince and to cut the throats one of another (D. Hall, ed. 343; cf. 342).

Thomas Weld took up the motif of sectarians cutting the throats of each other or of their enemies in his preface to Winthrop's *A Short Story* (1644), repeating a supposed statement of the Hutchinsonians: "This is for you, yee legalists, that your eyes might bee further blinded, by Gods hand upon us, in your legall wayes, and stumble and fall, and in the end break your necks into hell, if yee imbrace not the truth."²²⁰

The Bay colonial covenantal body politic as formulated in Winthrop's "A Modell of Christian Charity" thus had several weaknesses: What if members of the congregation broke apart because what knitted the body together had become defective? Could the reason be a corruption of Christ's love? What if what Richard Mather (*Apologie* 5) had termed the "matter" of the church (the "visible Saints, or visible beleevers") or the form of the church covenant, the congregation ("a uniting, or combining, or knitting of those Saints together into one visible body, by the band of this holy Covenant") were corrupted? Then the form of the body was in danger of becoming a disproportionate, "confusedly knit and monstrous" body (Herzogenrath, *American* 104-5). As shown in chapter 1.1, the relationship between matter and form was one of the decisive parameters in early modern discourse for deciding whether a body was monstrous or not.

To opponents of Congregationalism the case seemed clear: Hutchinson's multiple offspring was a powerful symbol of a "many-headed monster" (as exemplified by double births, see chapter 3.1), and Dyer's child of a headless body politic. When a female head presided over a body politic (and Hutchinson seemed to have taken a leading role in the Massachusetts Bay Colony for quite some time), a

²²⁰ It could also be said that Antinomians simply carried the idea of unity by love to the extreme. To them, this bond was so central that it needed and should not be troubled by the law. In his fast day sermon of 19 January 1637 (see chapter 1.1), John Wheelwright stressed that "the Law killeth, but it is the spiritt that quickens" ("Sermon" 166). For Antinomians, order was not the product of a body of laws but the automatic outcome of a community of saints possessed by the Holy Spirit. As Edward Howes (see chapter 3.1) commented: "I wonder your people that pretend to know soe much, doe not knowe that Loue is the fulfilling of the Lawe, and that against Loue there is noe Lawe." ("1637" 504).

wrong member of the body had taken control, claimed John Knox in *The First Blast* ([1558]). In his view, a female head was as monstrous and deformed as a headless body. Referring to Mary Tudor, Queen of England and Ireland, Knox considered “the bodie of that commonwelth, where a woman beareth empire,” as “monstruous,” since it lacked “a lafull heade” (27):²²¹ “For who wolde not judge that bodie to be a monstre, where there was no head eminent above the rest, but that the eyes were in the handes, the tonge and mouth beneth in the belie, and the eares in the feet?” (26-27). Dyer’s child also lacked a head, and her eyes were similarly misplaced. Female rule obviously led to division and disorder, especially without the regulating force of male authority—a motif that will be analyzed in more detail in chapter 3.3.

Defending the image of the New England body politic

The colonial magistrates and church elders did their best to counter such negative connotations and to protect the image of the New England body politic as well-formed. *A Short Story* served as a means to corroborate the claim that neither the form of the congregation nor a corruption of Christ’s love endangered the unity of the body politic but individual, mostly female members of the congregation. Already in November 1637 John Winthrop had stated that Anne Hutchinson had “troubled the peace of the commonwealth and the churches here” (D. Hall, ed. 312), and she had been identified as “the foundation of all mischief” due to her claim of direct revelation (D. Hall, ed. 344). This line of argumentation was continued in *A Short Story*. Although there also were males who troubled the peace and order of the colony (Winthrop, for example, deplored the “disturbances of the publick peace” by John Wheelwright “and other erroneous and seditious persons,” 131), Hutchinson was presented as “the root of all these troubles,” as their “breeder and nourisher” and “the head of all this faction (*Dux fæmina facti*)” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, 33, 31).²²² Constructing Anne Hutchinson as the main culprit for the crisis allowed the Bay colony’s officials to decline all responsibility for any deformations of the body

²²¹ For a discussion of headship in Knox’s writings, see Felch 816-8. On Knox, see also chapter 3.3.

²²² The expression is taken from Virgil’s *The Aeneid* (see chapter 4.3 for an analysis of this reference). Also Vicars, an adherent of the providential worldview (see chapter 3.1), had ascribed all responsibility to Hutchinson, using a similar wording as *A Short Story*: Hutchinson “had beene a maine fautrix, if not originall broacher of very many most wicked, dangerous, & damnable opinions” (*Prodigies* 27).

politic: “Identifying rebellion with the body of Anne Hutchinson contains it both socially and temporally. The story of Anne Hutchinson ends when she dies, or perhaps even when she is exiled.” (Field, “Antinomian” 458). According to this story line, individual persons were to be blamed rather than the congregational system.

The colonial magistrates dismissed Anne Hutchinson as “a spiritual bastard” (Reid 530) who could not be brought into connection with the congregational way of church order. The motif of bastardy had already come up at the height of the Antinomian Controversy. During the November trial, for example, one of the attendants had considered Hutchinson’s claim of direct revelation to be “the foundation . . . of all those bastardly things which have been overthrowing by that great meeting” (D. Hall, ed. 344). It was suggested that Hutchinson had renounced her parents by breaching the fifth commandment: “the Lord doth say honour thy father and thy mother.” She had been disrespecting and “dishonouring” the Bay colony’s authorities by having sided with “transgressors of the law” and signed a petition in favor of Wheelwright (D. Hall, ed. 313). In the early years of the colony, open disobedience of children towards their parents belonged to the capital laws of the colony. If a child above sixteen years of age “and of sufficient understanding, shall CURSE, or SMITE their natural FATHER, or MOTHER,” it could be punished by death (*Book of the General Laws* 6).²²³ Much as maternal imagination (see chapters 2.2 and 3.3) could be interpreted as having “erased paternity” (Huet 1), so Hutchinson’s inordinately active mind (see chapter 2.2) erased the influence of the legitimate interpreters of the Scriptures (Valerius 196), who were the spiritual fathers of the colony. In modification of Aristotle’s dictum that “anyone who does not take after his parents is really in a way a monstrosity” (IV, III, 767a/b), leaving the path of one’s parents (as Hutchinson’s was accused of) could be interpreted as the prime cause of monstrosity.

Weld and Winthrop took pains to stress that the Antinomians, and especially Anne Hutchinson, had secretly imported their heretical ideas from England and planted them into New England congregations as a cuckoo did foist his egg to another host. Already in a journal entry of October 1636, Winthrop had claimed (in his first mentioning of her) that Anne Hutchinson had “brought over with her . . . dangerous errors” (*Journal* 193). In his preface to *A Short Story*, Weld summarized the

²²³ On the motif of disobedience towards parents, see also chapter 4.3.

controversy with the words “that some going thither from hence full fraught with many unsound and loose opinions, after a time, began to open their packs, and freely vent their wares to any that would be their customers” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644). And in the main part of *A Short Story* Winthrop repeated his claim that “[t]his woman had learned her skill in *England*,” adding that she “had discovered some of her opinions in the Ship, as shee came over” (31).²²⁴ One year earlier, the anonymously published tract *New Englands First Fruits* (1643) had praised God for “subduing those erroneous opinions carryed over from hence by some of the Passengers” (21).

Antinomian thinking was like the smallpox infection that had been carried over across the Atlantic to a place where it had not existed before. Weld’s preface to *A Short Story* is full of vocabulary referring to an “infection” with the “Plague” and to “leaven” and “venome” that was spread by the “opinionists” (cf. Winthrop, *Journal* 163-2). The author of *New Englands First Fruits* (1643)—possibly Weld²²⁵—similarly wrote of “erronious opinions . . . which for a time infected our Churches peace” (21). Weld presented Anne Hutchinson and those following her as vile network, luring new arrivals into a web of friendliness and slowly poisoning them before they became aware of it:

this was ever their method, to drop a little at once into their followers as they were capable, and never would administer their Physicke, till they had first given good preparatives to make it worke, and then stronger & stronger potions, as they found the Patient able to beare. (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface)

Hutchinson and her followers passed on “poisonous and unwholesome liquor” as part of a Satanic plot aimed at destroying the colony, claimed John Hull (170; cf. 169-70; on Hull see chapter 2.1), and the Reverend Thomas Shepard did “account it no small

²²⁴ Modern scholars are undecided as to whether the claim that the erroneous opinions had arrived in Boston via the arrival of immigrants was an apologetic move (see Shuffelton 240; Stoevers 164) or whether “Anne Hutchinson was an enthusiast before she set foot in New England” (Lovejoy 67). Even opponents of the New England Way such as Samuel Rutherford suggested that the Antinomians “had brought these wicked opinions out of Old *England* with them” (*Survey* 171).

²²⁵ As will also be shown below, some passages of this publication and *A Short Story*’s preface are strikingly similar, wherefore one is tempted to suspect Weld as author of *New Englands First Fruits*; see also chapters 3.3, 3.4, and 4.3.

mercy to myself that the Lord kept me from that contagion” (“The Autobiography” 67).²²⁶

In contrast to disturbers of the peace who only spread disease and disorder, the Bay colony’s officials presented themselves as giving overarching care to their flock and as physicians providing life-rescuing remedies against this plague-like spreading of disease. While Hutchinson’s opinions were termed “venome,” the frequent talks with the Antinomian party were presented as the administration of “Antidotes”: in his preface, Weld pointed out that the ministers (helped by God’s mercy) had been able “to cure those that were diseased already, and to give Antidotes to the rest, to preserve them from infection,” by preaching against the Antinomian errors (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644).

New England colonials even offered advice to their brethren in England who faced similar problems. In 1645, Thomas Shepard expressed his worries in a letter to a friend in England (subsequently published in London) that “*Englands languishing body*” was befallen with “hot fevers and inflammations” due to the rise of Anabaptists and Antinomians (*New Englands Lamentation* 2).²²⁷ While England still was in the midst of severe malady, New England had already successfully administered antidotes and “prescribed” some “seasonable remedies, against the infection of these errorrs” (ibid., title page), and its churches were living in perfect health and order again. Shepard stressed that any “reports of the divisions” in New England were “fables,” wherefore England should “[t]ake counsell of those whom you know to be approved and godly Ministers” (5). It is in this context that Shepard possibly referred indirectly to the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson (see chapter 2.2): “We have seen the fruits of such spirits in these parts, and how God hath cast fire of wrath from Heaven upon some of that way” (*New Englands Lamentation* 3).²²⁸

²²⁶ For an analysis of the metaphors of infection and contagion in the context of the Antinomian Controversy, see Herzogenrath, *American* 98-104, and Silva (chapter 2). As of mid-century it would be Quakerism (see chapter 4.1) that was denounced as a “disease” that needed to be cured by a “physician” (Norton, *Heart* 45).

²²⁷ Also according to Thomas Edwards England had been befallen with countless errors and heresies, such as the belief in mortalism or Antipaedobaptism; but in his view these “maladies and diseases of our Church and State” needed to be “cure[d]” by the “Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament,” who were “our great Physicians” (*Gangraena* sig. A2 and A2 verso).

²²⁸ In his “Autobiography,” referring to the belief that sanctification was no evidence of God’s grace, Shepard claims similarly that “all error is fruitful, so this opinion did gender about a hundred monstrous opinions in the country” (67). On associations between religious heresies and the process of giving birth, see chapter 3.3.

As shown above, it was widely held that a strong form of authority was needed to guarantee peace, and for the New England Congregationalists it was without doubt that the magistrates therefore had the right to punish breaches of the covenant of works. The performance of the colonial magistrates during the Antinomian Controversy was severely criticized by opponents of the New England Way, however. There was a broad consensus that heretical, idolatrous viewpoints needed to be opposed in order to maintain the cohesion of the church, but it was fiercely debated whether the magistrate should have and use coercive power in matters of diverging religious opinions. The Presbyterian Thomas Edwards criticized that due to the absence of synods and classes the colonial churches lacked “authoritative power to call to account and censure such persons” as Antinomians and Familists; the consequence was, claimed Edwards in his *Antapologia* (1644), that they “were necessitated to make use of the Magistrates, and to give the more to them, a power of questioning for doctrines, and judging of errors; and punishing with imprisonment, banishment” (165). Edwards showed himself convinced that if the New England churches had been organized “in the Presbyteriall way, there had never beene so many imprisoned, banished for errors, nor the Magistrates put upon that distinction” (166). The New England elders were accused of having treated Antinomian heresies as civil crimes instead of matters of conscience, the latter posing, in the view of the Presbyterians, the greatest danger (J. Crawford 165-7).²²⁹

The colonial Puritans did their best to counter such accusations. Weld stressed in his report on the three-week Assembly at Cambridge (“New-Towne,” at the time) that it had not been opinions but civil offenses that led to a censuring of the Antinomians. The aim was to prevent them from going “on in their former course, not only to disturb the Churches, but miserably interrupt the civill Peace,” since “they threw contempt both upon Courts, and Churches, and began now to raise sedition amongst us, to the indangering the Common-wealth”:

Hereupon for these grounds named, (and not for their opinions, as themselves falsely reported, and as our godly Magistrates have been much traduced here in *England*) for these reasons (I say) being civill disturbances, the Magistrate convents them . . . and

²²⁹ Also colonial dissenters such as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson opposed the view that civil magistrates held authority over religion. Williams wanted to keep the church free of worldly stains, wherefore he demanded that the civil magistrate should not meddle in religious matters. He laid down his viewpoints in *The Blovy Tenent* (1644), arguing for the principle of liberty of conscience. During her first trial, Hutchinson had maintained that the magistrate had “power over my body but the Lord Jesus hath power over my body and soul” (D. Hall, ed. 338; cf. Hubbard, *General History* 339).

censures them; some were disfranchised, others fined, the incurable amongst them banished. (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface)

Recounting the court's procedures against John Wheelwright, John Winthrop similarly explained in *A Short Story* (1644) that "This case was not matter of conscience, but of a civill nature, and therefore most proper for this Court, to take Cognizance of" (46). Thomas Shepard argued along the same lines one year later. He maintained that no one has ever been "banished" from New England "for their consciences, but for sinning against conscience, after due meanes of conviction, or some other wickednesse which they had no conscience to plead for" (*New Englands Lamentation* 3). For Shepard it was essential that the magistrates had the right to meddle in religious matters: "To cut off the hand of the Magistrate from touching men for their consciences . . . will certainly in time . . . be the utter overthrow . . . of the Reformation begun." The consequence would be that "mens consciences" would be turned into "the safeguard of sin and error, and Sathan himself" (3).

That Winthrop was convinced of the effectiveness of "the hand of the Magistrate" can be seen by his use of the verb *to scatter* in *A Short Story*, which can be interpreted as an effort to counter the powerful motif of a disintegrating body politic as symbolized by Anne Hutchinson's monstrous birth(s). In his *Journal*, writing about Hutchinson's violent death at the hands of the Indians, Winthrop presented the victims as having chosen their fate for themselves: they "had cast off ordinances and churches" and "dwelt scatteringly near a mile asunder" (475). By leaving the community they had not only made themselves an easy victim of Indian attacks but actively destroyed the unity of the church. In *A Short Story* (1644), which addressed an English audience, Winthrop used the term *to scatter* to stress that it were the Bay colony's authorities who had destroyed the Antinomians' leaders.²³⁰ Although Hutchinson's claim of having had direct revelations was presented as divine intervention and as evidence that "it pleased the Lord to heare the prayers of his afflicted people," it was "the care and indeavour [sic] of the wise and faithfull Ministers of the Churches, assisted by the Civill authority," that made it possible "to discover this Master-piece of the old Serpent, and to break the brood by scattering the

²³⁰ In the Scriptures, the term *to scatter* is used in the narration of God's punishment of those who had destroyed the unity of mankind by building the tower of Babel (Gen. 11.1 and 11. 9). The narrative offered an explanation for the differing discursive practices in the world, for diversity in mankind in general, and for the appearance of monsters (see D. Williams 61-63; Wittkower 65).

Leaders” (43). In his journal, Winthrop had described Hutchinson as the active agent, but in *A Short Story* Winthrop ascribed the active part to the ministers and the magistrates.

Closely connected to the motif of scattering or otherwise destroying an enemy was the usage of the term *to reduce*. At the beginning of Hutchinson’s examination at the court in Newtown in November 1637 Winthrop had stated that the talks with Hutchinson had the aim to “reduce” Hutchinson if she “be in an erroneous way” so that she “may become a profitable member here among us” (D. Hall, ed. 312; cf. Winthrop, *Journal* 158, 233, 245). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the meaning of *to reduce* ranged from bringing someone under one’s rule and under control (in the meaning of *to conquer* or *to subdue*) to correcting someone’s errors in conduct or in belief, thereby “civilizing” him or her.²³¹ Reports on groups that were regarded as uncivilized, such as the Irish or the Native Americans, are full of expressions that “those barbarous people” needed to be “reduced to the knowledge of true religions” (Hakluyt 625). *To reduce* had the implicit meaning of diminishing complexity and chaos, which often meant eliminating the foreign (as in “reducing to civility,” or in “reducing” in the sense of “translating” a foreign language into English). By being reduced, chaos and barbarism, heathens and uncivilized groups of people were transformed into another, higher state of being, leading to order, truth or civility.²³²

The term *to reduce* implied that superfluous parts of the body politic—be it Native Americans, Antinomians, or Quakers—needed to be cut back in order to form a coherent body politic. For Nowell, for example, it was unconceivable that the Native Americans could ever form a legitimate part of New England: “The Inhabitants of the land will not joyn or mix with us to make one Body,” wherefore they will rather “be thorns in our sides.” Drawing upon Gen. 25.23, Nowell warned that “Two Nations are in the womb and will be striving” (287). As soon as the Native Americans offered resistance to European efforts of Christianization, European settlers conceived of them as a limb that needed to be cut away: “We must subdue the

²³¹ On the various uses of the term *reduce* in early modern texts, see Axtell 45-46; Hebel, *Images* 238-9; Oberg 25. For a discussion of the term with regard to Hutchinson’s trials, see C. Smith 451n2.

²³² For examples, see Bacon 3, 9; E. Spencer 1, 9. But *to reduce* could also have the contrary meaning, describing a process that ended with a sinful state of being; see for example Gookin’s “Historical Collections of the Indians in New England” (223); but also in this context the term is connected to the concept of civilization, see *ibid.* 177.

foe, or be subdued; . . . ‘Till the infected limb be cut away’ (Wolcott 277). Regarding the Antinomians, the November Court of 1637 had come to the same conclusion: “two so opposite parties could not contain the same body, without apparent hazard of ruin to the whole,” so it was “agreed to send away some of the principal” (Winthrop, *Journal* 239). Regarding Hutchinson’s claim of immediate revelations, Winthrop demanded to “cut off from us [those] that trouble us, for this is the thing that hath been the root of all the mischief” (D. Hall, ed. 342). Similar to superfluous limbs of deformed newborn children, these outgrowths threatened to turn a well-formed body into a hybrid, monstrous being. In his famous *A Shorte Treatise of Politike Pouuer* (1656), John Ponet likewise argued that “[t]his lawe testifieth to euery mannes conscience, that it is naturall to cutte awaie an incurable membre, which (being suffred) wolde destroye the hole body.”²³³ Winthrop and his co-fighters against Antinomianism prescribed medicine or—if the antidotes failed to work—intervened in an almost surgical way.

Congregational churches were made up of countless individual bodies, so diseases of the individual body could negatively affect the church or the body politic (cf. Fissell 1; Healy 3-5 and *passim*). Heretics and criminals had to leave, otherwise the rest of the community risked contamination. The Cambridge Platform of 1648 stated that censures of the church, such as excommunication, should be spoken out in order to prevent religious offenses and to reclaim erring “brethren,” but also “for purging out the leaven which may infect the whole lump” (XIV, 1, p. 109). Taking over Christ’s demand that his disciples should keep away from unrepentant sinners (Matt. 18.17), it was hoped that through measures such as banishment or excommunication the health of the body would be restored. Such measures were believed to have a “restorative or ‘medicinal’” function (D. Brown 534), since the sinner had the chance to repent while the community avoided infection. If the cause of the infection was kept inside, the whole body politic might be in danger: referring to sodomites, Samuel Danforth demanded for example in 1648 that “[t]he gangrened part must be cut off, or the whole Body will perish” (21). In punishing sodomites, God “cut off this rotten and putrid Member” in order to “prevent the spreading of the

²³³ No pag.; chapter “Whether it be lafull to depose an euil gouernour, and kill a tyranne,” Section G. Ponet’s *A Shorte Treatise* is full of references to the legitimate head of a body politic and the misuse of power, including the question whether a tyrannical ruler may be killed. It was also discussed whether a body politic with the wrong head could have its head cut off, a debate that intensified in the Civil War years as mentioned above. On Ponet, see Brammall.

Infection” (*Cry of Sodom* 15). The “system of medicine” does not only “provide convincing explanations of bodily misfortune,” explains Healy, but it also comprises an “attempt to control the underlying processes, to re-establish order” (10).

The various measures to contain the Antinomian threat were presented as a necessary, radical “cure,” and it was implied that the methods used needed to be as radical and violent as the disease itself: it was necessary to “scatter” one’s enemies, to “cut off” their heads or “break” their necks. Thomas Bakewell, who supported the Presbyterian faction in the Westminster Assembly (Pederson 222n54), had compared the Antinomians and their errors to “a bastard brood” whose “necks” were “chopt off, and their carkasses throwne to the dunghill” (title page). The removal of heads could also refer to the removal of heretical ideas. Ideas were metaphorically equated with “Heads,” as in Thomas Bakewell’s most influential work: *A Short View of the Antinomian Errours: With a Briefe and Plaine Answer to Them, As the Heads of Them Lye in Order in the Next Page of this Book* (1643).²³⁴ Discourse was seen as having a life of its own; once started, it was difficult to contain. Some early modern writers therefore compared discourse to the mythical figure hydra, whose heads grew anew after having been cut off: “Even as the heads of *Hydra* smitten of are seven times doubled, so unto me delivering one discourse, many other arise.” (d’Anghiera 226 verso). The English scholar John Spencer (see chapter 4.2) complained in 1663 that as soon as one had “cut off the neck” of one “Opinion” there are countless other “heads,” that is, “monstrous relations,” which “grow upon it” (*Prodigies* 102). With Antinomian opinions it seemed to be no different. Winthrop is said to have remarked upon Dyer’s monstrous birth and its exhumation that the “Lord hath fearfully indigated [sic] there hydros [hydras?] of opinions” (Yonge 36, incl. n45). For Edwards, Anabaptism and Antinomianism were “that many headed monstrous *Hydra* of sectarisme sprung up in these times in *England*” (*Gangraena* The Preface). Without control, heretical viewpoints would multiply, just as Hutchinson’s mole had multiplied monstrousness.²³⁵

Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* again serves well to illustrate vividly how the idea of a superfluous body part that needed to be removed was related to the early

²³⁴ See also the “Cardinall points, or Heads” in Charleton’s *The Darknes [sic] of Atheism Dispelled by the Light of Nature* of 1652 (A Preparatory Advertisement to the Reader; see also the Contents: Chapter I, Section II, Article 14: „An abstract, or Anacephalae[lig]osis of the whole demonstration“).

²³⁵ The motif of the hydra will turn up again in the context of Cotton Mather’s interpretation of the monstrous births, see chapter 4.3.

modern concept of the body politic. In part II of chapter 29, “Of those things that Weaken, or tend to the Dissolution of a Common-wealth,” Hobbes explained that the danger of division due to an imbalance or a lack of authority was equal to a “Disease in the Naturall Body of man” (172). He stated that the dangers resulting from an “Imperfect Institution” or make-up of “Common-wealths” “resemble the diseases of a naturall body, which proceed from a Defectuous Procreation” (167). To illustrate this point, Hobbes referred to a prodigy that he claimed to have seen himself: “a man, that had another man growing out of his side, with an head, armes, breast, and stomach, of his own” (*Leviathan* 172).

Hobbes referred with high probability to the famous case of the Genoan nobleman Lazarus Colloredo (Burns, “King’s” 202n39) who was joined at the chest to his Siamese twin, John Baptist. In the late 1630s and early 1640s, Colloredo exhibited himself all over Europe, including Scotland and the court of Charles I of England, an event that was covered in many ballads. Also *The Two Inseparable Brothers* (1637), which had a woodcut representing Colloredo on the title page (see fig. 10), offered a ballad tune.

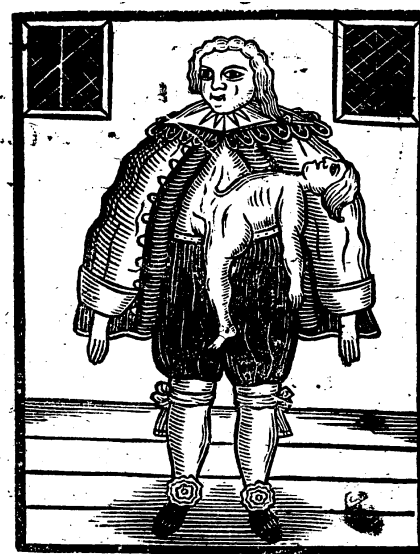


Fig. 10. Woodcut illustration on the title page of MP’s *The Two Inseparable Brothers. Or A True and Strange Description of a Gentleman (an Italian by Birth) about Seventeene Yeeres of Age* (London, 1637).

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The brother of Colloredo could not be cut away because the twins were connected through vital veins. The upper body and left leg of John Baptist emerged out of his brother’s thorax, and he was said to display basic signs of life, such as moving when touched.²³⁶

²³⁶ See Bondeson viii-xix; Burns, “King’s” 191-2; Gould 125; Pender, “Bodyshop” 99.

To cut away troublesome parts and thereby remove disease from the covenantal body of the Bay colony was equally difficult, and it soon turned out that any attempts to that purpose were only partly successful. As Herzogenrath suggests, the orthodoxy failed in its efforts to form the New England body politic and to maintain order because they fought an enemy that was fluid and “liquid” (105) and not solid, which made it almost impossible “to sustain the difference between inside and outside, host and virus” (*American* 104-5; cf. 112-5).²³⁷ In *A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr Balls Discourse of Set Formes of Prayer* (1642), John Cotton had evoked the idea of a church that still was vitally connected to the Church of England (see chapter 3.1); in the course of the 1640s, the Bay colonials had to learn that they were also firmly connected to what they considered dispensable outgrowths of the community of saints. It was much more difficult to control cause and effect as the Cambridge Platform of 1648 implied.

The Presbyterians saw monstrous outgrowths such as Antinomianism as an integral part of the congregational system of church order—both were as closely connected as the two Colloredo brothers. The Presbyterians doubted that the New England communities could be restored by removing individual outgrowths; they regarded the form of the church as so defective that only a complete change of the organizing principle could solve the problem. Baillie and others clearly saw a corruption of the “form” of church organization—Congregationalism—rather than its matter—the members of the churches. *A Short Story*, with its strong focus on Anne Hutchinson as individual culprit, failed in its attempt to deny that the two monstrous births were a product of the New England Way. While Winthrop and Weld had tried to hold the biological mothers responsible for the monstrous births, the Presbyterians regarded Antinomianism as the legitimate child of the Bay colony, and not as its bastard. Now it was the Church of England that denied parentage and feared infection from abroad.

The Presbyterians described the New England Way as monstrous—transferring the monstrosity of human bodies to the body politic, much as Winthrop

²³⁷ Although, like Herzogenrath, he was not referring to Colloredo, also Nathaniel Hawthorne’s comments on Anne Hutchinson call to mind this early modern prodigy. Anne Hutchinson’s husband, William, seemed in Hawthorne’s view like “a mere insignificant appendage of his mightier wife” (24). As Hubbard summarized it, William had been “guided wholly by his wife” (*General History* 339). Colloredo symbolized a deformed couple of twins, much as Anne and William Hutchinson represented a deformed couple of husband and wife, with the wife having appropriated the role of the head of the family.

had transferred monstrosity onto the Antinomians' viewpoints (see chapter 3.1).²³⁸ For Thomas Edwards it was clear that it were the Independent churches that produced monsters (that is, heretical thinking) such as the belief in the mortality of the soul:

. . . and daily the Independent Churches like Africa doe breed and bring forth the Monsters of Anabaptisme, Antinomianisme, Familisme, nay that huge Monster and old flying serpent of the Mortality of the soul of man, and indeed there is no end of errors that the Independent principles and practices lead unto. (*Antapologia* 262)²³⁹

Referring to the Antinomian Controversy, Edwards commented that "Gods visibly witnessing from Heaven against the Separation, in giving them so fearfull sins, in inflicting fearfull judgements, and leaving them to strange divisions" was the evident consequence of separatism (*Antapologia* 34). Robert Baillie regarded Independent thinking as equal to or even worse than Brownism: "both wayes really are one and the same," and

in the comparison of the events which have befallen [sic] to both wayes, it will be seen that the miscarriages, and (because of them) the marks of Gods anger have been more manifest upon this latter way [Independent thinking] then upon the former [Brownism] (*Dissuasive* 58).

In Baillie's view, "the Brownists fatal miscarriages" made it easier for the "Patrons" of "Independency" to bring the Independent way "to the utmost pitch of perfection" (58). Independency and Brownism were presented as dangerous flames that threatened to consume the established church and possibly all of England (*Dissuasive* 1). In Congregationalist churches, aberrant thinking was "assisted and fenced with all the security that Civil Laws . . . and gracious Magistrates at their absolute devotion, could afford" (*Dissuasive* 59). As long as the Bay colonials stuck to their systems of church government "they shall ever be infected with heresies" and troubled by

²³⁸ Many recipients of *A Short Story* followed Winthrop's example. Samuel Clarke (see chapters 4.1 and 4.2) stated in *A Mirrour or Looking-Glass Both for Saints, and Sinners* (1646) that Hutchinson was someone who "held many monstrous and Hereticall opinions" (114). Commenting on Dyer's stillborn child, Rutherford claimed in 1648 that the "father of the Monster," who had belonged to "the grossest and most active *Familists*," had been "convented before the Church, for making Christ, and the Saints a monster" and holding "monstrous lies" (*Survey* 181-2). Already Thomas Shepard had used similar metaphors referring to heretical beliefs—not explicitly referring to the monstrous births, but surely knowing about them (see chapter 2.2).

²³⁹ Referring to either *An Apologeticall Narration* or Richard Mather's *An Apologie for the Churches in New-England* (or both; see chapter 3.1), Edwards maintained similarly that there was "a *Monster*" "lurking in this Apologie, and to be sure one Monster of opinions you all hold generally, and some of you have preached for, A Toleration of divers sects and opinions" (*Antapologia* 262). On Africa as a place where monsters abounded, see chapter 4.4.

“Anabaptists, Seekers Enthusiasts, Familists, and Antinomians,” wrote Rutherford (*Survey* 177).

Baillie was convinced that the male establishment had lost control and authority in the Bay colony. Pointing out that Jane Hawkins, Dyer’s midwife (see chapter 2.2), was associated with witchcraft, had “familiarity with the devil,” and did “commit devillish Malefices,” Baillie wondered about the “abomination” that this woman got away “without punishment” and that the whole issue was not even “inquired after” (*Dissuasive* 64; cf. 73). Referring to Anne Hutchinson and her followers Baillie stated:

The troublers of New *England* did not only plead for a freedom and immunity from all civill Laws . . . but were also ready if they had not been prevented by force of Arms, in a very unjust and seditious manner to have risen against the State, and to have cut the throats of the opposites (*Anabaptism* 59)

Especially John Cotton was made responsible for the fact that none of the alleged “Seducers” (meaning the Antinomians) “were ever called to an account by the Presbyterie of that Church till after the Assembly,” which could not be excused (Baillie, *Dissuasive* 58).

Thus John Cotton and his brethren had good reason to fear that he would be made responsible for Hutchinson’s errors. Cotton had been one of the most important spokesmen for the congregational system, and, even worse, he had praised Hutchinson and shared some of her viewpoints that could be described as tending towards enthusiasm.²⁴⁰ Cotton’s opponents in the transatlantic debates gladly took up his Antinomian affiliations and used them as evidence of their claim that the congregational church order fostered heresies and erratic opinions. According to Baillie, Cotton had been so deeply enmeshed in Antinomian thinking, “wandering into the horrible Errours of the *Antinomians* and *Familists*, with his deare friend *Mistresse Hutchinson*,” that he came to embrace separatism (*Dissuasive* 57). Thomas Edwards used Cotton’s involvement with the Antinomian crisis to argue that the New England elite was inferior to that of England: “Take the prime man of them all in new England, and yet, he is not to be accounted as judicious and learned as ever any this kingdome bred” (*Antapologia* 40):

²⁴⁰ On Cotton siding with Anne Hutchinson, see chapter 2.2 and Stoevers 35-40, who covers also Cotton’s dispute with Baillie.

. . . the most eminent Minister in New-England (though he be an excellent and worthy man) hath had his errours; and I referre you for prooffe to . . . his being deceived (for a time) in the businesse of M *Wheelwright*, and Mistris *Hutchinson*, and some of those opinions about Sanctification evidencing Justification (*Antapologia* 40)

Baillie and Rutherford pointed out—like Weld—that the Antinomians’ erroneous thinking had spread like a highly contagious disease across Boston so that “almost no Society, no Family of that Land was free of that Pest” (Baillie, *Dissuasive* 61; cf. Rutherford, *Survey* 177). But while Weld and Winthrop presented these infections as diseases that could be cured, Baillie and Rutherford regarded them as a sign of the weaknesses of the congregational way of church order. After all, even the “Church of *Boston*”—“the best and most famous of their Churches”—had been “infected with that Leprosie” (Baillie, *Dissuasive* 58, 61). Weld himself had admitted in his preface to *A Short Story* that all strata of the population had been infiltrated with Hutchinson’s “Opinions”: her followers “had some of all sorts, and quality, in all places to defend and Patronise them,” the Magistrates, “Gentlemen,” “Scholars, and men of learning,” as well as “men eminent for Religion, parts, and wit” (Winthrop, 1644).

At least in some aspects, however, Baillie, Rutherford, and other English polemic writers agreed with the narrative offered in *A Short Story*. The monstrous births were seen as the outflow of the “Omnipontency of Divine Justice,” claimed Rutherford in 1648 (*Survey* 181). And Baillie marveled at the obstinacy of the Antinomians in the course of the crisis, all the more

when God visibly from the Heavens had declared his anger against some of their chief Leaders, punishing Mistresse *Hutchinson* with a monstrous birth of more then thirty misshapen creatures at one time . . . , and Mistresse *Dyer* her principall assistant, with another monstrous birth (*Dissuasive* 63)

Ephraim Pagitt stressed in his best-selling compilation of heresies *Heresiography: or, A Description of the Heretickes and Sectaries of these Latter Times* (1645) that although God “suffered the enemie to sow” corrupting opinions, in the end “hee manifested his dislike in notorious judgements upon the prime fomenters of them” by the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson (100).

Years later, Edward Johnson, a leading colonial figure, and William Hubbard, minister at Ipswich, MA, tried to complete the task begun by Weld and Winthrop. In the early 1650s, Johnson authored a *History of New-England*, better known as

Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England (1653), which is one of the first comprehensive overviews on New England's history and, unlike earlier histories, "not at all apologetic or defensive in tone"; instead, the role of New England "in the history of redemption" is stressed (Gura, *Glimpse* 229, 230; cf. 229-32). Johnson obviously tried to create a narrative that countered earlier points of criticism one by one. He pointed out that in spite of "hot headed" Antinomians (121) all official agencies of the Bay colony, "the Synod, Civil Government, and the Churches of Christ, kept their proper place, each moving in their own sphear . . . , yet not refusing the help of each other" (122). Referring to the Cambridge Synod of 1637, Johnson expressed his conviction that if "the Godly and Reverend Presbyterian Party" had "made their eye-witness" of the work of the Synod

they had assuredly saved themselves much labour, which I dare presume they would have spent worthily otherwayes, then in writing so many books to prove Congregational or Independant [sic] Churches to the sluce [sic], through which so many flouds of Error flow in (118)

Johnson re-used the motif of beheading those who had propagated false viewpoints: God assisted "some of his most orthodox servants, and chiefe Champions of his truth . . . to bring to the block these Traytours to his truths one by one, and behead them before your eyes" (118). John Cotton and his co-fighters are celebrated for having heroically been "suppressing of Errours, Sects, and Heresies, by the blessed word of his truth, causing his servants in this Synod, mutually to agree" (121). Johnson presents Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy as exception rather than the rule, as one short interruption of an otherwise continuous story of success and progress.

By emphasizing that the monstrous births were God's punishment for the sins of individual persons, Johnson denied that the congregational system was to be blamed for all these troubles:

. . . the Lord had poynted directly to their sinne by a very fearfull Monster, that another of these women brought forth, they striving to bury it in oblivion, but the Lord brought it to light, setting forth the view of their monstrous Errors in this prodigious birth. (133)

As Field points out, Johnson intended to "make Anne Hutchinson the embodiment of the controversy," whereby he not only "minimized Cotton's culpability" but "figured

dissent as something contained in a person who can be exiled (‘cut away’ from the body politic, so to say)” (“Antinomian” 457).

Taking up the motif of silly women (see chapters 2.2 and 3.3), Johnson described the Antinomians as “very ignorant” and “erronious persons” who were “easily perverted,” seduced by “blinde guides,” and therefore “much to be pittied” (131-4). As Johnson summarized it, the strategy of the “erronists”

was onely devised to weaken the Word of the Lord in the mouth of the Ministers, and withal to put both ignorant and unlettered Men and Women, in a posture of Preaching to a multitude, that they might be praised for their able Tongue. (Book I, 95)

Johnson illustrated his point by referring to an episode that allegedly had happened to him when one of these erroneous persons asked him to “[c]ome along” with him: “T’le [sic] bring you to a Woman that Preaches better Gospell then any of your black-coates that have been at the Ninnevercity” (Book I, 95-6). The term *Ninneversity* would remind anybody with knowledge of the Scriptures of the ancient Assyrian city Nineveh (Jon. 1 and 3). It is described as a wicked city worthy of destruction that was spared by God only since a great part of the population “can not discern between their right hand, & their left hand” (Jon. 4.11)—what might also be said of Anne Hutchinson and her followers: Hutchinson’s “customers” were silly women who resembled the inhabitants of Nineveh; they had not been able to distinguish between right and wrong, or between Christ and false prophets. Johnson presented the Antinomian crisis as a case of “social rebellion: lay people against ministers; ignorance against learning; women against the authority of men” (Winship, *Making Heretics* 83).

In the early 1680s, the colony’s authorities continued with their project of presenting the Bay colony in a positive light: the General Court of Boston commissioned William Hubbard to compose *A General History of New England* (see Hebel, *Images* 86). Hubbard drew upon various sources for his *A General History* and he mostly took over earlier interpretations of the two monstrous births. Hubbard briefly mentions the two ill-fated pregnancies when recounting the attempts of John Cotton and others to convince Hutchinson and her followers in their exile in Rhode Island of the necessity of the proceedings of the Court and the Church against

them.²⁴¹ Since the work was commissioned by the General Court, Hubbard's main motivation was to convey a positive image of the colony.

Like Johnson, Hubbard tried to save John Cotton's reputation by blaming solely the "Hutchinsonians" for the erroneous opinions. Hubbard presents Cotton as a victim of Anne Hutchinson—"it being not probable that she gathered them [her errors] from the ministry of Mr. Cotton, or any other minister in New England" (*General History* 286). Hubbard even took over Cotton's terminology of "fathering" false beliefs upon others, informing his readers that "[m]any of the aforesaid opinions were fathered upon Mr. Cotton" (298). When the Antinomians "were questioned by some brethren about these things, they carried it as if they held forth nothing but what they had received from Mr. Cotton"—obviously they had re-interpreted "some unwary expressions, occasionally let fall by that worthy and eminent divine," distorting their meaning "to a far different and contrary sense, than ever they were intended by the speaker" (*General History* 281). The colonial merchant John Hull had similarly accused the Antinomians of having "put their senses and meanings to be the meaning of their ministers," thereby damaging the reputation of John Cotton, teacher of the Boston Church (170).

²⁴¹ See Chapter XLIII, "Ecclesiastical affairs, with other occurrences, at Providence and Rhode Island to the year 1643. Intercourse between them and the Massachusetts" (335-50, esp. 341-2).

3.3 Early modern public debate and misogynistic rhetoric: Thomas Weld, John Wheelwright Jr. and Sr., Anne Bradstreet

“And as her [Anne Hutchinson’s] Errours were publike, and spread abroad in that and other Countries: so this Monster of hers is famously known in al [sic] the *New-England* Churches, and in many other parts of the world.”

--Robert Groves, *Gleanings: Or, A Collection of some Memorable passages* (1651), 42-43--

John Winthrop and Thomas Weld tried to form a coherent narrative of the Antinomian Controversy and Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s monstrous births that supported their attempts to present the Bay colony in a favorable light; but, as has also been shown in the previous chapter, *A Short Story* had to compete with other, diverging narratives on the transatlantic market of discourses. In 1645, *Mercurius Americanus, Mr. Welds His Antitype, Or, Massachusetts Great Apologie Examined* was published in London. As will be shown in this chapter, its author questioned Weld’s story line, but he shared some of the potentially misogynistic tendencies of *A Short Story* that characterized mid-seventeenth century culture and public debate of the Atlantic World. The prominent role of Anne Hutchinson “gendered” the Antinomian Controversy and New England “public discourse” (Reid 529, 533). This will be further elaborated by analyzing the literary activities of the Bay colonial poet Anne Bradstreet, whose writings possibly had been influenced by her knowledge of the two famous New England monstrous births. Analyzing Bradstreet’s biography as a writer will shed light on both the limits females had to encounter as well as the possibilities they had for reshaping potentially misogynistic concepts. The writings of John Wheelwright the Elder, finally, will serve as a reminder that males, too, could be or feel like victims of the public discursive space, struggling with a loss of control over previously made statements; not only women but also men were discredited for their “corrupt minds and haughty spirits” and publicly attacked for having “secretly sowed seeds of division and schism in the country” (Hubbard, *General History* 282).

The setting in which the transatlantic debate on the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson unfolded was a troubled one. The rise of sects associated with sexual

license²⁴² in combination with women speaking up in public created the unsettling impression that women sped up the spread of heterodox opinions, destroyed the established order both at home and in society, and contributed to the felt decline of morals. The religious and political turnovers of the Civil War period and the Commonwealth led to fears of a social turnover. Ever more women felt empowered by religious movements such as Antinomianism and Quakerism, and a rising number of female prophets claimed to have been impregnated by Christ or the Holy Ghost, as publications such as *A Declaration* (1646) and *Ranters Monster* (1652) deplored (see chapter 3.1). As Cressy remarked, these stories “drew attention to the problem of controlling unruly women, at a time when patriarchal discipline, like other forms of authority, seemed to be crumbling” (“Lamentable” 54). A noteworthy example of an unruly woman is Katherine Chidley, whose aims and motivations seem to have strongly resembled those of Anne Hutchinson: she published politico-religious tracts and engaged in public debate in London, openly questioning the authority of the clergy and her husband in spiritual matters. Chidley opposed in particular Thomas Edwards, a minister of the Church of England fighting religious radicalism and toleration (see chapter 3.1, n196).

Facilitated by the breakdown of official censorship, a pamphlet war on the role of women in society ensued from the 1640s up to the 1660s.²⁴³ In the decades following publication of John Knox’s influential *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women* (1558), a series of pamphlets was printed taking up and expanding Knox’s arguments that female rule was unnatural, a “subversion of good order” (9), and not acknowledged by Scripture. Joseph Swetnam’s notorious misogynistic *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Forward, and Unconstant women*, first printed in 1615, was republished several times up to the 1680s. The anonymously published *Hic Mulier* and *Haec-vir* pamphlets (1620) railed at “monstrous,” “Masculine” women who were “Base” and “Barbarous” in their digression from nature “and an *Antithesis* to kinde” (*Hic Mulier* sig. A3, B). The authors of such works could draw upon the still highly valued writings of Aristotle

²⁴² Sectarians were held to propagate grotesque notions of the family and to practice group marriage and other vices (Valerius 183). On the title page of Reading’s *The Ranters Ranting* (1650), for example, sectarians were shown kissing each other’s bare buttocks or dancing nakedly.

²⁴³ Already from the tenth to eleventh century there was controversy over the role of women in England. On the “querelle des femmes” and the debate over female participation in politics, see Hughes; Kamensky 19-21; Malcolmson and Suzuki, eds.; Romack 209-11. On gender roles in England in the 1640s and 1650s, see J. Crawford 114-45; Fissell 93-94, 162-5; Purkiss 163-85; J. Turner.

who had presented the female sex as a monstrous aberration—as “a deformed male” (II, III, 737a). As quoted in chapter 3.2, for Aristotle “anyone who does not take after his parents is really in a way a monstrosity,” and the “first beginning of this deviation is when a female is formed instead of a male” (IV, III, 767a/b).²⁴⁴

The effects of these transformative processes and ferocious debates were discernible in various fields of public discourse in England: in political and religious controversies and in the way the female sex was conceived, which in turn influenced the emerging discourses of early science. Nature—traditionally conceived of as female and metaphorically described as “Mother Earth” acting as “a Nursing-Mother to the Creatures” (Boyle, *Free Enquiry* 161)—came to be ascribed a disorderly and chaotic character: nature rather “endeauoureth an imperfect and depraued Conception then none at all, because she is greedy of propagation,” explained Crooke in 1631 (297). Already in 1616, Godfrey Goodman had stated in *The Fall of Man, Or the Corrvption of Natvre* that nature had turned from “a louing mother” into “a partiall step-dame, wholly tending and enclining to corruption” (15) and helplessly producing monsters.²⁴⁵ The feeling that the world was unstable was connected to the idea that the world and nature degenerated more and more due to the fall of man, which had been brought about by a woman, Eve. While before there had been perfect harmony between God, nature, and mankind, now the flesh corrupted human nature.

Especially the female womb turned into the prime symbol of the force and the failures of nature. While in medieval times the womb was judged as hospitable and nourishing, possessing almost miraculous abilities by bringing forth new life in mostly unknown ways, the womb became the source of disease in the early seventeenth century (Fissell 53-89). A “faulty constitution of the Womb” (Lemnius, *First Book*, 22) or the matrix were popular and wide-spread physiological explanations for monstrosity, as has been shown in chapter 2.2 with regard to moles. A well-known example of a work propagating the theory of the “bad womb” is John Sadler’s *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (1636), first published in 1632. For Sadler, a “Dr in Physick” who drew mainly upon Galen and Hippocrates, the

²⁴⁴ The reason for this deformity, Aristotle explained, was that the female equivalent to semen, “menstrual discharge,” lacked “the principle of Soul,” which therefore needed to be provided by male semen (II, III, 737a; cf. IV, VI, 775a). On Aristotle commenting on females as monstrous deformity, see Boylan 107-8. On Aristotelian theories on male and female seed, see chapter 2.2.

²⁴⁵ On the analogy between disorderly nature and women, see Merchant 127-48; on the motif of nature as nurturing mother (“mother earth”), see *ibidem* 1-41.

womb was the place of origin for an impressive range of diseases: “convulsions, epilepsies, apoplexies, palseyes, hecticke fevers, dropsies, malignant ulcers, and to bee short, there is no disease so ill but may procede from the evill quality of it” (The Epistle Dedicatory).

Throughout the seventeenth century, birth and conception were considered a mysterious-stricken process in both Old and New England, wherefore the female womb easily could be ascribed qualities that suited best one’s polemical objectives. As the English natural philosopher Francis Bacon put it in 1620, the details of generation were the object of “contentions and barking disputations” (8). More than twenty years later, the English physician William Harvey called birth “a dark, obscure business” (539). This viewpoint was shared by John Eliot, the Puritan missionary to the Native Americans who had commented on the exhumation of Dyer’s stillborn child (see chapter 1.1): Eliot considered the creation of new life “a strang business” (“Letter” 31). Small wonder, then, that birth and related topics figured prominently among *The secret miracles of nature* (Lemnius) and that the American colonial poet Benjamin Tompson regarded female wombs as “secret cabinets” where nature did “hide her masterpiece” (221).²⁴⁶

The womb’s reproductive abilities were used by women to claim more authority in religious matters, wherefore opponents of female participation in the public sphere used negative associations with the womb to discredit women. In the heated debates of the Civil War, the trope of birth was a popular polemical tool for devising bleak scenarios for the future. The female body—especially the womb and the reproductive organs—was used to point out deformations of the body politic (see Romack). Good examples are the *Mistris Parliament* pamphlets, published in London from 1648 to 1660, when the series’ title was changed to *Mris. Rump*. The author(s), who published under the acronym “Mercurious Melancholicus” and obviously belonged to the Royalist faction, described Parliament as a whore struggling in labor; she finally was “miraculously delivered of a *Monster* of a deformed shape” (Melancholicus, *Brought to Bed* 8) without a head (*Famous Tragedie* 6).²⁴⁷ The product of the female womb served as a means for expressing critique of a dysfunctional body politic.

²⁴⁶ On the term *cabinet* and its use in seventeenth-century tracts on childbearing, see Fissell 189.

²⁴⁷ See similarly Melancholicus’s *Mistris Parliament Presented in her Bed* (1648). On the *Mistris Parliament* pamphlets as a critique of female participation in politics, see Burns, “King’s” 190-1; Fissell 162-95; Hughes 129-32; Purkiss 163-85; Romack 216-9; J. Turner 74-117.

Also in religiously motivated discourses negative connotations related to the female sex were used to discredit opponents or to lament the overall situation. The trope of monstrous conceptions, for example, served to bewail the strong increase of “multiplicities of opinions” (J. Taylor, *Ranters* 1) and faulty theological concepts. Echoing the widely held association of monstrosity with menstruation (see chapter 2.2), John Norton referred to “the concurrence of multitude of Heresies and mutability in Religion, which gave occasion to that opprobrious and horrid Proverb, *The Christian Faith is menstruous*” (Abel 48). Heretical viewpoints were an “ugly Child” that “rose” from the “Bowels” of the sects (R. Williams, *George Fox* 43; cf. Baxter, “Treatise” 204), and, even worse, errors of the same “litter” were prone to “beget more” (Ward 21). Seventeenth-century heresiographers described on a collective level what William Perkins had formulated with regard to the individual sinner, paralleling the different degrees of sinning with the various stages from conception to delivery: “*Temptation, Conception, Birth, and Perfection*” (*Whole Treatise* 38).

As Cressy summarized it, “in the gender politics of the 1640s, social conflict, monstrosity, and religious deviance were constantly in a state of collision” (“Lamentable” 54), and this diagnosis can also be applied to the Massachusetts Bay Colony of the late 1630s. Anne Hutchinson, and, to a lesser extent, Mary Dyer, having mothered aberrant opinions as well as aberrant bodies, offered a perfect target for misogynistic rhetoric. Especially in Anne Hutchinson all negative character traits of insubordinate women seemed to be combined. When Edmund Browne wrote about the two failed pregnancies in 1638 (see chapter 3.1), he referred to Hutchinson and her followers as “conceited persons” and to Dyer as “young and lusty and active in holding forth Mrs. Hutchinson’s conceits or some of them” (“Letter” 230). Hutchinson, Winthrop had claimed, was a woman “of a very proud spirit” (*Journal* 253), and if it had been Hutchinson’s (and not Dyer’s) miscarriage that was covered in *Newes from New-England* (1642) this wording would help explain why the compiler had decided to adorn the title page with an allegory of pride and wantonness (see chapter 3.1). Rutherford maintained in 1648 that Hutchinson was “haughty, bold, active in wit, eloquent, vaine, and selfe-conceited” (*Survey* 176). She contradicted the ideal of the virtuous, modest woman, as Winthrop had taken pains to stress in *A Short Story* (1644): Hutchinson’s husband, William, was characterized as “a very honest

and peaceable man, of good estate,” which stood in sharp contrast to the description of Hutchinson as “a woman of a haughty and fierce carriage, of a nimble wit and active spirit, and a very voluble tongue, more bold then a man, though in understanding and judgement, inferiour [sic] to many women” (31; cf. Winthrop, *Journal* 193).²⁴⁸

Hutchinson personified the female threat to established authorities in politics and religion, and her viewpoints seemed to pave the way to sexual leniency and immorality. In his preface to *A Short Story*, Weld repeated the standpoint brought forward during Hutchinson’s church trial (see chapter 2.2) that the belief in the mortality of the soul caused people to become liars and to be “loose and degenerate in their practices (for these opinions will certainly produce a filthy life by degrees)” (Winthrop, *A Short Story*, 1644). Weld also hinted at the synchronicity of Hutchinson’s sins and Captain John Underhill’s adultery (see chapter 2.2): “Mistris *Hutchison* and others [were] cast out of the Church for lying, and some guilty of fouler sins then all these, which I here name not.” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface).²⁴⁹ On the title page of the second edition, published under the new title *A Short Story* (see chapter 3.1), the term “*Libertines*” (which had been used by John Davenport during the church trial, see chapter 2.2) was added to the heading, while the earlier edition had addressed “*Antinomians and familists*.” Hutchinson even had prophesied and claimed to have immediate revelations, which put her near to the “enthusiasm” of religious extremists and radicals who claimed to have a close, personal relationship with God. The term *enthusiasm* suggested disloyalty with political and religious authorities, potentially leading to disorderly regimes and chaos (Lovejoy 222).

The New England male elite perceived the strong influence Anne Hutchinson was able to exert due to her medical practice and her meetings in her home (see

²⁴⁸ As Cressy points out in his analysis of *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster* (see chapter 3.1), it usually “was the women who were especially unruly and outspoken” in such publications, while their husbands maintained cordial relations with the religious authorities” (“Lamentable” 52); however, as shown in chapter 2.1, also Dyer’s husband had been accused of having propagated “monstrous errors,” and John Wheelwright the Elder felt badly treated by the Bay colony’s authorities (see below).

²⁴⁹ Also C. Adams (90n1) assumes that Weld thereby alluded to the Underhill episode. That Hutchinson had produced a mole would have offered Weld yet another opportunity to focus on sexual matters in his preface: moles were commonly believed to be caused by a lack of sexual restraint. But maybe Weld felt not secure enough in medical topics to exploit this possibility (especially after John Cotton’s unsuccessful array in the field of medicine, see chapter 2.2), or he had not been familiar with this aspect of theories on moles.

chapter 1.1) as a threat to male authority. For Puritans such as Thomas Shepard (see chapter 2.2) it was not to be tolerated that a woman acted almost like a preacher and began guiding both female and male members of the congregation. Anne Hutchinson had profited from the social networks she had as a well-respected and experienced midwife. The birthing room was an intimate setting that heightened the weight of spiritual and religious discourse; both the unborn child and the mother giving birth ran a high risk of losing their life, and midwives often presided over hours of intense prayers, which gave them a “quasi-religious function” and some authority in discussing Scriptural matters (Wertz and Wertz 6; cf. Hobby 148; N. Miller 168).²⁵⁰ When acting as a midwife, it was claimed, Hutchinson “readily fell into good discourse with the women about their spirituall estates” (Cotton, *Congregational Churches* 51), which facilitated attracting women of all rank to her opinions on doctrinal matters. According to Winthrop, Hutchinson “easily insinuated her selfe into the affections of many” (*A Short Story* 1644, 31) by performing her duties as a midwife. Hutchinson pointed out “the danger of being under a covenant of works” to women when they “labored under wants, and bodily infirmities” and therefore were “prepared to become susceptible” to such talk (Hubbard, *General History* 283). The women who assembled at childbirth were commonly called “gossips,” and over time the term also came to mean intimate, scandalous details, which expresses a feeling of uneasiness toward this oral form of discourse and suggests that women were prone to idle talk and news-mongering.²⁵¹ As Cotton Mather summarized Hutchinson’s activities: “because at the Meetings of the Women, which use to be called *Gossipings*, it was her manner to carry on very Pious *Discourses*” (*Magnalia* VII, 18).

In order to counter Hutchinson’s inordinate activeness, her opponents used much the same rhetoric as in English polemics against women preaching. During her November court trial of 1637, John Winthrop had cut short further discussion with her by citing the Apostle Paul—what John Knox had done in 1558 in his notorious polemic that denied women a leading role in politics and religion:²⁵² “We do not mean to discourse with those of your sex” (D. Hall, ed. 314). Again echoing John

²⁵⁰ On midwifery in Puritan New England (including Anne Hutchinson’s medical network), see also McGregor; Tannenbaum 45-70.

²⁵¹ On the term *gossip*, see Bicks 49-50, 74; Fissell 69-70; M. Norton, *Founding* 222-3; Sanders 74.

²⁵² Drawing upon 1 Tim. 2.12 and 1 Cor. 14.34, Knox maintained in *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women* that he did not “suffer” “a woman to teache, nether yet to usurpe authoritie above man”: “Let women kepe silence in the congregation, for it is not permitted to them to speake, but to be subiect as the lawe sayeth.” (15).

Knox, who had referred to Mary Tudor, Queen of England and Ireland, as “Iesabel,” “a wicked woman, yea of a traiteresse and bastard” (1), Winthrop termed Hutchinson in the last passage of *A Short Story* (1644) the “American Jesabel” (66), which was repeated in 1648 by the English Presbyterian Samuel Rutherford (*Survey* 176).²⁵³ The biblical Jezebel had seduced her husband and others to worship other deities than God (see e.g. 1 Kings 18 and 21; 2 Kings 9); she was associated with false prophets pretending to be servants of God and with sexual immorality and promiscuity.

In a letter quoted in *A Glass for the People of New-England*, Anne Hutchinson denied being “a Railer and Reviler” and a “*Haughty Jezebel*” ([Groome] 9), but the impact of this repudiation must have been small compared to the outreach of *A Short Story*. As Schweitzer puts it, “mainstream Puritan culture could not abide . . . women’s independence or visibility in the public sphere” (127),²⁵⁴ wherefore countermeasures were taken. The verdicts of the two trials, banishment and excommunication, were effective means to silence Hutchinson in public—and not only because of her geographical removal due to banishment: excommunication meant that Hutchinson lost any form of authorization to be heard within the church community. So when Hutchinson “sent an admonition to the church of Boston”²⁵⁵ from her Rhode Island exile in 1639, trying to clarify her position, “the elders would not read it publicly, because she was excommunicated” (Winthrop, *Journal* 287).

As J. Turner suggests, the narrative offered by *A Short Story* had been so powerful that it turned Mary Dyer, Anne Hutchinson, and their failed offspring into “an emblem of heresy” (81), and *A Short Story* possibly also exerted influence on the *Mistis Parliament* series mentioned above and the anti-Ranter movement in England (80-81). Both the *Mistis Parliament* series and colonial narratives of Anne Hutchinson contained accusations of having bewitched and seduced the credulous.²⁵⁶ In *Mistis Parliament Her Gossiping* (1648), published under the pseudonym Mercurius Melancholicus, Parliament was charged by “Mrs Truth” with having “by her sorceries and delusions bewitched the People into Rebellion” (8). Similarly,

²⁵³ On Rutherford and his interpretation of the “monstrous births,” see chapters 3.1, 3.2, and 3.4.

²⁵⁴ On the role of women in Puritan society, see e.g. Barker-Benfield; Godbeer, “Patriarchy”; Koehler; Lang; Traister; Westerkamp, *Women*. While early studies such as that of Barker-Benfield and Koehler focus on the concept of “sex,” later works have taken over the concept of “gender,” often in connection with theories on the body and on rhetoric; see for example Godbeer, “Patriarchy.”

²⁵⁵ Maybe this “admonition” is identical to the letter quoted in *A Glass for the People of New-England* ([Groome] 1676); see above.

²⁵⁶ On the motif of seduction in *A Short Story*, see Lang 54-59; see also the second part of this chapter.

colonial historiographers and English heresiographers accused the Hutchinsonians of having seduced the credulous with their “bewitching tongues” (Johnson 132). Like Jezebel, Hutchinson was turned into a “sect-leader” (Morton 106), “the high Priestesse of the new religion” (Pagitt 100). Also William Hubbard presented Hutchinson as someone who seduced and bewitched weak-minded men in 1640 when dwelling in Rhode Island. One Collins, for example, hastened “to wait at the feet of the she-Gamaliel there” and “was so bewitched with their notions, as he resolved to live and die with them” (*General History* 341). Dyer and Hutchinson were not bodily deformed themselves, but—at least in the rhetoric of their opponents—their psyche was corrupted, and their doings caused deformity in others: physically in their own children and mentally in the minds of their followers whom they seduced with corrupting opinions. Hutchinson’s mind had corrupted not only the fetus in her womb but Puritan doctrine (see also chapter 3.2).

A “language of corrupt maternity” permeated the Antinomian Controversy (Traister 152), and especially Thomas Weld’s preface infused *A Short Story* with misogynistic rhetoric: Hutchinson was presented as a “bad mother.”²⁵⁷ Instead of performing their role as guardians and transmitters of culture, bad mothers exerted a corrupting influence on others. Hutchinson regarded her talks during the meetings at her home and while acting as a midwife as part of “the conventional Puritan pattern of diffused mothering, in which older women supervised the daily lives and emotional development of young people and servants” (Porterfield 95; cf. 95-97), but her opponents accused her of having passed on disease. Although being a midwife with knowledge of medical matters, Hutchinson’s gift to the members of the congregation was described as poisonous and dangerous. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Weld and Winthrop presented the Hutchinsonians in *A Short Story* as a form of contagious disease that had befallen the Bay colony. Weld claimed that Hutchinson started to infiltrate the colony with her opinions soon after her arrival, and Anne Hutchinson’s weekly lecture was “worst of all, which most suddainly diffused the venome of these opinions into the very veines and vitals of the People in the Country” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface).

The women who listened to Hutchinson’s conventicles were not nursed by their suitable mothers—the ministers (who presented themselves as nursing fathers,

²⁵⁷ On the motif of the bad mother (albeit with a focus on the English Romantic period), see Thorn. See chapter 4.3 on “bad mothers” committing the crime of infanticide.

see chapter 3.2)—but by false prophets assuming the role of ministers, as the biblical Jezebel. Nursing was praised for its beneficiary effects in texts like Robert Cleaver’s *A Godly Form of Household Government*, first published in 1598, or James Guillemeau’s *The Nursing of Children* (1612); but when children were nursed by someone who had no legitimization to do so “it may be feared, that some bad conditions or inclinations may be derived from the Nurse into the child” (Guillimeau, *Nursing* sig. li2 verso; cf. E. Spencer *View* 112).²⁵⁸ Bad mothers spread their corrupting milk outside of the sphere ascribed to them (their homes) and turned public—they “vented” their corrupted viewpoints (see chapter 2.2). While during her trials Hutchinson had been condemned for overstepping her role as a wife by going public, over time “the accusations against her have expanded to embrace her entire nature as a woman.” Hutchinson was turned into “the archetypal mother of monsters” (Lang 65).

Being bad mothers, Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson had failed in the most important task of Christian wives—bearing children. Instead of giving new life they had suffered miscarriages and produced heretical opinions that resembled living beings, spreading themselves as if they were autonomous, parasitical creatures. Weld described in his preface to *A Short Story* how Hutchinson’s opinions had “grown to their full ripeness and latitude” and subsequently “began now to lift up their heads full high, to stare us in the face, and to confront all that opposed them.” Similarly, the anonymous author of *New Englands First Fruits* (possibly Weld, see chapter 3.2, n225) had commented one year earlier that after the Antinomians had either left the colony or repented “not any unsound, unsavourie and giddie fancie have dared to lift up his head, or abide the light amongst us” (21). Such rhetoric may have been influenced by the writings of Thomas Bakewell, for whom the Antinomians were like “a nest of cursed errors hatched by hereticks, fed and nourished by their proselites” (title). Weld took up this motif, claiming that the Antinomians produced “a litter of fourescore and eleven of their brats . . . all which they hatched and dandled” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). The motif of the fertility of heretical

²⁵⁸ The belief that the characteristics of the nurse are transferred through nursing may be derived from Aristotle who claimed that some animals derived the “primary matter” “from the mother for a considerable time by being suckled” (II, I 733b). On early modern views on nursing, see Paster 198-9; 244-60; Trubowitz, “Blood” 83-87; Zika 431-3. On colonial nursing practices, see Wertz and Wertz 2-3.

thinking stood in stark contrast to the metaphor of “dead stones” and the stillborn biological offspring of Dyer and Hutchinson (see chapter 2.2).

As shown above, the notion of heretical thoughts springing out of bowels had already been well established in the context of the Antinomian and other religious controversies in both Old and New England, and this motif forms a kind of climax of the misogynistic rhetoric of Weld’s preface to *A Short Story*. In one of the most notoriously famous passages of this text, Weld made use of the double meaning of the term *misconception* as both “an erroneous idea and deformed offspring” (Valerius 195) when describing Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s “monstrous births”:

Then God himselfe was pleased to step in with his casting voice, and bring in his owne vote and suffrage from heaven, by testifying his displeasure against their opinions and practices, as clearely as if hee had pointed with his finger, in causing the two fomenting women in the time of the height of the opinions to produce out of their wombs, as before they had out of their braines, such monstrous births as no Chronicle (I think) hardly ever recorded the like. (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface)

Referring to Hutchinson, Weld claimed that “the wisdom of God” had “fitted this judgement to her sin every way, for look as shee had vented mishapen [sic] opinions, so shee must bring forth deformed monsters; and as about thirty opinions in number, so many monsters” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644).²⁵⁹ Much as she had challenged established laws and customs, so her offspring challenged the rules of divinely ordered nature. The associations between mental and biological conceptions (which can already be detected in John Cotton’s first reaction to Hutchinson’s miscarriage, see chapter 2.2) were now turned into the literal sense: the heretical points of view were not only compared to monstrous offspring but were presented as having materialized in the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson—their faulty mental capacities were to be paralleled with the faulty products of their reproductive organs.²⁶⁰ Dyer’s headless child had been brought into connection with her spiritual state (see chapter 2.1), and Hutchinson’s mole was the perfect symbol of

²⁵⁹ On venting and the relationship between Hutchinson’s prophetic output and the monstrous births, see Round 148-50. On use of the term *to vent* in the context of the Antinomian Controversy, see chapter 2.2.

²⁶⁰ Weld may have been influenced by the popular theory of maternal imagination (see chapter 2.2), which suggested that the intellectual activity of women and their reproductive abilities were inevitably compromised by the uncontrollable working of their mind. The concept of maternal imagination blamed the mother for any bodily deformity of a newborn child: they were the mother’s sins and fancies that caused monstrosity. Being a minister, Weld surely was familiar with an early version of the concept of maternal imagination: the biblical narrative of Jacob breeding sheep with the help of the force of the animals’ imagination (Genesis 30).

wrong mental conceptions (see chapter 2.2). In Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson nature seemed to have broken loose in its degeneracy; they seemed to be flesh instead of spirit and not truly sanctified, which would have allowed them to let the principle of life do its work and give their material offspring perfect form. Both Dyer and Hutchinson had failed to master nature, whereas, as Larzer Ziff put it, the Puritan “gracious believer” had nature “available to him as instrument” and could form it by overcoming its “intrinsic resisting force” (24; cf. 13).

Alternative narratives of female minds and bodies

A Short Story was used as the most authoritative source on the Antinomian Controversy—even by those criticizing the New England Way. The Scottish Presbyterian Samuel Rutherford quoted so extensively from it in *A Survey of Spiritual Antichrist* (1648) that John Wheelwright, one of the “Antinomians,” put into doubt the reliability of his conclusions (*Apology To the Christian Reader*). In 1645, the English clergyman Ephraim Pagitt recommended *A Short Story* as “a learned Confutation” of Antinomian errors (101). Weld’s authority as a reliable reporter on the monstrous births became something like an established fact, which was also acknowledged by Robert Groves, whose *Gleanings* (1651) offered “*A Collection of some Memorable passages*” (title), including the story of the New England monstrous births: Groves referred his readers to the “large relation, with all the circumstances by Mr. *Thomas Welde* a worthy Minister then of *New England*, now in Old, [so] that the truth of these things is unquestionable” (45).

The analogy Weld had drawn between the number of monstrous lumps and Hutchinson’s opinions was repeated by many of those participating in the transatlantic debate on the New England Way. Ephraim Pagitt, for example, also paralleled the “30 monstrous births, or thereabouts” that Hutchinson had produced with “the number of her monstrous opinions” in his *Heresiography* (1645), adding that the “30 monstrous births” were “shap’t like her opinions”: “Thus God punisht [sic] those monstrous wretches with as monstrous fruit, sprung from their wombe, as had before sprung from their braines.” (100-101). Also the colonial Puritan William Hubbard (see chapter 3.2) perpetuated Weld’s tale that God caused “the two fomenting women . . . to produce out of their wombs, as before they had out of their

braines, such monstrous births” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). In their exile in Rhode Island, Hutchinson and her followers remained obstinate, Hubbard wrote, “for every year they broached new errors, the issues of their depraved minds, more misshapen than those monsters, which were credibly reported to be born of the bodies of some of them” (*General History* 341-2).

However, not all were prepared to buy Weld’s story line. In 1645, the author of *Mercurius Americanus, Mr. Welds his Antitype, Or, Massachusetts Great Apologie Examined* put into doubt many of Weld’s conclusions. The *Mercurius* was with high probability not authored by the “Hutchinsonian” John Wheelwright, to whom it often is attributed, but by his son, John Wheelwright Jr. (Bush, “Apology”).²⁶¹ Referring to the passage in Weld’s preface quoted above—that Dyer and Hutchinson “produce[d] out of their wombs, as before they had out of their braines, such monstrous births”—John Wheelwright the Younger refused to “discusse” “whether the conceptions of her brain had influence upon the conceptions of her wombe, or these of the wombe upon those of the brain,” as Weld had stated (198). Wheelwright called Weld’s analogy

a monstrous conception of his brain, a spurious issue of his intellect, acted upon by a sweatish and Feaverish zeal, which indeed beats almost in every line; and resolves his in themselves imperfect sometimes, if not feigned facts into phanatique meditations. (196)

Wheelwright suggested that it was *Weld’s* mind that was producing monsters,²⁶² and he accused him of acting out of a dubious motivation. Wheelwright Jr. declared that in this “passage, as in many other in his book, a spirit of censure and malice is pregnant” (198), and he criticized Weld (assuming Weld had written all of *A Short Story*, 200) for offering a partial report. He wondered whether the narrative was intended to be “Rhetoricall” and what its author meant with “laying down the sense and order of the story”: “What have we here? *a mythologie*? Reall Histories use to carry their own sense, matters of fact need no comment, fictions have their senses, Fables their Morals.” (Wheelwright Jr. 186).

²⁶¹ Also Winship inclines toward attributing the text to Wheelwright’s son (*Making Heretics* 54). An elegant way to describe authorship of the *Mercurius* is to see it as a “family response” (Winship, *Making Heretics* 239).

²⁶² Similarly, the anonymous author of *A Wonder Worth the Reading* claimed to have been accused that his story of “this monstrous Childe birth” “was begotten in some monster hatching brayne” (5). Like Weld (see chapter 3.1), he backed up his claim of truthfulness with the high number of reliable witnesses: the story “is approved to be true,” he maintained, “by the attestation of many godly, honest, and religious women: so no lesse faithfully, truely will I relate it” (5).

Wheelwright the Younger showed himself convinced that Weld “might by a deeper search have reached the naturall cause whilest he . . . judges her for her errours immediately sentenced from heaven” (198). Referring to the assertion that Hutchinson was delivered of “at once thirty conceptions” (195), Wheelwright ridiculed Weld for drawing conclusions that demanded knowledge of obstetrics and a close “physicall inspection which I think his learning will not reach” (196-97). Regarding the women who were “*purging and vomiting*” during Dyer’s labor, Wheelwright suggested that this phenomenon might just as well be attributed to “the distemper we usually call *Cholera*” (Wheelwright Jr. 197). Wheelwright seemed to be more inclined than Weld to consider a physiological cause of the child’s birth defects.²⁶³

That Wheelwright attacked Weld, a minister, for commenting upon a medical phenomenon is another indicator that it was Wheelwright the Younger who had authored the *Mercurius*. When *Mercurius Americanus* was published in London in 1645, Wheelwright Jr. was an undergraduate at Jesus College, Cambridge (Bush Jr., *Writings* 22, 42-44), and in England, the professionalization of medicine had been quite advanced in comparison to New England at the time. Weld was a minister, and these increasingly came to be criticized for meddling in medical matters in mid-seventeenth century England, where the Galenic and Paracelsian schools opposed each other distinctly. In the 1620s, the Puritan English physician James Hart of Northampton, for example, ridiculed the ministers’ practice of reading “now and then at vacant hours . . . by way of recreation” “some Physyck booke” and then “thinke them selves suddenly fitted for the practise of so weighty a profession” (371; cf. 382). Hart defended medicine as a system of privilege and formal training and abhorred members of the church meddling with medicinal topics. He went so far as to describe this sort of medical practitioners “as informe Monsters,” as “birthes borne out of season which never received the right shape of a Phisitian” (379). According to Hart, these ministers neglected their parochial, religious duties and were poaching in other men’s profession (see Harley). By contrast, in New England, where Wheelwright the Elder was living, the Galenic and Paracelsian schools seem to have co-existed rather

²⁶³ See similarly Schutte (103), who, however, refers to Wheelwright Sr., assuming that the latter had authored *Mercurius*.

peacefully in the 1630s and beyond (Green 19-20; Healy 6-7; Watson 5-6), which led to the strong proliferation of preacher-physicians as described in chapter 2.2.²⁶⁴

Casting doubt on the credibility of *A Short Story* served Wheelwright Jr. in his endeavor to “free” his father, John Wheelwright the Elder, “from those errours and unsavoury speeches” (Wheelwright Jr. 200) brought forward in *A Short Story*. Wheelwright countered the claim of *A Short Story* to bring truth to its readers, as expressed for example in the metaphor of light that appeared in many early modern texts with persuasive intent (see chapter 3.1). That Wheelwright the Younger was inclined to question the claim of truthfulness of the author(s) of *A Short Story* is evident from the title of his work, *Mercurius Americanus*. In the alchemical tradition, the planet Mercurius was ascribed revelatory power, and Wheelwright obviously claimed this for his own text as well (see Schutte 102-3). With planetary assistance from Mercury he hoped “to have some influence upon thee unprejudiced & qualified Reader; which obtained makes the period, and revolution of thy *Mercurie*, JOHN WHEELWRIGHT.” Wheelwright identified himself and his father with Mercurie, and Weld, the supposed author of *A Short Story*, with the planet “*Saturne*, under whose planetary houre he was born” (188). Saturn was the planet opposite to Mercury, and early modern writers blamed it for melancholy and madness (Culpeper, *Semeiotica* 83-4).

These two states of minds, melancholy and madness, often served to discredit females (J. Crawford 171-80; J. Friedman, *Miracles* 116), and Wheelwright readily made use of this option—not only to discredit Weld but also Hutchinson and her followers. Although Wheelwright had not been prepared to discuss the influence of Hutchinson’s brain upon her womb or vice versa, he used the idea that melancholy affected the mental health of a person for explaining Anne Hutchinson’s actions. Hutchinson may have been “a woman of a good wit” and “of a good judgement too,” but she suffered from “melancholy” and the bad “quality of humors,” Wheelwright suggested:

In spirituals indeed she gave her understanding over into the power of suggestion and immediate dictates, by reason of which she had many strange fancies, and erroneous tenents possess her, especially during her confinement, where she might feel some effect

²⁶⁴ On Galen’s influence on medical practice in colonial New England, see Watson 74-96. See Tannenbaum 3-6 on Galenic versus Paracelsian medicine. In New England, opposition to ministers with a strong interest in medicine is known mainly from the early eighteenth century (see chapter 4.4).

too from the quality of humors, together with the advantage the devill took of her condition attended with melancholy. (197)

Wheelwright the Younger, living in England, thereby may have referred to the bad “humors” that were said to affect human bodies in the “uncivilized” wilderness of the North American continent (see chapter 2.1)—or to Hutchinson’s pregnancy, a “condition” that possibly influenced her mental capacities and offered an easy entry door for satanic delusions.

Wheelwright’s explanation of Hutchinson’s state of mind was at least in parts the result of early modern theories on the negative effects of the bad womb or the stomach upon the rest of the body. Disease often originated in the stomach, or the womb (see e.g. C. Mather, *Warnings* 52), which could negatively affect the brain. Reginald Scot, the famous English skeptic on witchcraft and magic, had suggested in the late sixteenth century that the womb could negatively affect the mental health of women. Serious “trouble of the mind” could be caused by

the burthen of that heauie humor, which is ingendred of a thicke vapor proceeding from the cruditie and rawnesse in the stomach: which ascending up into the head oppresseth the braine, in so much as manie are much infeebleed thereby (86)

Also Sadler held that the bad humors of the womb could harm the brain. Among the “manifold distempers” of women Sadler “found none more frequent, none more perilous then those which arise from the ill affected wombe: for through the evill quality thereof, the heart, the liver, and the braine are affected” (The Epistle Dedicatory).

Both in England and New England, melancholy was associated with serious crimes. According to Scot, melancholy made women prone to sinning and easily to be seduced by the devil (52-59). John Winthrop, the long-time Governor of the Bay colony, recorded several episodes in his journal when mothers acted violently against their own children, suffering from melancholic frenzies caused by the emotional strain of uncertainty in theological matters and by satanic delusions (or so it was believed). Killing a child²⁶⁵ was a crime sure to damn one’s soul, and some members of the congregation were said to consciously have made use of this in order to put an end to the rigors of finding out about their state of grace. Women attempted to or factually killed their child after “having been in much trouble of mind” about their

²⁶⁵ On murdering mothers, see also chapter 4.3.

“spiritual estate,” suffering from “a sad melancholic distemper near to phrensy [sic]” or from “spiritual delusions,” mistaking Satanic “delusions” as “revelations from God,” and justifying their acts by claiming that they wanted to “free” or “save” their child “from future misery” (Winthrop, *Journal* 229-30, 271-2, 391-2).

Melancholy diminished at least the capacity of reasonable thought. Reginald Scot regarded witches as “sillie soules” who were suffering from melancholy (52-59), and the motif of foolish men and women—a popular theme in the Scriptures (see 2 Tim. 3.6, 7; Prov. 14.15)—had also come up in the context of Hutchinson’s trials (see chapter 2.2; cf. chapter 3.2) and, as shown above, it gained popularity in various publications in combination with the motif of bewitching tongues. Hutchinson was said to have seduced not only “many honest persons” (as Winthrop had maintained during the court trial of November 1637, see D. Hall, ed. 316) but also people with weak mental capacities. Weld presented Hutchinson’s followers as being led astray and “deluded” due to “the simplicity of their hearts” and their “weaknesse” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). For Thomas Bakewell it was clear that “seducers” who “deceive the hearts of the simple” “with faire speeches” will “lead captive silly women laden with their lusts” who were “never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (sig. A2 verso). Richard Baxter (see chapters 3.4 and 4.2) similarly regarded Antinomian viewpoints as “a mighty engine of that Evill spirit” that served “to deceive silly soules, that know not wherein the nature of ffree [sic] Grace doth consist” (“Undated Treatise” 203).²⁶⁶

In *Mercurius Americanus*, Wheelwright the Younger willingly took up the motif of silly women. Hawkins, who had been accused of being a witch (see chapter 2.1), was described by Wheelwright as “a poore silly woman” who received “good victuals” from Hutchinson and therefore was willing to “taste” “any new doctrine” Hutchinson brought forward (198). “Mrs. Dyer,” Wheelwright claimed, was similarly “devoted to Mrs. *Hutchinsons* fancies” (197). So while John Wheelwright Jr. claimed to differ from Thomas Weld in his judgment as far as the effects of Hutchinson’s brain on her womb were concerned, with regard to the mental capacities of Hutchinson and her followers he came to similar conclusions. There was one important difference, though. By ridiculing the women involved as being addicted to

²⁶⁶ A publication that probably had also been influenced by the tale of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s miscarriages (see chapter 3.1) presented not the followers of the main female protagonist as silly but the woman herself: she was “foolish,” “silly,” and “deluded” (H. Ellis 11, 12).

fancies and possessing rather not much wit and understanding, Wheelwright Jr. achieved displaying the disciplinary actions of the magistrates as completely off the point and exaggerated. He joined those who accused the Bay authorities of dealing too harshly with those holding diverging opinions: they could have dealt with their “brethren” “in more moderate deportment . . . then in fining, confining, imprisoning, disfranchizing, banishing, and as much as in you lay, killing” (190).²⁶⁷ Wheelwright’s position reflects a change of paradigm. It were not anymore heretical beliefs that were anatomized and dissected (see chapter 2.1) but human minds, as in Robert Burton’s famous *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), which has been republished up to the 1670s. Those claiming to have been impregnated by the Holy Spirit (see chapter 3.1) were increasingly seen in close connection with mental illness and were rather pitied for their delusions. Fear of trouble-making women slowly came to be substituted by compassion for women with a weak mental disposition—which often enough resulted in another form of control.

The reconfiguration of the female sex as weak and endangered by external corrupting influences also affected the self-understanding of the early “scientists.” The theories of the bad womb and weak female understanding fostered the idea that male authority was needed to control the generative abilities of female wombs. Without control, nature was producing monsters, as for example moles, which were created when females gave themselves over to their lust (see chapter 2.2). It was as if early scientists took over the part of God in their endeavor to explore and control the female womb and the process of generating offspring. Male scientists even were presented as possessing generative power, being “pregnant and inventive Heads” making discoveries (Oldenburg XII: 43) and “supply[ing] a suckling philosophy with its first food” (Bacon 24). Male generation worked through the brain instead of the womb, and slowly but surely the creative agency of the mother was transferred to the male scientist. The pursuit of science was a “Male Virtu,” stated Abraham Cowley in his dedication “To the *Royal Society*” (in Sprat), and Sprat, the first chronicler of this prestigious institution, wrote in 1667 of “the *Masculine Arts of Knowledge*” (129). The object of science, nature, was regarded as a female being “squeezed and

²⁶⁷ A similar line of argumentation would be brought forward by those criticizing the Bay colony’s harsh stance against Quakerism, see chapter 4.1.

moulded” (Bacon 25) by male scientists (see chapter 2.2):²⁶⁸ the Baconian view on nature focused on how man could master and transform it.

The changes in the perception of the womb and the rhetoric of women as instable paralleled the decline of the authority of midwives and the rise of male-dominated obstetrical science. As of mid-seventeenth century, the rituals “surrounding childbearing” were increasingly perceived as a potential “threat to communal integrity and male hegemony” (C. Smith 447). The women attending birthing scenes (midwives and their assistants, e.g. female relatives of the mother-to-be and friends or neighbors) often got to know intimate details pertaining to the health and family life of the woman in childbed, and external control of the knowledge gained in such settings and the procedures during labor was difficult to implement—the best example being the birth of Dyer’s deformed fetus that had been kept a secret by the women involved (though upon advice of John Cotton; see chapters 1.2 and 2.1).

In the course of the seventeenth century, male scientists began taking over the role of midwives and discovered the secrets hitherto hidden in the female womb. While Rueff’s *Expert Midwife* (1637) was dedicated to midwives with the explicit aim to assist them in their difficult task, it was also stressed that the reason for publication was “the unskilfulnesse and want of knowledge in the midwife in matters both concerning the mother and the infant.” Also the author(s) of *The Compleat Midwives Practice* (London, 1656) wanted “to correct the frequent mistake of most *Midwives*” to “neglect all the wholesome and profitable rules of Art” (Chamberlayne sig. A3 verso).²⁶⁹ Gradually, medicine, including midwifery, became a profession, that is, an occupation that required formal training in order to acquire a pre-defined body of knowledge.²⁷⁰ The formerly strictly female birth chamber was successively opened to and controlled by physicians.

Also in early colonial New England the professionalization of science started to affect the as yet female-dominated spheres of birth and labor (Lutes 310-1; C.

²⁶⁸ On the gendered (masculine) construction of science, see Gilbert; Keller, *Reflections*; Rosenfield 222-8; Schiebinger. On women as passive objects, see Deutsch 112; Merchant, esp. 149-90.

²⁶⁹ This would be vehemently denied by Jane Sharp, whose midwifery manual is the first we know of that was written by an English woman, see Hobby 146-7; 151; Sanders 78. Sharp stressed that midwives had a lot of practical experience (2-3). On *The Compleat Midwives Practice* and the Chamberlayne family, see Fissell 183-9.

²⁷⁰ On the decline of the authority of midwives, see Christianson 138; Sanders 79; Tannenbaum 16-21; Trubowitz, “Crossed-Dressed” 199-201; Ulrich 134.

Smith 448; Traister 145-6)—a development that gained momentum in the second half of the seventeenth century, as the notes of the Reverend Hugh Adams on his attendance of a birthing scene (see chapter 2.2) show. While there still was mutual respect between female birth attendants and the male preacher-physician in the early eighteenth century, there is also a strong sense of pride discernible on the part of Adams, which is symptomatic of the changes in seventeenth-century medical practice:

Madam Hilton one of the most Skilfull and Improved Midwives, and all the neighboring Women attending her all that time, finding all their endeavours and helps invain [sic], and Despairing otherwise of the life both of mother and infant: the Woman herself with the Midwife & the rest, as also her husband came for requesting my help (H. Adams, "Narrative" 35-36)

It is telling that it was Adams and not the midwife—"one of the most Skilfull" of her kind—who had been able to save the life of mother and child: even a very experienced midwife depended on the help of male lay practitioners (and soon preacher-physicians would themselves be ousted by professional medicines, see chapter 4.4).

While the medical care of females was provided within a female-dominated sphere at the time of Dyer's and Hutchinson's ill-fated pregnancies, Puritan ministers and male medical authorities alike strove to gain interpretative control over the female body, and the private, female-dominated sphere of childbearing came to be incorporated into the male-dominated public sphere (cf. C. Smith 448). Although women had been in control of the birthing room, men had interpretative authority over the female body, and they were males who left us with interpretations of the prodigious births of Dyer and Hutchinson, as also Lutes points out: "Their stories testified to the church's ability to inscribe its authority on the bodies of mothers and infants, and their misbirths became potent symbols of the penalty for transgression." (336).

In the sphere of literature, similar changes were on the horizon, albeit in reverse: females tried to enter a profession that had been reserved for males. That birth had public relevance had meant a form of empowering for women (much as the theory of maternal imagination gave women power over their unborn child): if birth and reproduction had relevance for the community at large, then women could

demand to play a significant role in it.²⁷¹ The number of female authors increased so strongly in the decades to follow that the famous romancer Nathaniel Hawthorne feared in 1830 not only that “female pens” might become “more numerous and more prolific than those of men” but might “add a girlish feebleness to the tottering infancy of our literature” (18). As soon as women published their own texts, they had the opportunity to transform concepts of gender and the female body, as the example of the colonial poet Anne Bradstreet shows. The topic of childbirth as a symbol of creative output (including the danger of producing monstrous births) turned up in this arena, too.

In 1650, a collection of Bradstreet’s poetry, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*, was published in London; it was the first collection of Bradstreet’s writings and the first one of a poet of the British colonies. The work had not been put into print by Bradstreet herself, though, but by her brother-in-law, John Woodbridge, who had published Bradstreet’s poems without her “knowledge, and contrary to her expectation” (Woodbridge, in Bradstreet 526).²⁷² In texts relating to the publication of Bradstreet’s work both Woodbridge and Bradstreet made use of the conventional metaphor of childbirth for creative output, a metaphor highly popular in the Atlantic World (see E. Harvey 97-115; Huet 37-45). In 1676, the colonial Puritan poet Benjamin Tompson, for example, brought forward the common excuse of the pious writer not considering his output worthy of publication: “I never thought this babe of my weak fantasy worthy of an imprimatur; but being an abortive, it was begged in these perplexing times to be cherished by the charity of others.” (215; cf. J. Smith, *Complete Works* II: 37, 42). The use of this metaphor by Woodbridge and Bradstreet highlights that gender relations and concepts of the body constituted one of the fighting grounds where questions of legitimacy and control were debated in the early modern period.

Just as Dyer’s aberrant birth had been brought to light by a male protagonist, Governor John Winthrop (see chapter 2.1), and just as the story of the monstrous births had been published widely by males, so Bradstreet’s offspring, a literary text, was published and thereby exposed to the public view by a male person, John Woodbridge (cf. Reid 537). The motivation of Woodbridge on the one side and Weld

²⁷¹ This development would culminate in the Republican ideal of motherhood—the notion that it was a mother’s duty to infuse the future male leaders with the necessary virtue and values, whereby the domestic sphere was turned into a sphere with political relevance (see Kerber 7-12, 265-88).

²⁷² On the publication history of Bradstreet’s work, see e.g. Jed; Schweitzer 127-80.

and Winthrop on the other seems to have differed, though. Winthrop and Weld had made public Dyer's headless child and Hutchinson's deformed lumps in order to discredit the Antinomian party and to regain authority in the public sphere in a deeply disruptive conflict, while Woodbridge intended to *protect* Bradstreet's image, even against her will. In a way his motivation resembles that of the Reverend Hugh Adams who wanted to help a mother in childbirth struggling with a difficult birth; but while Adams had been called for help by the women attending the birthing scene, Woodbridge had meddled in Bradstreet's creative process without having been asked for it. The reason Woodbridge brought forward for publishing Bradstreet's text is that it consisted of "broken pieces," which threatened to prejudice the readers against the author:

. . . but I found that divers had gotten some scattered papers, affected them wel, were likely to have sent forth broken peices [sic] to the Authors prejudice, which I thought to prevent, as well as to pleasure those that earnestly desired the view of the whole. (Bradstreet 526)

Woodbridge's "broken pieces" almost sound like an allusion to the "lumps" and "pieces" of Hutchinson's spontaneous abortion (Winthrop, *Journal* 265). Hutchinson's outflow had also not been well-conceived and entered the world prematurely; and as shown in chapter 2.2, the lumps she had produced could be brought into connection with thoughts badly expressed.

John Wheelwright the Elder, one of the Antinomians who had been banished from the Bay colony,²⁷³ used much the same wording when charging his adversaries (mainly Weld, but also Rutherford) with basing their critique of his fast day sermon (see chapter 1.1) on "the broken Notes, taken by others" (8) in *A Brief, and Plain Apology*, published in London almost ten years after Wheelwright had been questioned before Court.²⁷⁴ Referring again to "broken Notes," Wheelwright accused his opponents of having done exactly what they had attacked Hutchinson for—separating words from their meaning (see chapter 2.2):

You cut off, part of these defective Notes, and give such a sense, as the words seem to carry considered by themselves, without any Relation to that which goes before, or follows. You dis-member, wrest, torture, by putting upon the rack, some broken Notes of an extemporary Sermon, and make them speak what you think good against the

²⁷³ For biographic details on Wheelwright Sr. (c. 1592–1679), see Winship, *Making Heretics* 28–36.

²⁷⁴ On this work, see Bush, "Apology" 23–26 and *passim*.

Preacher: and where they are altogether silent, and speak not one word, you put in words of your own, which makes for your purpose. (*Plain Apology* 9; cf. 24)

There was rising awareness with all stakeholders that it was difficult to keep control over words uttered. Both parties in the Antinomian conflict had to discover that words could be interpreted differently, depending on the intentions of those involved, as also William Hubbard deplored referring to the Antinomian party: they “strangely pervert[ed]” words uttered unwarily “to a far different and contrary sense, than ever they were intended by the speaker” (*General History* 281). Wheelwright, for his part, complained that the Court had taken literally his allegory of spiritual combat in his fast-day sermon, and he charged Weld with having severely distorted his statements (*Plain Apology* 9, 14-15).

Like Anne Hutchinson (see chapter 2.2), John Wheelwright was well aware of the differences between the private and the public realm, and, like John Woodbridge, Wheelwright sensed the dangers that the public sphere potentially held in store. Wheelwright felt that Weld had not only treated him as “filth” but made him “a spectacle to the world” (*Plain Apology* 7)—simply because Wheelwright had accused Weld and others of legalism. Wheelwright expressed his indignation upon this public humiliation in dramatic words: “They bring me upon the Stage, present me unto the worlds view, Stigmatize me,” and “make al the heresies, and enormous crimes in the Country to center on me” (*Plain Apology To the Christian Reader*). What annoyed him more than anything else, however, was that he had been subjected to public view without shelter, while some of his “brethren” acted under the veil of secrecy: they were “prejudicing the Court and their friends,” he argued, and “devised a cause against me . . . differing from this in substance which they presented to the Court, yet never brought it to publick view” (*Plain Apology* 28; cf. 7). Wheelwright consequently felt compelled “to publish my Defence” for all the “marks of infamy, and reproach” that were “imprinted upon me” (*Plain Apology To the Christian Reader*) by Weld’s *A Short Story* or Rutherford’s *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist* (1648).

Also Woodbridge admitted that the public sphere could have unpleasant side-effects, and he seems to have been fully aware of what this enforcing of public scrutiny must have meant for Bradstreet. In “To my deare Sister, the Author of these

Poems,” Woodbridge stated to have “presumed to bring to publick view what she [Bradstreet] resolved should never in such manner see the Sun” (526) and added:

“I know your modest minde,
How you will blush, complaine, ‘tis too unkinde,
To force a womans birth, provoke her paine,
Expose her Labours to the world’s disdaine”

(Bradstreet 528)

Woodbridge’s lines do not only serve the common modesty topos (Bradstreet blushes out of modesty) but evoke the idea of a male entering the birthing scene without permission and enforcing a premature birth before the mother was ready, causing her to blush in view of this intrusion in her private sphere (Lutes 331; Schweitzer 161). Woodbridge’s comment on his unauthorized publication of Bradstreet’s work suggests that neither the mother nor her child—the literary work—had been ready yet to enter the world, which included the risk to bring to light a monstrosity. Woodbridge seems to have been well aware of these dangers:

I know you’l say, you doe defie that mint,
That stampt you thus, to be a foole in print.

(Bradstreet 528)

Woodbridge’s assumption that Bradstreet may have felt to be “stamp’t” by “that mint” and Wheelwright’s fear of having “imprinted upon” him “marks of infamy” expresses a feeling of uneasiness. Printed polemic could leave a mark, a visible trace on someone, much the same as the thoughts of the mother were held to be able to leave a mark on the unborn child. According to the widely propagated theory of maternal imagination (see chapter 2.2), the emotional state, moral inclination, or simply the thoughts of the mother could leave an internal impression or “stamp” on the unborn child. Maternal imagination “hath such power over the fruite [of the womb], that the beames and Charrecters, continue upon the rocke of the infante” (Boaistuau 13). Descartes described in 1629 how “the traces” of “ideas” caused by sensual experiences “radiate through all the blood” and, at times, are “imprinted on the limbs of the child being formed in her entrails” “by certain actions of the mother” (87). As soon as the child left the womb, its connection to the mother was cut and it was subjected to the judgment of others: the newborn child could serve as an indicator of

the mother's carriage during pregnancy—for example, whether she had been frightened by external influences, or whether she had had immoral thoughts.²⁷⁵

In “The Author to Her Book” (authored in 1666 and added as a preface to the second edition of her poems, which appeared posthumously in 1678), Bradstreet more or less confirmed Woodbridge's assumptions regarding the danger of “scattered papers” and “broken pieces” coming in the hands of critics and expressed her anxiety that her poems might be “roam[ing]” among the masses (Latta 74-75).²⁷⁶ Various scholars have pointed out that Bradstreet's text is the literary expression of her fear to have lost control over her own work: “Just as a mother was subject to condemnation on the basis of the unpredictable productions of her womb, a writer was subject to condemnation on the basis of the productions of her brain.” (Lutes 337; cf. Latta 73, 75; Major 113). Bradstreet referred to her work, which had been published without her consent, as yet “unfit for light”:

Thou ill-form'd offspring of my feeble brain,
Who after birth did'st by my side remain,
Till snatcht from thence by friends, less wise than true
Who thee abroad, expos'd to publick view

(Bradstreet 177)

Bradstreet had good reason to be on guard. That Woodbridge (or one of his English partners) had chosen the title *The Tenth Muse*²⁷⁷ when publishing Bradstreet's work for the first time was a “double-edged gesture”: the wording had the “effect of sensationalizing her [Bradstreet's] poetic production while at the same time devaluing it” (Schweitzer 131; cf. 127, 130-2). In the seventeenth century, it was common belief that poets were male, and muses, from whom they drew their inspiration, female. Males had the active, females the passive part—in the arts much as in the process of biological reproduction. As Aristotle had put it in line with the dual-seed theory (see chapter 2.2): the male “principle” was “reducing the material into its own proper form” in the process of generation (IV, I, 766a), and the “material” was provided by “the female” (Aristotle I, XX, 729a); and, as shown in chapter 2.2, one needed both

²⁷⁵ For an example of the effects of fright upon an unborn child, see chapter 4.3.

²⁷⁶ On Bradstreet's poetry, in particular “The Author to her Book” and the metaphor of childbirth, see Latta 73-75; Lutes esp. 310, 331-3; Major 111-5; Schweitzer 154, 169-73.

²⁷⁷ See also Part V of this study on the choice of title for the collection of poems. The expression “The Tenth Muse, lately Sprung up in America” was omitted when Bradstreet's poems were republished (posthumously) in Boston in 1678 with a revised title: *Several Poems, compiled with great Variety of Wit and Learning, full of delight* (Schweitzer 130).

sufficient willpower and mental abilities to give form to an idea—virtues that were usually ascribed to males.

The title *Tenth Muse* reflects the common viewpoint that writing was considered not an appropriate pass-time for women. John Winthrop had pointed out that literary activity endangered the mental health of women. In April 1645, Winthrop noted in his diary the story of Ann Yale Hopkins, wife of the governor of Hartford, Connecticut, “who was fallen into a sad infirmitye, the losse of her vnderstandinge & reason . . . , by occasion of her givinge her selfe wholly to readinge & writinge, & had written many bookes” (*Journal* 570):

if she had attended her household affaires, & such thinges as belonge to women, & not gone out of her waye & callinge, to meddle in suche thinges as are proper for men, whose mindes are stronger &c., she had kept her wittes, & might have improved them vsefully & honorably in the place God had sett her. (*Journal* 570).

Naming Anne Bradstreet the “tenth Muse” stressed her poetic activity, but at the same time the title made clear where her place as a woman was: her role was to be the object of male authors rather than a writing subject. Women’s minds were too instable; they lacked the power to properly conceive of ideas and were too easily diverted due to external influences, as the theory of maternal imagination suggested. Women risked to bring forth monsters, as had been the case with Anne Hutchinson: she had become active without male control and produced a mole (see chapter 2.2).

It can be assumed that Bradstreet had not only been with familiar with early modern notions of generation but also with Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s ill-fated pregnancies and how these had been interpreted by common colonials and the officials of the colony. Bradstreet’s father, Thomas Dudley, and her husband, Simon Bradstreet, had attended Hutchinson’s civil trial, Thomas Dudley serving as Deputy Governor to Winthrop and actively taking part in the questioning of Hutchinson.²⁷⁸ Anne Bradstreet (c. 1612–1672) had been in her mid-twenties then. Via her father’s library, Bradstreet had access to Helkiah Crooke’s *Mikrokosmographia*, which propagated Galenic notions of the female sex (see chapter 2.2), and she possessed

²⁷⁸ For biographical information on Bradstreet, see Lutes 312-4; Reid 517-20; Rosenmeier. Both Reid (518-9) and Rosenmeier (96-99) stress the parallels in Hutchinson’s and Bradstreet’s biography. Bradstreet may have been reminded of Hutchinson’s fate once again when in 1646 her younger sister, Sarah Keayne Dudley, was accused of public preaching and inordinate, immoral behavior. She was charged with having “impoysoned” her husband with syphilis and admonished for “hir irregular Prophesying in mixt Assemblies” (qtd. in Rosenmeier 93), wherefore she was excommunicated in 1647. On Sarah Keayne Dudley, see Reid 533-4; Rosenmeier 92-4, 96-99; Schweitzer 150-2.

good knowledge of early modern medical theories, e.g. the idea that females were colder and weaker than males, that the uterus was to be blamed for the weak physical constitution of females, or the supposed connection between womb and brain (Lutes 314-9; cf. 328-30). As Lutes has pointed out in her study on Bradstreet's use of metaphors and concepts of the female body, this knowledge allowed Bradstreet to develop her own interpretations of the body and Puritan theology (337)²⁷⁹—and these may have been influenced by her knowledge of the fate of Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer.

In "The Author to her Book," Bradstreet played with early modern theories of generation such as the theory of maternal imagination in order to challenge the view that women could at best produce healthy children but no creative work. Bradstreet made use of the modesty topos, describing her literary product as "ill-form'd" and as being created by her "feeble brain," but this served the aim to regain control over her own work and to claim full authorship. Bradstreet artfully stressed that—whatever its quality, and whatever others may think about it—it was *her* work (Schweitzer 171). Although describing her writing as defective, Bradstreet resumed full responsibility for it. Also imperfect offspring was the "progeny" of the mother and author, Bradstreet claimed (Major 114; cf. Latta 61).²⁸⁰ While Weld had used the notion of ill-bred children to point out the faulty mental and bodily output of Hutchinson (writing about the Antinomians' "litter" of "brats" in his preface to *A Short Story*, see above), Bradstreet was proud of her "rambling brat" (Bradstreet 177). As Schweitzer formulated it: "Bradstreet's hobbling child is a far cry from Winthrop's claims of the dissenting women's 'monstrous births.'" (154).

In "The Author to her Book," Bradstreet denied in particular that a male had been involved in the production of her literary work—she alone was the parent of her work.²⁸¹ Bradstreet had given her "brat" instructions to this purpose:

If for thy Father askts, say thou hadst none:
And for thy Mother, she alas is poor,
Which caus'd her thus to send thee out of door.

²⁷⁹ On Puritan conceptions of the flesh in the poetry of Bradstreet and other Puritan writers, see Daly.

²⁸⁰ Culpeper attributed good offspring to male authorship and bad one to female one: "I have viewed over this *Work*, and acknowledg [sic] it as my own Child . . . : If it be good, let the Father have the praise, its corruption it hath drawn from its Mother"—that is, the author (*Directory To the Reader*).

²⁸¹ On the way Bradstreet claimed ownership of her writings in "The Author to her Book" and by help of the metaphor of childbirth for creativity, see Latta 61; Lutes 310, 332-3; Major 111-5; Reid 539; Schweitzer esp. 154 and 169-73.

(Bradstreet 178; cf. 177).

Schweitzer goes so far as to read Bradstreet's text as "an angry and rebellious gesture" whereby Bradstreet pointed out that the child, her work, may even have been "ill-formed" "because of male interference," and not because it had been authored by a woman (154).

Bradstreet played with established metaphors and associations and used them for her own ends, wherefore her poem is "thoroughly conventional and subtly subversive at the same time" (Schweitzer 169). As various scholars have shown, she "defied the cultural prescriptions separating creativity and procreativity" (Lutes 332; cf. Major 111-5) and stressed that the physiological aspects of the female body (in particular its ability to produce offspring in the biological sense) on the one side and the creative potential of the female mind for producing a work of art on the other were no contradiction in terms but complementary (see Lutes 310; Major 114-5; Schweitzer 173). Bradstreet thereby rejected the common view that a mother forming her offspring through her imagination reversed the usual order of things: while Art imitated Nature, she made Nature imitate Art by transforming a visual impression into procreation (Huet 7-9, 24-27).²⁸² Through her literary work, Bradstreet demonstrated that also women had the right and the potential to express themselves in the arts (cf. Lutes 333, Schweitzer 172).

By reuniting poetic and procreative activities, Bradstreet created a positive view of Puritan womanhood that built a kind of counterpart to women like Anne Hutchinson who had been accused of having had corrupting effects on society. According to Rosenmeier, "Bradstreet affirms the existence of health and wholeness at a time when the elders and magistrates were finding evidence of the aberrant and destructive." (98; cf. 96-99). While Hutchinson became for Winthrop the model of a woman bringing disorder, disease, and disrespect, Bradstreet's poetry was presented by Woodbridge as "the 'gift,' not the curse, of speech" (153), contrary to the dangerous tongue of Anne Hutchinson and the malformed bodily offspring of Dyer and Hutchinson (Schweitzer 151-4; cf. Lutes 322, 326-8):

Women's speech that defies the party line—that usurps male authority and, thus, is not inseminated by legitimating masculine influence—is monstrous and deformed. Bradstreet's speech, nurtured by her father and her legitimating male poetic

²⁸² On the relation between Art and Nature, see Bredekamp; H. Cohen 183-98.

precursors, validates the dominant Puritan ideology and is “fair” and whole and healthy, fit for public display. (Schweitzer 154).

As this chapter has—it is hoped—shown, the misogynistic tendencies of *A Short Story* have to be seen as an element of a persuasive strategy within a wider debate and were more or less symptomatic of transatlantic cultural practices in the mid-seventeenth century. There occurred a fundamental re-conceptualization of the female sex—what Laqueur called the shift from the Galenic one-sex model to the two-sex model. Galen (see also chapter 2.2) had held that male and female bodies were essentially the same, with only the position of the genitalia differing. Writers such as Crooke perpetuated the theory “that women had all those parts belonging to Generation which men haue, although in these they appeare outward” (216). Sharp explained similarly in her midwifery manual of 1671 that the “Matrix is like the Yard turned inside outward” (37). Over time, the fluid construction of sex, in which men and women shared one body, was transformed into a model that conceived of the sexes as fundamentally different from each other. The result was in the late nineteenth century “a new model of radical dimorphism”; afterwards, sexual difference was not any more a difference of degree, but in kind (Laqueur 6).

3.4 The “hand of God”: Weld’s “finger of God” and the “Tombes-Baxter debate” in the context of changing concepts of nature

“We are guilty of false interpretations of *Providences*, and *Wonders*; when we either make those to be *Miracles* that are none; or when we put a false sense on those that are real, when we make general events to have a private aspect, or particular accidents to have some universal signification.”

--Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society* (1667), 358--

“Never, in New England, did the learned culture impose systematic order on the meaning of the wonder,” claims David Hall in his study on “popular belief” in early New England (*Worlds* 115)—and, one might add, this also applies to modern scholars working on wonder discourse in the early modern period. Throughout the seventeenth century, debate on signs, miracles, and the laws of nature permeated countless tracts and treatises. For one, there was rising awareness that human knowledge on nature was dynamic. What seemed contrary to nature could all of a sudden turn out to be perfectly in line with nature’s laws. Second, more and more thinkers began arguing that God did not meddle in the regular course of nature. There rose doubt whether God still intervened in worldly affairs, and if he did so, in what way. It is in this context that the story of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s failed pregnancies became a publicly debated touchstone regarding wonder discourse on both sides of the Atlantic, as will be shown in this chapter (and the following ones). Analyzing discourses on the two “monsters” serves as a prime route for gaining a better understanding of these debates and of the changes that comments on the two monstrous births underwent in the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In the first part of this chapter it will be sketched how the question of miracles was dealt with at the height of the Antinomian Controversy and how it was addressed in *A Short Story* and other contemporary publications. In the second part, the public debate between Richard Baxter and John Tombes on the New England monstrous births is presented as a case study for these controversies.

In the early modern period, children born with birth defects were considered a sport of a playful nature, outside the usual course of nature, or completely against nature, which found expression in the tripartite characterization of prodigious

phenomena as natural, preternatural, and supernatural. The preternatural comprised anything that appeared to be outside the usual course of nature; there existed rational explanations, but these were unknown to mankind. This was the sphere where the devil and demonic powers, such as witchcraft, became effective. The supernatural denoted all phenomena that could not be explained by rational means; such prodigies were attributed to God actively influencing the course of nature: “this terrible God . . . , who created all of nothing, can as easily diuert the usuall and orderly course of procreation, into the dreadfull and hideous deformitie” (*Wonder Worth* 6-7). Ambroise Paré postulated in his *Of Monsters and Prodigies* (see chapter 2.1) that monsters were “things that appear outside the course of Nature (and are usually signs of some forthcoming misfortune),” while “Prodigies” happened “contrary to the whole course of Nature . . . as if a man should be delivered of a Snake or a Dog” (585). Monsters were not necessarily a clear sign of Godly intervention—it depended on the definition of nature: whether it was regarded as existing independently from God or not.

As shown in chapter 2.1, natural and supernatural causes for monstrosity often were combined, and physiological reasons did not rule out involvement of God. One strategy to cope with the problems arising from the distinction between the natural, preter-, and supernatural sphere was to distinguish between “contra nature” and “contra nature as known to us.” According to Aristotle, monsters belonged “to the class of ‘things contrary to Nature,’” although not contrary “to Nature in her entirety but only to Nature *in the generality of cases*”; but, he added, “even that which is contrary to Nature is, in a way, in accordance with Nature” (IV, IV, 770b). Everything happened “by the will of God,” Augustine held: “A portent, therefore, happens not contrary to nature, but contrary to what we know as nature.” (776, 21:8). Also Montaigne believed that there was no such thing as “contrary to *Nature*,” only “contrary to *Custom*”: “Those that we call *Monsters*, are not so to *God*, who sees in the Immensity of his Work, the infinite Forms that he has comprehended therein.” (440, 439). In short, monstrosity denoted “not a contradiction of nature but of human epistemological categories” (D. Williams 13). The line separating the marvelous from the natural sphere was constantly shifting. Monstrosity was a question of degrees, depending on the view on nature and the level of knowledge mankind had attained (Céard, “Crisis” 186-8; Daston and Park 192-3).

Small wonder, then, that also the distinction between marvel and miracle,²⁸³ or between general and special providence, was and still is not easy to attain. Divine providence was the expression of God's activity and continued presence in the world and in nature—after all, it had been God who had created the laws of nature. Strange phenomena were interpreted as proof that providence “[r]ules the world and orders all below,” as the anonymous author of a broadside ballad on a double birth stated in 1680 (*True Relation* 4). General providence turned into “special providence” when God intervened in the natural laws in an extraordinary way, thereby producing phenomena that seemed inexplicable to mankind. In acts of special providence, God used nature as his instrument. God changed (or, one might say, manipulated) the laws of nature, but basically these remained valid. These instances were not completely contrary to nature, and they served to remind mankind that a higher power governed the universe (P. Miller 228). With extraordinary (or “immediate”) providence, God “provides for his creatures” either “immediately by himself” or by “miracles” (Shepard, *First Principles* 7).

The disputed distinction between the supernatural and the preternatural sphere had led to extensive debates during the examination of Anne Hutchinson at the November court of 1637 (see chapter 1.1). When Hutchinson claimed that eventually she would be delivered like Daniel out of the lion's den, Governor Winthrop asked whether Hutchinson thought that she would “be deliver'd” like Daniel “by a miracle”; Hutchinson opted for divine providence: “I look that the Lord should deliver me by his providence.” (D. Hall, ed. 338). John Endecott, a former Governor of the colony, objected and claimed that divine providence was not active in favor but against Hutchinson. In his view, her announcement of deliverance out of a lion's den was “a special providence of God,” because it provided a clear picture of what Hutchinson considered a miracle: “Now there is a revelation you see which she doth expect as a miracle. She saith she now suffers and let us do what we will she shall be delivered by a miracle.” (D. Hall, ed. 340).

²⁸³ Corner distinguishes a miracle from mere coincidence by defining a miracle as a “a special or immediate act of God, as opposed to God's continuous work of creating and sustaining the world. The result of this act will be beneficial and religiously significant.” (15). On wonders and marvels from the High Middle Ages through the Enlightenment period, see Daston and Park; cf. Bates, *Emblematic* 13-15; Campbell, *Wonder* 4-8, 15 and passim. See Platt 22-23, n6 for an extensive list of secondary works on wonder. On the concept of wonder in New England, see D. Hall, *Worlds* 71-116.

There was a high degree of uncertainty how to categorize the supernatural world. According to Calvin (taking up Augustine), miracles had ceased with the end of the New Testament era; they were considered unnecessary because of the sufficiency of God's word as recorded in Scripture and preached by ministers. Phenomena that seemed to be a miracle were "false" miracles that served to punish the reprobate and to test the elect. During the court examination, John Cotton was asked by Endecott to give his "judgment of Mrs. Hutchinson" in this matter in order to clear up the situation. Cotton stated that there were "two sorts of revelations" and he "would demand whether by a miracle she [Anne Hutchinson] doth mean a work above nature or by some wonderful providence for that is called a miracle often in the psalms" (D. Hall, ed. 340). There followed further attempts by the Deputy Governor to learn about Cotton's opinion—whether he thought Anne Hutchinson had revelations by God or not—but Cotton avoided a clear answer. For Winthrop, Hutchinson speaking of immediate revelations and her claim that divine providence would deliver her were "a marvellous providence of God" (D. Hall, ed. 341).

Much as in his journal (see chapter 2.1), Winthrop avoided using the term *providence* in *A Short Story* when describing Dyer's headless child but he systematically collected any piece of evidence. Winthrop presented the occurrences in a way that suggested that higher powers were involved and that a causal relation existed between them. Winthrop listed eight "things [that] were observable in the birth and discovery of this Monster" (*Short Story*, 1644, 44-45). The first three points can be related to misconduct: the parents were active Familists (see chapter 2.2) who reproached the Elders; the midwife had contact with the devil; and the birth had been concealed; the second group, numbers four to six, clustered events possibly caused by preternatural powers, e.g. the vomiting of the women attending the birthing scene, the convulsions of their children, the shaking of the bed, and the afterbirth covered with the same kind of prickles as the breast of the child. These events could be interpreted as having been caused by previous misconduct; they made visible the corrupt nature of the parents. Finally, in the third group, numbers seven and eight, the synchronicity of all these occurrences is pointed out, with Hutchinson being cast out of the Church just when Dyer's miscarriage became public news and when the father, William Dyer, had returned home after one month's absence.

By not explicitly terming Dyer's monstrous birth an instance of providence or of divine punishment, Winthrop at least left open to his readers the possibility to consider a natural cause; Thomas Weld's preface to *A Short Story* did not leave room for speculation, by contrast. Weld presented the two monstrous births in an overtly providential setting. For Weld, they were the inevitable result of divine punishment for the disobedience and obstinacy of their mothers. After having recounted the unsuccessful attempts to bring Hutchinson and the "Opinionists" back into line, Weld continued by ascribing the events to divine providence. Referring to the Antinomian Controversy, Weld stated that "in the time of the height of the opinions" the two women produced "monstrous births"; these were a clear indicator to him that thereby

God himselfe was pleased to step in with his casting voice, and bring in his own vote and suffrage from heaven, by testifying his displeasure against their opinions and practices, as clearly as if hee had pointed with his finger (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface)

It was not to be denied, Weld concluded, that one could "read their sin in these judgements" and see "the finger of God in all these dreadfull passages" (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). For Weld, the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson were a message from God, a sign of his wrath and judgment; they were "loud-speaking providence from heaven" that "did much awaken many of their followers (especially the tenderer sort) to attend Gods meaning therein" (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). As suggested in chapter 3.2, Weld may also have authored the anonymously published *New Englands First Fruits*, in which the two monstrous births possibly are alluded to in a passage that sounds very similar to the ones just quoted:

. . . by Gods own hand from heaven, in most remarkable stroaks upon some of the chief formeters of them; the matter came to such an happie conclusion, that most of the seduced came humbly and confessed their Errours in our publique Assemblies and abide to this day constant in the Truth" (*New Englands First Fruits* 22).

The process of birth was conceived of as an endless repetition of divine creation. As suggested in chapter 2.1, it was at the instance of birth that God did speak most clearly to mankind. When a child was born, the natural and the supernatural sphere were closely interrelated. Generation was "the finger-work and power of God in nature" (Cotta 33). John Cotton poetically described how God created the infant in

the mother's womb: "In mothers womb thy fingers did me make" (qtd. in J. Norton, *Abel* 28). Not the parents, but God gave the child "the essential form," it was God who caused its development and growth (Augustine 851, 22:24). Each birth was a mighty demonstration of divine strength and power. Nature was the product of "the sole immediate hand of God" (Cotta 33), wherefore God was "the Creator of every kind of creature, whatever its nature or form" (Augustine 408, Book XII, chapter 25).

Especially in acts of providence God's arm stretched out to the human sphere could be seen. In order to punish sinning, "Gods owne fingers shall crush the loynes in the wombe, and set his markes of fearefull diuine vengeance, on the brest of an unborne Babe, to turne it into a Monster"—already the title of the publication, *Gods Handy-worke in Wonders* (1615), made clear that prodigious births were first of all the work of God. In *A Declaration of a Strange and Wonderfull Monster* (a publication that possibly has been influenced by the tale of the New England monstrous births, see chapter 3.1), the midwife explained that she had informed the minister about the headless birth because "she verily believed that it was the hand of God" upon the mother; the members of the House of Commons in London ordered the story "to be printed, that so all the Kingdome might see the hand of God herein" (7).

In stressing the "finger" of God, Weld removed the creative agency of the mother in forming her progeny (as the concept of maternal imagination suggested, see chapter 2.2) to God.²⁸⁴ Weld presented the two miscarriages as being "not 'natural'" and "an intrusion of the supernatural into everyday life" (Lang 58; cf. St. George 169-73): Weld stated with regard to Hutchinson's multiple miscarriage that few of the "thirty monstrous births" were "of any perfect shape, none at all of them (as farre as I could ever learn) of humane shape" (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). The mother's sins caused a deformation of the unborn child, but the real cause—that is, the "first cause"—was God.²⁸⁵ It was as if God literally had used the creative power of his hands to step in.

Also in other publications the effects of God's hand on Dyer's and Hutchinson's wombs were discussed. The monstrous births were—directly or indirectly—presented as the result of "Gods own hand from heaven" (*New Englands First Fruits* 22) or the

²⁸⁴ As explored in chapter 3.3, another way to remove the creative agency from the mother was to construct male scientists as "pregnant" minds.

²⁸⁵ On "first" versus "second" causes in Puritan writings, see also chapter 4.2.

product of “a revenging hand from heaven” (Rutherford, *Survey* 181). And, as shown in chapter 3.2, also those who vehemently criticized the New England Way regarded the two monstrous births as a “visibly” sign “from the Heavens,” “punishing” Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer with aberrant births (Baillie, *Dissuasive* 63). By causing Dyer’s child to be born without a head, God showed that he was not content with Antinomian thinking: “heads” often were equated with (heretical) “ideas” (see chapter 3.2).

Hutchinson’s violent death at the hands of the Native Americans was presented in a similar realm by both adherents and opponents of the New England Way. Baillie saw it as the consequence of Hutchinson’s tendency toward separation and “her long contempt of divine and humane patience” that “at last God did let loose his hand, and destroyed her” (*Dissuasive* 63). Having never before heard of such a cruel deed of the Indians, Weld was sure that “Gods hand is the more apparently seen herein,” since he made “this wofull woman . . . an unheard of heavy example, of their cruelty above others” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). Edward Johnson (see chapter 3.2) commented that “although the Lord be secret in all the dispensation of his providences, whether in judgement or mercy, yet much may be learn’d from all, as sometimes pointing with the finger to the lesson” (132).²⁸⁶ Johnson used the episode to remind his readers of an earlier instance of God having expressed his anger—Dyer’s monstrous birth, as quoted in chapter 3.2: “yet was not this the first loud speaking hand of God against them; but before this the Lord had poynted directly to their sinne by a very fearfull Monster,” and when they were “striving to bury it in oblivion, . . . the Lord brought it to light” (133). In the expression “loud speaking hand of God,” Johnson combined Weld’s “finger of God” and “loud-speaking providence from heaven” with “Gods own hand from heaven” of *New Englands First Fruits* (1643).

Ironically enough, Anne Hutchinson, who had fervently questioned that the majority of the ministers were truly regenerate, seemed to have provided her

²⁸⁶ Also Groves saw the circumstances of Hutchinson’s death as an instance of God’s “visible hand from heaven” (43). Thomas Hooker, who had commented in a letter on Dyer’s miscarriage (see chapter 2.1), used a similar wording with regard to the sentence of banishment against Hutchinson: “The expression of providence against this wretched woman hath proceeded from the Lord’s miraculous mercy, and his bare arm hath been discovered therein from first to last” (qtd. in Hutchinson I: 63). Thomas Shepard (referring to the Antinomians’ banishment, their “sins” and internal quarrels as well as “some sudden and terrible deaths” among them) pointed out in 1645 that “God from Heaven hath ever borne witnesse, by some strange hand of his providence against them” (*New Englands Lamentation* 4).

opponents with a bodily sign of her own aberration. While Hutchinson had claimed during the November trial in 1637 that God's providence would deliver her—"[b]y a providence of God I say I expect to be delivered from some calamity that shall come to me" (D. Hall, ed. 341)—God seemed to have betrayed her by the prodigious misbirth. While she herself mistrusted outward, visible signs (see chapter 2.1), many of her opponents were ready to point out the sign character of her miscarriage.

The concept of providence had significant weaknesses when it came to explain strange occurrences, however. Often enough the doctrine of providence served to explain everything without explaining anything, and it was tempting to interpret seemingly unnatural occurrences in a way that suited best one's own interests. Anne Hutchinson and "some of her adherents," for example, reportedly took an earthquake that had occurred while they were praying as a sign "that the Holy Ghost did shake" the earth "in coming down upon them, as he did upon the apostles" (Winthrop, *Journal* 287). And the reliability of Rutherford's narrative (see chapters 3.1 and 3.2) at times suffered from his preoccupation with synchronicity of events and seemingly causal relationships. Rutherford claimed that Dyer's child died two hours *after* the actual birth, when in all other reports it had died two hours *before* delivery; furthermore, Rutherford established a near causal relationship between Dyer's monstrous birth and events in Scotland: he pointed out that the "revenging hand from heaven" came down just at the moment when "God was beginning to take vengeance on persecuting Prelates and their adherents in *Scotland*"; it was "at this time" that "the Wife of *William Dyer*, a proper comely young woman," had given birth to "a fearfull and rarely prodigious Monster" (*Survey* 181-2).

Some thinkers began devising theoretical frameworks that were better suited for explaining and understanding the world than the doctrine of providence. Around mid-century, a group of ex-Parliamentarians and Royalists started holding regular meetings in Oxford and London, studying the course of nature, conducting experiments, and debating the latest findings in astronomy, mechanics, and related fields. Ultimately, these activities led to the formation of the Royal Society of London in the early 1660s. The rise of this so-called New Science triggered a reconceptualization of nature that resulted in a re-evaluation of portents, miracles, and signs (see part IV of this study). The concept of a playful nature full of surprises (see Findlen, "Jokes"), as captured vividly by the term *lusus naturae*, came to be replaced

by a view on nature as being based upon regular rules and deterministic processes (Hagner, “Naturalienkabinett” 75). The so-called naturalists claimed that God did not meddle with nature’s course, as the belief in providence held, but that his presence was to be found in the regularity of the natural laws. Before, it was believed that God showed himself in irregularities,²⁸⁷ now in regularity. God became the watchmaker who had created a world that functioned like a mechanical device.

The changes in the concept of nature had profound effects on the interpretation of monstrous births and other extraordinary phenomena (see Bates, “Good” 157; Céard, “Crisis” 193-9). Mechanism included the belief that the operations of matter could be explained by general, universal laws and analogies; for example, similar effects were produced by similar causes. When the course of nature could be changed by mankind by deliberately influencing natural laws, then the causes of monstrosity might be changed, too. The Renaissance view on nature as a complex system of signs and symbols organized along analogies and horizontal correspondences slowly but surely came to be replaced by a taxonomy organized along vertical lines that allowed for exploring functional relations (Daston and Park 204-5; Findlen, “Jokes” 325; 295-6).

Due to these transformation processes, commentators on monstrous births increasingly focused on medical explanations. In the long run, they ceased trying to incorporate the monster into an overarching theory and focused instead on individual cases and specific body parts—what Hillman and Mazzio describe as “a new aesthetic of the part” (xiv). The monster as a portent was not ruled out as a possibility by this new class of scholars, but they consciously decided to deal with the individual monster as a physician, and not as a natural philosopher (Céard, “Crisis” 197-9). Specialization won over general theories on monstrosity. The two ways of interpreting monsters—as divinatory sign and as proof of the variety of nature—gradually became opposites. Prodigies lost more and more of their marvelous content and were increasingly seen as being part of the normal course of nature. That John Wheelwright Jr. questioned the theories offered by Weld on the two New England monstrous births (see chapter 3.3) is symptomatic of these changes.

²⁸⁷ For Augustine, God’s grace could be discerned best in cases when nature failed to fulfill her task: “For although God effects even the natural course of procreation, yet where the agency of God is manifest, through the decay or failure of nature, grace is more plainly discerned.” (16:26, 549). The study of monsters therefore offered a privileged route to partake in divine wisdom.

The Tombes-Baxter debate on the New England monstrous births

A dispute of two English contemporaries of John Wheelwright Jr. over Dyer's and Hutchinson's monstrous births perfectly illustrates the changing intellectual climate of the period. Richard Baxter and John Tombes, two ministers in neighboring parishes, debated questions relating to the form and degree of divine intervention with regard to the two monstrous births as part of a years-long public quarrel on the question of baptism. This debate is of high value for us today. It not only touches upon Dyer's and Hutchinson's failed pregnancies and is very well-documented but the controversy offers an insight into the mechanisms of religious communication in the public sphere, and these mechanisms strongly resemble the way public discourse on *A Short Story* unfolded as delineated in the preceding chapters.

The two opponents in debate were both deeply enmeshed in the religious controversies of their time. Richard Baxter (1615–1691), preacher at Kidderminster, Worcestershire as of 1641, was one of England's most fervent critics of Antinomianism. In his view, Antinomian thinking was to be blamed for most of the upheavals of the time—including Anabaptism, social unrest, and even regicide. Baxter's worldview had been shaped by his own experiences in the Civil War and his knowledge of the colonial Antinomian crisis. He feared that New England Antinomianism might infect England, wherefore in 1649 he warned of the “practicall birth” with which the Antinomians had lately “travailed” (qtd. in T. Cooper 111).²⁸⁸

That Baxter had heard about the miscarriages is not astounding. As also his writings show, Baxter had a strong interest in the New England colonies. He exchanged letters with the first, second, and third generation of the Mather family: with Richard, Increase, and Cotton Mather. Baxter also corresponded extensively with John Eliot (Keeble and Nuttall, eds. xxvi) and was an acquaintance of the Reverend Thomas Brookes, who in 1660 had received the letter with John Eliot's description of the exhumation of Dyer's child (Winsser 31).²⁸⁹ Last but not least, Baxter claimed to have conversed with some of those who had left New England after Wheelwright and Hutchinson had been banished (*Plain* 189).

Richard Baxter first met John Tombes in the winter of 1644 to 1645 in London in the house of a friend of Baxter. At about this time, Tombes (1602–1676)

²⁸⁸ On Baxter's interpretation of the monstrous births, see also shortly in chapter 4.2.

²⁸⁹ On Eliot's letter, see chapters 1.1 and 3.1.

was developing antipaedobaptist views, which he subsequently published in *An Apology or Plea for the Two Treatises, and Appendix to Them Concerning Infant-Baptisme* (1645). Tombes was Curate of his birthplace, Bewdley, two miles from Kidderminster, from 1646 to 1650. Later he became Vicar of Leominster, Herefordshire. Tombes held various other positions at different places, which reflects in a way his changing religious viewpoints and the problems that resulted from some of these.²⁹⁰

Baptism was heavily disputed at the time both in Old and New England. There was no clear guidance on the topic in the Scriptures; all the while, Protestants saw baptism as a precondition of salvation. In the Massachusetts Bay Colony, baptism was required for entering into the church covenant, that is, for becoming a member of the church with all rights and duties. As Cotton Mather put it, baptism was “the Seal of the first Entrance or Admission into the Visible Church” (*Magnalia* V, 65). Most Puritans therefore regarded it as indispensable that children were baptized as soon as possible. Those who were against baptism were asked to consider “what a Cruelty” it was “to devest Children of that onely externall priviledge which their heavenly Father hath bequeathed them, to interest them visibly in . . . the tender bosome of their carefull Mother the Church” (Ward 16). However, more radical adherents of Reformation required candidates to make their own confessions of faith; Anabaptists tended to refuse baptism to infants—or at least saw a second baptism necessary, as Tombes and many members of his congregation did.

As of the late 1630s, Anabaptism got hold in New England, too. As will be shown below, many of those who had been expelled from the Bay colony in the course of the Antinomian Controversy adopted Anabaptist views; furthermore, in 1638 Roger Williams and other settlers established a Baptist church in Providence along separatist lines (Gaustad 52-53). Anabaptism was not only perceived as a threat to religious orthodoxy but to the peace and order of the colony. In late 1644, the Massachusetts Court passed a law that allowed for banishing those opposing infant baptism, and the law also punished denial of “the Ordinance of Magistracy, or their lawfull right & authority to make war, or to punish the outward breaches” of the first four of the ten commandments (*Book of the General Laws* 2). Anabaptists were

²⁹⁰ For a summary of the debate and biographic information on Tombes and Baxter, see Keeble and Nuttall, eds. (47). On Tombes, see J. Smith, “Tombes.” For a detailed study on Baxter’s life, work, and religious viewpoints, see T. Cooper.

described as secretly broaching a variety of heretical opinions, waiting patiently for a suitable opportunity “to vent them,” wherefore they were “the Incendiaries of the Common-wealths & the Infectors of persons in main matters of Religion, & the Troublers of Churches in most places where they have been” (*Book of the General Laws* 1). In 1648 and again in 1662 the question of baptism was debated in synods, resulting in the Half-Way Covenant of 1662: baptism was extended to the children of baptized but unredeemed parents, that is, people who had been baptized as infants but had failed to provide evidence of having experienced grace as an adult; they were not full church members but submitted themselves to church discipline and professed faith (see Pope; Staloff 135-41).

Although the two New England monstrous births did not move to the center of the debate between Tombes and Baxter until somewhat later, a closer look at the beginning of the two men’s controversy over baptism may shed light on the nature of their dispute and why they fought so vehemently over the interpretation of the two miscarriages. Evidently, both Tombes and Baxter were of a difficult character and prone to plunge headfirst into the controversial debates of their time. Tombes, for example, was in conflict with many of his contemporaries, among them Robert Baillie (see chapters 3.1 and 3.2), who had presented Anabaptism as a heresy endangering the very foundation of family, church, and state in *Anabaptism, the Trve Fovntaine of Independency, Antinomy, Brownisme, Familisme* (1647). In a text signed July 1647 (published in 1652), Tombes lamented the “wrong done to me by Mr. Baillie” and the “many false accusations tending to beget prejudice against my writing, and hatred against my person” (*An Addition* 37-38). Baxter, for his part, was an uncompromising anti-Antinomian and tended to contempt those who did not share his opinions. As of 1649, when Baxter had published his first book, he continuously triggered criticism of his religious viewpoints, resulting in several years of verbal quarrels with his critics (T. Cooper 46-51, 101-2).

A pivotal point of Baxter’s and Tombes’s dispute was a verbal trade-off between both of them in Bewdley Chapel, where Tombes was curate, on 1 January 1650, lasting “from Nine of the Clock in the Morning till Five at Night, in a crowded Congregation” (qtd. in Keeble and Nuttall, eds. 47). At this occasion, they tried to reach a conclusion on when was the right time for baptism. How it came to the public debate in Bewdley Chapel and how the relationship between the two adversaries

developed thereafter is delineated in *Letters That Passed between Mr. Baxter and Mr. Tombes Concerning the Dispute* of 1649/50, a 12-pages collection of their letters that Baxter had published in 1652.

In 1649, Tombes was informed that Baxter suggested “a disputing” of their differing viewpoints on infant-baptism “in some open way of speech.” Tombes, however, was unwilling to participate, pointing out in his letter to Baxter that he had already laid down his arguments in his writings. He made the counter-proposal that Baxter should send him his arguments in written form (Baxter, *Letters* 405). Reading Baxter’s return letter reinforces the impression that the two gentlemen were struggling not only with the appropriate choice of weapons for a rhetorical duel but also about who desired it. The following passage with Baxter’s tripartite “offer” to Tombes serves well to illustrate this point:

[1] if to you or your people a debate seem necessary and desireable, (for I or my people do not desire it much, but affect quietness) I shall (if God enable me) spend a day or two in publick conference with you (as far as my strength will bear). 2 Or if you so absolutely refuse that, that there is no hopes of it, I offer, that if you will preach two Sermons against it, and I two for it, and so let fall the debate, and leave it to the peoples judgment, I shall agree to it. 3 If you absolutely refuse both these (which seem to me the only means) if you can contrive how to make a short dispatch, and give me sufficient assurance of it upon equall terms before we begin, I shall consent to write. (Baxter, *Letters* 406)

Baxter did not forget to mention that he accepted the challenge only “for the truths sake” since his position was much more disadvantageous than that of Tombes: “you being Batchelour of Divinitie of so long standing, and I having scarcely known an University” (*Letters* 407).

The form and degree of education influenced the form of discourse that those involved preferred on their way to finding “truth.” While Tombes opted for the written form, Baxter, who described himself as “a dying man” (*Letters* 409), disliked writing lengthy treatises on the subject; he preferred “2 or 3 hours dispute” to “many months writing” (406-7) and offered paying a visit to Tombes in order to discuss the controversial topics (409). Tombes, however, distrusted “open dispute,” regarding it inappropriate “for common Auditories” who “usually misapprehended” the statements and “commonly take him to have the better who speaks most”—not to mention the “misreports” that surely would result from such an endeavor. Tombes conceded that he needed not a “voluminous” written response but would be content to

receive some “Syllogisms” from Baxter (407). Written arguments, Tombes claimed, allowed for better judgments than verbal disputes, and he suspected that Baxter’s “cause” was “not good,” since Baxter refused to write down his arguments (408). Baxter, in turn, expressed his doubts about written tracts, claiming that Tombes’s “Neighbours did confess to me” that they had never read relevant books on the topic and that they were not “able to judge by comparing together such tedious writings” (Baxter, *Letters* 411).

There were messengers sent to and fro, and both parties frequently made reference to “Neighbours” asking for clarification on the theological issues at stake (Baxter, *Letters* 405-9). Many of Tombes’s auditors seem to have thought about being baptized again, being unsure whether the baptism they had received as an infant was sufficient; they longed for a reliable assertion as to whether there was “a divine institution of Pædobaptism” or not (Baxter, *Letters* 410). There was a high degree of uncertainty that expressed itself in the letters quoted above. Evidently even learned theologians had difficulties in giving guidance and orientation.

That Tombes suggested “Syllogisms” shows that he belonged rather to the scholastic tradition and had not been influenced by the methods of New Science. A few years earlier, Tombes had expressed his hope that those criticizing him for his views on baptism would “examine my writings in a faire Scholastike way” (*An Apology* 15). Influenced by Ramistic logic, Puritans frequently used syllogisms. The pre-condition for putting together a correct syllogism was to know its constituents and the categories of being that were to be described (see Roberts-Miller 36-38, 49-53). The method came under increasing attack by adherents of Francis Bacon who propagated the method of induction (see chapter 2.1). The aim was to “analyze experience and take it to pieces” to reach “an inevitable conclusion” (Bacon 20).

The wish for syllogisms also shows a form of helplessness in view of theological conflicts with such strong social and political relevance. Could such matters be solved with the means of logic? Baxter doubted as much, and he was especially annoyed at Tombes’s line of reasoning (which resembled itself a syllogism) that clearly aimed at provoking a written statement from Baxter: Tombes had written to Baxter that if he did not “gratifie” him and his neighbors with some syllogisms, “they will take it as if it were granted that you can say no more then others have done in print for Pædobaptism” (Baxter, *Letters* 410). Baxter reacted

accordingly, responding that in this case it was “vain” to explain anything to people who were “so easily deceived,” and he seemed honestly disappointed of Tombes’s conduct: “But for you that are a Logician, to encourage them to such conclusions, who should teach them only the truth, and the right way of discovering the truth, seems to me a thing to be admired at.” (411). Tombes then claimed that he had been “willing to invite you to be a hearer, and if you judged it meet, to oppose what you should think good in a Logick way without Rhetorick” (Baxter, *Letters* 412).

Apart from the form of discourse, the two opponents also disagreed about the degree of publicity and the quality and number of auditors. Baxter had no “desire to be publique,” and if this was unavoidable he would prefer “a competent number of the intelligent” as audience (Baxter, *Letters* 408). He felt that “freedome of speech” was only possible in “a secret conference between you and me alone” since otherwise, “in publick,” Tombes might find it difficult to admit his errors, for this would damage his reputation (415). Tombes, too, had his reservations regarding the public sphere. When we are to believe Baxter’s account, there was some discontent on Tombes’s side that Baxter had shown one of his letters to three persons who were present when Baxter received the letter. Baxter defended his doings, stating that he did not know that there were “any desires of secrecie; nor had I reason to think of any, it being about so publick a business” (Baxter, *Letters* 409). In general, letters of ministers were regarded as being rather a public medium of discourse (McIntyre 613).

Verbal or written discourse, brought forward publicly or not, syllogisms and logic versus rhetoric—Tombes and Baxter could find no satisfying compromise on what was the best way to truth. Many issues of Anne Hutchinson’s trials and the attacks of Wheelwright Jr. and, later, Wheewright Sr. on Thomas Weld (who was believed to have authored all of *A Short Story*), played a role in this conflict, too: the fight over truth; the question whether the arguments were meant “Rhetoricall” (Wheelwright Jr. 185) and were presented publicly or in a secretive way, and whether statements made in a private setting (when Hutchinson had been consulted by friends, see chapter 2.2, or when Tombes sent a letter to Baxter) were to be dealt with publicly; the fear that public reproaches might damage one’s reputation (see chapter 3.3). Like Tombes, Hutchinson’s opponents had engaged themselves “in a plaine Syllogisticall dispute,” as Weld summarized the attempts to reclaim Hutchinson (Winthrop, *A Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). Last but not least, Tombes had been

accused by Stephen Marshall, a supporter of infant baptism, that he printed his views on Anabaptism only “out of a restless spirit to vent my selfe” (Tombes, *An Apology* 15)—much as Hutchinson had been accused of venting her opinions (see chapters 2.2 and 3.3).

When Tombes and Baxter finally met in Bewdley Chapel the debate intensified rather than resolved their conflict. The tone in the letters they sent to each other after 1 January 1650 became even more acrimonious than before (see Baxter, *Letters* 413-5). Baxter felt that Tombes had “most unworthily and unbrotherly traduced me four times in publick, whereof three in pulpit” (413). Tombes denied this and wondered whether “it was true which was said, that you would hide your weapon till you were to use it” (414). While all the time they had discoursed on the right way of how to decide about infant baptism, Tombes established all of a sudden a connection between their dispute and Baxter’s relationship to the authorities. Tombes feared “that you go in a slippery path, if you do as your friends imagine, oppose the present government, and dissenting brethren, likely out of mistaken zeal, and others provocation who will abuse you for their own ends” (Baxter, *Letters* 414). The year 1650 belonged to the period of the Commonwealth of England (or the “Interregnum”); on 30 January 1649, King Charles I had been executed by Parliament, and on 19 May 1649 the so-called Rump Parliament had declared England a commonwealth. The Rump Parliament had an interest in curtailing religious extremism, and Tombes must have been aware of this; only a few years earlier he had thought about publishing in Latin instead of English because those arguing in favor of adult baptism had to fear that Parliament imposed penal punishments for holding and propagating Anabaptist views (Tombes, *An Apology* 15). Tombes’s abrupt change of topic was not lost on Baxter:

It seemed a strange Diversion to me to turn from a dispute of Infant-baptism so suddenly to State matters; And to intimate my opposing the present Government, because my friends imagine it; and so to join together the present Government and Dissenting Brethren, as if they were conjunct; and it were as dangerous to dispute against Anabaptists, as to oppose the Government! And to tell me of my going in a slippery path, as if threatening must be the Argument to take me off when others failed! Perhaps he will say, he meant in regard of danger from God immediately; but I do not think any impartial Reader will so interpret his words, as to the imaginary opposing the present Government. (*Letters* 414-15)

That Tombes suggested that some of Baxter's "friends" may "abuse" him "for their own ends" (Baxter, *Letters* 414) paralleled the suspicion that Weld had been used as a strategic instrument by Scottish Presbyterians in the context of the toleration controversy (see chapter 3.1).

After Baxter and Tombes had exchanged about a dozen letters, they switched to large tracts. Baxter published *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650), which became one of the most influential Puritan texts of the seventeenth century (published in nine editions in twelve years; Daly 75). The work was answered by Tombes's *An Antidote against the Venome of . . . the Whole Book of Mr. Richard Baxter*. (1650). Baxter responded with a *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants Church-membership and Baptism: Being the Arguments Prepared for (and Partly Managed in) the Publike Dispute with Mr. Tombes at Bewdley on the First Day of January* (London, 1651), which was republished twice up to 1656. With continual reference to Tombes, Baxter discussed the question of infant baptism and the concept of the visible church. It was in this context that Baxter and Tombes finally turned their attention to the two New England monster tales.

So when Baxter and Tombes focused their dispute on Dyer's and Hutchinson's monstrous births they already had a long record of fierce attacks upon each other and touched upon topics that were hotly debated at the time. Their previous disagreement was rekindled by a short note at the margin of Baxter's *Saints Everlasting Rest* on how to interpret these two prodigies (232). Baxter's motivation was to illustrate one of his points with an example. In the previous chapters, Baxter had brought forward a whole range of arguments "to prove Scripture to be Word of God" and his "Divine Authority" (191, 221), analyzing different forms of providence: first "wonders of Providence, which have been exercised for the Church universal," then those "exercised for particular Churches" (*Saints* 225).

Baxter was convinced that "the hand of God" showed its "workings" in conflicts (*Saints* 227). Elaborating this viewpoints, Baxter made use of birth imagery to explain that God's ways were often inscrutable since he "delighteth . . . to hide the birth in the womb, till the very hour of deliverance" (227). Baxter was writing about human "miscarriages and errors" and expressed his confidence that God will "make the Birth which we travel with more beautifull, then our slanderous enemies . . . do yet imagine" (229). In short, Baxter considered "monstrous births" as divine

“Judgments” that “have been usually executed on offenders, at the very time when they have been either opposing or violating Scripture” (232):

As them in New England whether Mistris *Hutchinsons* and Mistris *Dyers* most hideous monstrous births were not convincing providences against their Antinomian Antiscriptural heresies, as if God from heaven had spoke against them: and yet Old England will not take warning. (Baxter, *Saints* 232)

Baxter regarded the monstrous births as miracles, using them—much like Weld—as an example of “the finger of God” (*Saints* 230). He had already done so in an earlier, undated treatise, written probably in 1649, in which he claimed that Antinomians were far worse than the “Papists”:

God hath confirmed me herein by his judgments from heaven. For besides his giving them over to scandalls and wickedness, he did by little lesse than Mircales in those Monsters in New England, speake plainly to the world his detestation of their opinions. (“Treatise” 203)

That “Miracles are so unusuall in these later ages” proved to him “that when God speaketh by them, he is obdurate in rebellion that will stop his eares” (Baxter, “Treatise” 203).

In *An Antidote* (1650) Tombes reacted critically to Baxter’s reference to the New England monstrous births. That Baxter cited the Bay colony as an example was not the primary issue, since Tombes had also directly referred to the situation in New England a few years earlier;²⁹¹ Tombes disagreed with Baxter’s conclusions. Tombes put into doubt Baxter’s claim that “*the most hideous monstrous births of Mistris Hutchinson, and Mistris Dier*” as “mentioned in the Margin of his book” were a miracle. Tombes disliked that Baxter obviously had only the example of these two New England prodigies to bring forward to back up his attack on the diverse sects, and this was all the less acceptable since Tombes was “confident” that “neither Mr. Baxter, not any of his *Neighbours of Kederminster*” actually had seen the “two Monsters” with their own eyes. In order to get more information, Tombes consulted *A Short Story*, “Mr. Welds story of the Antinomians,” on this matter (*An Antidote* 21).

Tombes did not doubt that the narrative of the monstrous births as told by Weld was true, but he denied “that they were Miracles” in the sense Baxter had

²⁹¹ In reaction to a law sanctioning antipaedobaptism passed by the Massachusetts General Court in 1644, Tombes had recommended “the Elders of the Churches of Christ in *New-England*” to read one of his books in 1646 (*An Apology* 13-14; quotation: 13).

“distinguisheth between *Wonders and Miracles*” (*An Antidote* 22). Baxter had defined “real Miracles” as acts that could be wrought by God alone and that confirmed the “Truth” of certain “writings” or a particular “Doctrine”; by contrast, wonders could also be brought about by sorcerers and witches (*Saints* 191, 192). To Tombes, the two monstrous births were not remarkable enough to deserve being regarded as real miracles. Although there was hardly a “story” that paralleled the New England cases “in every point,” there were many other monstrous births that “neither Divines, nor Philosophers, not Physicians” would term “Miracles” (*An Antidote* 22). Edward Howes (see chapters 2.2 and 3.1) had made a similar point in the same context, asking in 1639 “whoe can tell certainly wherefore God sent them [the monstrous births]? where is there such an other people then in New England?” (505).

The difficulties in deciding upon the nature of extraordinary events were also much debated in the writings of contemporaries of Baxter and Tombes. Culpeper’s viewpoint on this matter, for example, resembled that of Tombes: he stated that the “*Divine*” tended to see the cause of monstrosity in a “Judgment of God,” which would render “every Monster a miracle” (*Directory* 139). Also John Wheelwright the Younger’s argumentation resembled that of Tombes. In the *Mercurius*, Wheelwright had distanced himself from the belief that moral misdeeds could exert influence upon the course of nature. He considered the analogy brought forward by Weld in his preface to *A Short Story* between products of the womb and the brain (see chapter 3.3) “impertinent, for he brings in defects of Nature, amongst defects of Manners” (196). Wheelwright also ruled out the option to single out the monstrous birth as “an extraordinary defect”: this “avails nothing, unlesse he will either raise it to a miracle, or at the least prove a supernaturall remission of the *formative virtue in her*” (Wheelwright Jr. 197).²⁹² Unlike Weld, Wheelwright Jr. had focused on the natural sphere working independently of God’s hand when interpreting the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson (see chapter 3.3). John Vicars, by contrast, who had also commented upon Hutchinson’s aberrant birth (see chapter 3.1), openly rejected the view of the “Naturalists and Philosophers” that double births and other such phenomena were caused by “a deficiencie and weaknesse of nature.” He called “a meere naturalist and carnall man, who is willing only to look upon externall and

²⁹² In seventeenth-century writings, the “formative virtue” usually is situated in the semen, causing the preformed fetus to develop in its final form (see also chapter 2.2): the male semen was “the *logos* of the movement” (Aristotle IV, III, 767b). For related terms (*stamina* and *Nishmath-Chajim*), see chapter 4.3.

secondarie causes, not considering the wonders and operations of Gods hands” (*Prodigies* 23).

To Tombes, strange occurrences were simply “Accidents” (of a playful nature, one might add), wherefore it would be wrong to use them “as Arguments for, or against any Tenet.” In his view, this would amount to a “confirmation of superstition and errors” (*An Antidote* 22). Tombes thereby openly rejected the view that an act of God had been involved in the case of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s monstrous births. In general, he seemed more inclined to see the course of nature working independently of her Divine creator. As someone holding potentially heretical viewpoints, Tombes may have feared to suffer a similar harsh judgment as Hutchinson and her supporters. But it would be simplistic to see Vicars and those holding similar views as blocking the way for deeper knowledge; they simply had a different understanding of knowledge, truth, and nature.

In reaction to Tombes’ criticism, Baxter tried to clarify what he had meant with “erroneous” sects: “I then speak of them,” he explained, “[a]s testified against by God; more particularly the *Antinomians* in *New England* by the Monsters,” and “against whom only I brought the Example of the Monsters (for whom else can it belong to?)” (*Plain* 168). He took the monstrous births as phenomena that were inseparably connected to their place of origin—New England. For Baxter, the deeper meaning of the miscarriages was to be found in the area where they had occurred and not in any general laws of nature. Baxter believed, however, that the lesson learned by the two monsters could be transferred to similar cases.

To Tombes, as quoted by Baxter in the *Plain Scripture Proof*, the relevance of the monstrous births and the message they carried were far from certain; in particular, he was doubtful whether one could draw any conclusions as far as the question of baptism was concerned. The claim of *A Short Story*—that “a certain strange kinde of thing that was bred in the womb of one Mrs. *Dyer*, and the other, some strange things that came out of the womb of one Mrs. *Hutchinson*”—were a heavenly sign from God “to shew the errours these women held” did—in Tombes’s view—not allow for a general condemnation of Antipaedopatism: “what is this to Anabaptism?” Tombes wondered, especially since the errors debated during the Synod held at Newtown from late August 1637 onwards had not included a denial of infant baptism. There may have been “severall unsavoury speeches that fell” from the Antinomians, he

conceded, “but not one of them against Infant-Baptism. There are twenty nine Doctrines of Mrs. *Hutchinsons*, but none of them against Baptism of Infants.” (Baxter, *Plain* 189). It is true that during the trials of Anne Hutchinson and John Wheelwright the denial of infant baptism had not been a prominent topic, if at all. Winthrop had shortly mentioned Anabaptists, but more in historical perspective rather than referring explicitly to Hutchinson and her followers (D. Hall, ed. 342).

In the years following the Antinomian Controversy, however, Antinomians became more and more associated with Anabaptist viewpoints—also in New England. From the beginning, the Hutchinsonians were seen in close connection with Familism (see chapter 2.2), a variant of earlier forms of Anabaptism (Como 5), and also on the title page of *Antinomians and Familists Condemned* and its later editions (under the new title *A Short Story*) the two groupings are mentioned in a row. In Browne’s letter to D’Ewes (see chapter 3.1) the question of baptism immediately preceded the report on the Antinomian Controversy and Hutchinson’s mole. Browne did not establish a direct connection between Antinomians and Anabaptists, but *before* he turned to the Antinomian “controversies” as the last topic of his letter he pondered the question of “baptizing of infants.” He was preoccupied with the problem of how to deal with newborn children when the parents had been “excommunicated upon a scandalous course” (E. Browne 229). Also in Winthrop’s *Journal* the threat of Anabaptism turned up once in a while. After similar unsettling news had reached him already in 1639, in the summer of 1641 Winthrop noted that “Mrs. Hutchinson and those of Aquiday island broached new heresies every year. Divers of them turned professed anabaptists, and would wear any arms, and denied all magistracy among christians” (362; cf. 286-87; cf. Hubbard, *General History* 339). In 1652, John Clarke, who had provided Winthrop with information on Hutchinson’s miscarriage (see chapter 2.2), defended himself against accusations of being an Anabaptist (*Ill Newes* 5). And, to give just one last example, Baxter claimed that he “had acquaintance with some of them that left *New-England* when M. *Wheeler* [Wheelwright] and Mrs. *Hutchinson* were discarded, and they were against Baptism” (Baxter, *Plain* 189).

For Baxter it was clear that the seeming surge of monstrous births was caused by the sects and their despicable practices that proliferated in England and its colonies:

The judgements that I mean they have seen, are such as this Land is full of, and now groans under, giving up these Sects to such vile opinions, and practices, as might be a terrour to any considerate man that followeth them (*Plain* 189)

And “terror” there was. In England a number of broadsides narrated gruesome stories of mothers killing their newborn child in order to prevent having it baptized or, in the reverse scenario, to punish the husband who rejected baptism. In *Bloody Newes from Dover* (1647), for example, the question of baptism pitted an Anabaptist mother, Mary Champion, against her husband, who was labeled a Presbyterian on the title page. John wanted to have the child christened, so Mary cut off the head of her baby in his absence. The woodcut depicted her presenting the head of her child to her shocked husband.²⁹³

Also in New England the question whether a child should be baptized divided families. In July 1644, Thomas Painter of Hingham, who “suddenly turned Anabaptist,” refused to have his newborn child baptized, while his wife wanted it. He was brought before Court and sentenced to whipping (Hubbard, *General History* 347; cf. Winthrop, *Journal* 517-8). Similarly, the first president of Harvard College, Henry Dunster, announced in 1654 that his newborn son would not be baptized since he could not find solid foundation for the practice in Scripture (Hoeveler 39-41). And in 1662, the debate on the Halfway-Covenant had led to divisions not only within churches but also within families, among them the Mather family (Silverman 57).

For Baxter it was without doubt that the New England monstrous births were a sign “against the deniers of Infant-Baptism,” since those colonial Puritans whom he had met after the height of the colonial Antinomian Controversy “were against Baptism.” He also clarified that in mentioning the example of New England he “intended only the Antinomians” (Baxter, *Plain* 189), and, as one year earlier in his *Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650), he used much the same rhetoric in *Plain Scripture Proof* as Weld had done in *A Short Story*, writing of “the finger of God”:

²⁹³ For a similar publication, see Locke’s *A Strange and Lamentable Accident that Happened Lately at Mears-Ashby in Northampton-shire* (1642), in which the birth of a headless child was interpreted by the minister, the author of the pamphlet, as a dreadful warning to all who went astray from the Anglican Church or challenged God in other ways. On the pamphlet, see Cressy, “Lamentable,” who interprets it in relation to the publication *Strange and Wonderfull Monster* (London, 1646; see chapter 2.1 of this dissertation). On broadsides and chapbooks dealing with women beheading their child because of disputes on baptism, see Fissell 158-61; J. Friedman, *Miracles* 82, 89-90; Staub 336-9.

For those in New-England, they are apparent and undeniable wonders wrought by the finger of God Almighty. Sir, God doth not ordinarily, nor every day work wonders, and crosse the course of nature; and therefore his wonders are not to be flighted not overlooked. I wish all Divines and Christians in England that are too favourable to the Antinomian principles, would a little more sadly and seriously consider of those wonders; and whether they should not above all errors decline those that God hath so visible testified his detestation of. Certainly God would never have done it, if he did not expect we should observe it, and give him the glory. It is a desperate thing to be hardened against wonders. (Baxter, *Plain* 189)

A few pages later, however, Baxter somewhat drew back from his earlier claim that the two monsters were miracles. Although he admonished his readers that “[t]rue Miracles are never to be distrusted, but believed whatsoever they teach: For they are only the Testimony of God, and God cannot lie,” he conceded that “some wonders” may “not [be] proper miracles in their nature” (198); but even those “may yet have a plain discovery of a finger of God in the ordering of them, and so when they are not against Scripture, but according to it, should exceedingly confirm us” (198):

So, if it were no Miracle for Mistris *Dyer* and Mistris *Hutchinson* to bring forth these Monsters, yet to fall out on the leading Sectaries, and not on one only, but both, and that in such a time when the Church was in perplexity, because of those Controversies, and for one to have such variety of births, and the other a Monster, with such variety of parts suitable to their various Opinions; these are so evidently the hand of God, that he that will not see it when it is lifted up, shall see and be ashamed. (Baxter, *Plain* 198)

Ironically enough, while Baxter had refused to lay down his arguments with a syllogism in his debate with Tombes, he more or less did so with regard to the New England monstrous births. He argued like a logician, constructing “if” and “when” sequences and pointing out parallels and synchronicities. The idea that the number of monstrosities equaled the number of erring opinions followed the same rationale as Weld’s conclusion in *A Short Story* that God fitted the number of monsters to the number of Hutchinson’s errors (see chapter 3.3). Baxter seems to have become tired of endlessly justifying his viewpoints, as the following, almost beseeching statement shows:

And I hop M. T. his tongue will sooner cleave to the roof of his mouth, then these wonders of providence shall be forgotten by *New-England*. And the forgetting them among us, is no small aggravation of our sin; That ever old *England* should become the dunghill to receive the excrements of all those abominations which were purged out of *New-England* by wonders from God! (*Plain* 198)

Following this exclamation, Baxter gave “the people of *Kederminster*” the advice “that they take Scripture for the only rule, but flight not the judgements of God on the corrupters of it, not shut they eyes against the Commentary of such providences” (*Plain* 198). For Baxter, a combined reading of the “book of Scriptures” and the “book of nature” (see chapter 2.1) still was the prime route to gaining insight, wherefore it was essential to consider the “Commentary” of “these wonders of providence” (*Saints* 225). In 1702 and again in 1713, there appeared another edition of Baxter’s writings, published and edited by Edmund Calamy, who admired Baxter, as an “abridgment of Mr Baxter’s History of his life and times.” According to Wykes, Calamy “recast Baxter’s narrative in the third person to form a general history of dissent.”²⁹⁴ Tombes, for his part, continued publishing treatises on the question of baptism up to the late 1650s.²⁹⁵

As the debate between Tombes and Baxter shows, interpreting bodily deformation in newborn children as a providential sign or even a miracle increasingly came under attack, but it still would take decades until the so-called monstrous births lost their sign-character. For still some time, natural philosophers tried to devise epistemological concepts that suited both traditions, that of the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. In the long run, these attempts would fail, however; theology and physics, having coexisted peacefully for a long time, began moving apart from each other, as also the following chapters will show. The “universal hermeneutics” that had been applied to both fields was on the decline, and “the era of ‘the two books’” came to be replaced by that of “‘the two cultures’” (Harrison 267), each developing their own distinct methodologies.

²⁹⁴ In chapter VI of the 1713 edition, Calamy/Baxter recount how Vane’s and Hutchinson’s “Party [was] quickly confounded by God’s *Providence* . . . One Mrs. Dyer, a *Chief Person of the Sect*, did first bring forth a *Monster*, which had the *Parts of almost all Sorts of Living Creatures*; some *Parts like Man*, but most ugly and misplaced; and some like *Beasts, Birds, and Fishes*, having *Horns, Fins and Claws* . . . Mrs. *Hutchinson*, the chief Woman among them; and their *Teacher* . . . brought forth about 30 *Mishapen Births* at once;” (98). On Calamy/Baxter, see also shortly in chapter 3.1.

²⁹⁵ See *A Publick Dispute* (1654), or *John. Felo de se, or, Mr. Richard Baxter's Self-Destroying Manifested in Twenty Arguments against Infant-baptism* (1659). But the dispute seems not to have completely destroyed Tombes’s and Baxter’s interest in each other’s lives and a certain respect of each other. In 1659, Baxter contributed commendatory epistles to a work authored by Tombes; and in the late seventeenth century, Baxter judged Tombes to be “reputed the most Learned and able Anabaptist in *England*,” claiming that he “more rejoiced in *Mr. T.’s Neighbourhood*, and made more use of it, then of most of others” (qtd. in Keeble and Nuttall, eds. 47).

IV A family endeavor in interpreting prodigies (1652–1714)

4.1 Prologue: the Quaker threat

While from 1638 up to the early 1650s one or both of the prodigious births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson had been commented upon almost each year in written form, the frequency declined slowly but surely as of the mid-1650s. There were Edward Johnson's *Wonder-Working Providence* and William Hubbard's *A General History of New England* (see chapter 3.2), and in 1669, Nathaniel Morton, the long-time Secretary of Plymouth Colony, gave a short account of Dyer's "hideous Monster" (108) in his *New-Englands Memoriall*. With the exception of Johnson's text, these publications rarely contributed new aspects to the reception history of the monstrous births but rather repeated earlier interpretations. Morton, for example, used expressions that evidently had been taken from earlier publications (for example Weld's preface to *A Short Story*, or Baillie's *Dissuasive* 72), such as "Horns like a Beast" and "Leggs and Claws like a Fowl" (108). That the frequency of publications declined was to be expected. Many of those who had played a prominent role in local and transatlantic discourses on the two miscarriages were not among the living anymore, while others had their interests diverted: John Winthrop and Thomas Shepard had died in 1649, John Cotton in late 1652; Thomas Weld lived until 1661 or 1662, but he may have had lost interest in the topic long before, due to changes in the political climate and the experience that *A Short Story* had proved a double-edged sword in the contested space of transatlantic opinion making.

Anne Hutchinson had died in 1643, but Mary Dyer was still alive, and her activities of the late 1650s would have offered a good opportunity to bring to life again memories of the two monstrous births: Dyer had turned a Quaker, and it is striking that her "headless" child was not used as a polemical weapon when the authorities of the Bay colony started to fight Quakerism, with Mary Dyer playing again a prominent role in a serious dispute over authority in religious matters. The

Quakers (also called the “Society of Friends”)²⁹⁶ were one of the many sects that had sprung up in the wake of the English Civil War. They rejected hierarchical structures and claimed to be guided by the Inner Light of God that was present in each person. Since they did not accept the primacy of learned clerics in interpreting Scriptures and were held to disregard civil legal authorities (declining for example to swear oaths), they were seen in close connection to Antinomianism.

Dyer’s Quaker history began when she and her husband, William, travelled to England in 1652. While William returned to Rhode Island in 1653, Mary extended her stay and came in contact with George Fox, the founder of Quakerism. When Dyer returned to the Bay colony in the fall of 1657 to bring the “Inner Light” to New England, she had deviated even further from “orthodox” Puritan thinking than before her departure. In the meantime, the Bay colony’s officials had continuously strengthened their efforts to fight Quakerism. Violation of anti-Quaker laws was severely punished, for example with whippings, imprisonment, or banishment. Dyer therefore was immediately taken up as a Quaker upon arrival, along with two fellow missionaries from England. Shortly thereafter, Dyer left for Rhode Island, but when she returned to Massachusetts in the summer of 1659 to visit her two Quaker friends at Boston jail she was also imprisoned and had to stay in jail for two months. In a letter to the Massachusetts General Court, Dyer issued a prophetic warning that divine judgment would follow the Court’s actions against her. Drawing upon the biblical Esther (1.12, 17), she claimed to speak by revelation and, implicitly, to be able to foretell the future (Myles 11-14; Plimpton 163-5). During the Antinomian Controversy, it had been Anne Hutchinson who had claimed to have immediate revelations and acted like a prophet (see chapters 1.1 and 3.4); as of 1656, Dyer followed in Hutchinson’s footsteps.

After her release from jail, Mary Dyer continued provoking the colony’s authorities. Only one year earlier, in 1658, the General Court had introduced the death penalty for any Quaker who returned to the colony after having been banished from it (L. Friedman 42-3). So when Dyer and her two Quaker friends, William Robinson and Marmaduke Stephenson, returned to the colony only three weeks after having been banished on pain of death in September 1659, they were arrested and sentenced to death, being led to the scaffold on 27 October 1659. Unlike her two friends, Dyer

²⁹⁶ On Quakerism, see Chu; Lovejoy 111-53; Pestana, *Quakers*; Ryan. On Dyer’s Quaker biography,

was reprieved shortly before execution, since her husband and son as well as persons holding public offices (among them John Winthrop Jr., Governor of Connecticut) had protested on her behalf. Dyer was again banished from the colony, but when she returned still another time in May 1660, the authorities lost patience. On 1 June 1660, Mary Dyer was led to Boston Common and hanged at the order of Governor John Endicott.

Responding to criticism that their Quaker laws were disproportionate and unjustified, the New England officials brought forth defensive texts. In 1659, the Massachusetts General Court commissioned John Norton, who had succeeded John Cotton as a minister at Boston's First Church, to author *The Heart of N[ew] England Rent* to explain the colony's actions against the Quakers. Also the Quakers and those sympathizing with them authored polemical works to advance their cause. In 1659, the Quaker Humphrey Norton, having suffered himself various penalties because of his continued activities for the Society of Friends, called the officials of New England and New Haven "hypocrites" in his *New England's Ensigne* (1) and attacked them for their hard stance against Anne Hutchinson and the Quakers. In 1661, one year after Dyer had been executed, George Bishop published *New England Judged* to provide a summary "of the *Sufferings* of the *People* called *Quakers*" in America from 1656 to 1660 (title page). Bishop criticized the Quaker laws and the severe punishment of Quakers as "*Monstrous Barbarism's* to the *Innocent*" (94).

Although this renewed threat to Puritan doctrine triggered anew public debates, Dyer's "monstrous birth" and her earlier Antinomian affiliations were with few exceptions not addressed. Neither George Bishop nor Humphrey Norton mentions Dyer's miscarriage, and John Norton not even mentions Dyer herself. When the story of the prodigious births made it into the Public Record Office of England after Dyer's execution as a Quaker in 1660 (see chapters 2.1 and 3.1), her failed pregnancy was reported upon, but not her Quaker history. One of the few contemporaries who established a connection between Dyer as a Quaker and her previous miscarriage was John Hull (see chapters 2.1 and 3.2), but this happened only in his personal diary and not in print. The passage, dating from the year 1659, starts with a short overview on the arrival of the Quakers and their early years in the Bay

see e.g. Myles 7.

colony. Hull identified one of these Quakers, Mary Dyer, as she “who, about twenty years since, was of Boston and brought forth a hideous monster, part like a man, part like a fish, part like a bird, part like a beast, and had no neck: it had scales, claws, and horns” (188-9). That Dyer and her Quaker friends had been sentenced to death by the General Court was strongly appreciated by Hull (188).

Another noteworthy example of a publication focusing on both the Quakers and the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson is the text *A Glass for the People of New-England* (1676). The work, which gives only the initials “S. G.” as author, is nowadays attributed to Samuel Groome (Hutchinson 64n2). Groome maintained that the New England authorities had severely mistreated Anne Hutchinson, Mary Dyer, and Jane Hawkins and that the colony’s officials

made a notorious Lye on the destroyed Woman, the which one of their Priests put in Print, and another of that Tribe, *Samuel Clark* Priest of *London*, taking the Lye out of his Brother *Wells* his Short Story, and must needs put it into his Book called, *God’s Judgments against Heresie*, in which he also scandalized *Mary Dyer* and *Midwife Hawkins* (8)

According to Groome, the story of the monstrous births was mainly used as self-justification for banishing and “destroying” Hutchinson and her family (8). He charged the New England elite with their uncompromising stance and their failure to explain what the Quakers had been accused of; this he perceived as an unfair form of public debate (and in this respect the text reminds of John Wheelwright’s *Apology*, see chapter 3.3): you “have covered your selves by saying, *she held about Thirty Monstrous Heretical Opinions*,” without having “laid down so much as One of them, for Indifferent Persons to judge” (9). Groome criticized “Priest *Wells* [Weld]” and *A Short Story* as well as Samuel Clark’s “lying Book,” the *Looking Glass* (see chapter 4.2), all of which commented on the monstrous births, for making their readers believe that Hutchinson, Dyer, and Hawkins, who “have been known to be honest Women,” were “*Witches* or such Persons” (11). Groome ascribed Hutchinson’s miscarriage to the emotional and physical strain she had had to endure: “for they banished, imprisoned this tenderly bred Woman in or towards Winter, and what with *Fears* and *Tossings* to and fro the Woman miscarried, upon which they grounded their abominable Untruth.” (11). So while John Winthrop is not known to have considered a natural explanation for the “monstrous birth” of Mary Dyer (see chapter

2.1), someone criticizing Hutchinson's opponents was willing to do so—as John Wheelwright Jr. had done a few years earlier (see chapter 3.3).

While Weld and others had referred to witnesses to confirm the truth of the monster story, Groome did the same to point out that it was untrue: “many Witnesses might be produced to prove this, and to disprove their abominable frequently told Slanders” (11-12). It was in this context that Groome referred to Dyer's miscarriage:

I might insert that other Story which the same Lye makers made of *Mary Dyer*, and Midwife *Hawkins*, but it's not worth while, as to his Description of a horrid Monster, wherein ther Lyes were apparent to many sober People. (12)

Towards the end of the publication are added “Queries by another Hand for the *New-England* Priests and Elders to Answer,” and one of these queries deserves to be quoted at length since it shows that the fears of Winthrop and other colonials that Congregationalism as practiced in the Bay colony might be interpreted as being prone to produce monstrosities (see chapter 3.2) had not been without cause:

Whether have not *New-England* Priests and Elders brought forth a Monstrous Birth of the Flesh, worse then *Balaam*, worse then *Core*, worse then *Cain*, *Herod*, *Pharao* and *Nebuchadnezar*; for these never pretended themselves to be *Christians*, and therefore my Query is, whether ye *New-England* Priests and Professors, since ye fled out of Old *England* into the Wilderness of *New-England*, whether you have not brought forth many Monstrous Births, like Bruit Beasts, like Dragons, like Cockatrices, like Roaring Lyons and Devouring Wolves? Let the Fruits of the Birth that they have brought forth in the Wilderness speak. ([Groome] 29)

In this query, the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson were seen as the product of the Bay colony's elite—they were “the Fruits of the Birth that they have brought forth in the Wilderness,”²⁹⁷ a statement that echoes Mat. 7.16, where it is explained how to recognize false prophets: “Ye shall know them by their fruites”

The author of the query in Groome's *A Glass for the People of New-England* also took up the accusation formulated in the wake of the toleration controversy that the Bay colonials used worldly measures for dealing with questions of conscience (see chapter 3.2): “For wherein do ye differ from all the Monstrous Births of the World, with your Fleshly Carnal Weapons” ([Groome], 30). The degree of cruelty and the willingness to suppress “Liberty” in New England, the author claimed, by far exceeded that of the “*Papists*” and the “*Turks*”: “For, the most Monstrous Births,

which have been brought forth in many Ages, in all Nations, are now brought forth in *New-England*” ([Groome], 30). As Bremer (“Cotton”) put it: “While presbyterian critics of the New England way like Baillie branded the colonies as a spawning ground for heresies, sectarian critics deplored the intolerance of Massachusetts.”

To conclude, Dyer’s monster tale was usually ignored in Quaker histories, and when it was referred to this happened as part of a rhetorical battle. Maybe the defenders of the Quaker cause wanted to avoid turning public attention to Dyer’s past because her previous affiliation with Antinomianism would have made it easier to dismiss the Quakers as notorious troublemakers. Even those criticizing the brutal punishments of Quakers may have felt a certain irritation when women became politically active. Promoting women’s full and equal participation in religious matters and within the community, Quakerism posed a similar threat to the established order as the colonial Antinomians of the 1630s or the female petitioners to Parliament in Jacobean England (see chapter 3.3). For the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s establishment, on the other hand, it would have been embarrassing having to admit that the attempts in the late 1630s and the 1640s to re-establish order had not been as successful as claimed (see chapter 3.2): Dyer again caused trouble. Last but not least, the almost unrestrained polemic and propaganda that characterized public debate in England during the Civil War and thereafter may have led to a certain weariness of the use of monstrous births to prove one’s points, as the following chapter will show. This restraint may have had a long-term effect on modern studies on Quakerism, in which Dyer’s monstrous births are also rarely covered (see chapter 1.1).

²⁹⁷ On the trope of wilderness (also in relation to interpretations of the “monstrous birth” of Mary Dyer), see also chapter 2.1.

4.2 The advancement of New Science in colonial New England: Increase Mather and John Spencer

“For I admit nothing but on the faith of eyes, or at least of careful and severe examination, so that nothing is exaggerated for wonder’s sake, but what I state is sound and without mixture of fables or vanity.”

--Francis Bacon, “The Plan of the Great Instauration” (1620), 26--

The heights of the colonial Antinomian and Quaker crises are separated only by about two decades, but this short period of time is regarded today as one of the constitutive periods for the modern mindset: the fundamental intellectual turnover remembered today as Scientific Revolution had gained momentum. Both the emergence of New Science and the political and religious debates in the aftermath of the English Civil War influenced the reception of the narrative of the two monstrous births in the second half of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth century. Slowly, the story of the two famous New England monsters began to mean something different to recipients on both sides of the Atlantic. The writings of the Bay colonial Puritan minister Increase Mather and in particular his comments on Mary Dyer’s stillborn child illustrate well the effects of these transformation processes. These effects can be detected just as much in what was formulated in various texts as in what was *not* written—maybe as a consequence of the increasing distrust of miracles and wonders. As will be shown in this chapter, in view of the rise of mechanistic theories, Mather tried to save the idea of an orderly world governed by divine providence that could be understood (at least partially) by God’s obedient servants. Mather verifiably has been influenced by the distinguished English scholar John Spencer, wherefore an additional focus lies on the question whether Sievers has been right in stating that it was mainly due to Spencer’s work that Dyer’s “monster baby” finally turned into “a Baconian natural fact” (227).

The two monstrous births entered the world at a time of profound intellectual changes. The debate on their meaning evolved when the Western world became involved in the fundamental intellectual turnover that has come to be subsumed under the term *Scientific Revolution* that is meant to capture the change of paradigms taking

place.²⁹⁸ The hitherto dominating form of natural philosophy, neo-Scholastic Aristotelianism, gradually came to be replaced by new methodologies that ultimately resulted in today's scientific disciplines, a process captured in the notion of the emergence of a "New Science." While natural philosophy comprised any system of thought that tried to establish "a general theory of nature" (Anstey and Schuster 1), new scientists increasingly restricted themselves to providing solutions for individual problems.

The Civil War and Interregnum period strengthened the impetus to search for new epistemological concepts. There had been a tremendous rise in sectarian polemics making use of remarkable providences, signs, and wonders. That the compilers of cheap print sometimes found it less important to give a truthful account than to attract potential readers by re-using woodcuts that had been produced upon other occasions (see chapter 3.1) was not conducive to building trust in the reliability of such publications either. And the Stuart Restoration in 1660 did not put an end to these practices. A prominent example is the *Mirabilis Annus* series, collections of prodigies published by religious dissenters in 1661 (under the title *Eniautos Terastios*) and 1662. The authors of the series were pointing out signs of God's anger at the newly established order created by the royalists and the Church of England, and it was claimed that these signs were presages of upcoming disaster, such as another outbreak of civil war (J. Friedman, *Miracles* 41-56).

Both the rise of New Science and the experience of unrestrained polemics led to a more skeptical approach towards providential interpretations, a development that had already begun in the first half of the seventeenth century. Many Anglicans began warning of an over-excessive belief in prodigies and supernatural phenomena, and adherents of New Science called for an alternative route to gaining a deeper understanding of the world. They took up the mission of one of the founding fathers of the project of New Science, the Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon, who had aimed at nothing less than "with a religious care to eject, repress, and, as it were, exorcise every kind of phantasm" (26). That John Wheelwright Jr. had dismissed *A Short Story* as "a mythologie" (186) and Wheelwright Sr. the accusations brought forward against

²⁹⁸ On the terms *Scientific Revolution* and *New Science*, see chapter 1.2, n60. Secondary literature on the Scientific Revolution and the rise of New Science is massive. For a good overview, see H. Cohen; Dascal and Boantz, eds.; Hellyer, ed.; Henry, *Scientific*; Hill, *Intellectual*.

him by Weld and others as “Fictions” (*Plain Apology* 15) is symptomatic of these intellectual changes.²⁹⁹

When the prestigious Royal Society was founded in late 1660 (receiving a royal charter in 1662), the new way of thinking found an institutionalized form. Thomas Sprat’s famous *History of the Royal Society* (1667) formulated the founding myth of an institution dedicated to repudiate enthusiasm and folkloristic tales:³⁰⁰ The founders of the Society “have indeavor’d, to separate the knowledge of *Nature*, from the colours of *Rhetorick*, the devices of *Fancy*, or the delightful deceit of *Fables*,” so that knowledge of nature could serve as “an Instrument, whereby Mankind may obtain Dominion over *Things*, and not onely over one anothers *Judgements*” (62). Knowledge, not opinions should govern the public realm. By help of “*sober and generous knowledge*” the members of the Royal Society “were invincibly arm’d against all the enchantments of *Enthusiasm*” that the “madness of that dismal Age” had brought about, Sprat claimed (53). The prime route to gaining this knowledge was the experimental method, combined with exact observation. The sciences should “no longer float in air, but rest on the solid foundation of experience of every kind” (Bacon 6).³⁰¹ When adherence to an orderly system of examination was demanded (the results of which needed confirmation by the early scientific community) it became more difficult to use prodigies for individual purposes. The use of monstrosities mainly as a means of rhetoric as part of religious or political disputes was more and more despised.

One of England’s most influential opponent of credulity and the “fanatical Enthusiasms” of sectarian groupings such as the Quakers (J. Spencer, *Prophecies* 7) was John Spencer, an Anglican clergyman and distinguished Hebrew scholar.³⁰² In 1663, only one year after the Royal Society had received its charter, Spencer published *A Discourse Concerning Prodigies*, in which he commented on the New England monstrous births, and two years later *Discourse on Vulgar Prophecies* (1665), in which he attacked the widespread belief in prophecy; the latter he regarded

²⁹⁹ Wheelwright the Elder admittedly had been motivated less by the wish to further New Science but personal frustration over how he had been treated by the Bay colonial authorities. It is possible, however, that his wording has been influenced by the rhetoric of some of his contemporaries who had an interest in these epistemological changes. On Wheelwright Jr. and Sr., see chapter 3.3 of this study.

³⁰⁰ On Sprat’s account, see Feingold 168. On the Royal Society’s founding history, see Stearns, *Science* 84-116. See Winship, “Prodigies” 95n8 for secondary literature on the Royal Society.

³⁰¹ For a good overview on experimental versus speculative philosophy, see Anstey; cf. Ashworth 154-5.

as the worst outflow of enthusiasm after the flood of pamphlets written by Puritan Dissenters after the Restoration, the *Mirabilis Annus* series. Spencer despised the “confusion” that “such predictions” brought about (*Prophecies* 8) as well as the constant threatening of “some strange and unusual plagues approaching in the State” (*Prodigies* sig. B verso). He wanted to stop the practice of the dissenters to interpret these events in a religious and political context, which he deemed inappropriate and a danger to the existing order. In short, Spencer tried putting an end to the emblematic world view—the tendency to think in terms of analogies, allegories, and resemblances (see chapter 3.1).

Spencer aimed at removing prodigies from the preter- and supernatural sphere and categorizing them as natural events—much like earlier writers who had claimed that the causes of seemingly miraculous events were only hidden and would be laid bare by mankind with increasing knowledge (see chapter 3.4). On the title page of Pierre Boaistuau’s *Certaines Secrete Wonders* (1569), for example, it was suggested that these “sundry strange things” were only “seeming monstrous in our eyes and iudgement, bicause we are not priuie to the reasons of them.” In Spencer’s view, the “general constancy and harmony of Nature in its operations” was confirmed rather than “removed” by “prodigious occurrences”: these were simply “Anomalies of Nature” or, more precisely, “some temporary exceptions from her more common rules of motion” (*Prodigies* sig. A2). Spencer argued for moderation, for a middle way between regarding nature as an orderly system governed by laws and as allowing for strong aberrations. Neither was nature always following “immutable law and order” nor was “the world a great lottery” (*Prodigies* 42). A “wise intermixture of some irregularities” would cause mankind to acknowledge that in nature there was “some Great Master to guide her hand” (*Prodigies* 42). Also Sprat had demanded in 1667 to be cautious with regard to divine prodigies and belief in omens. Reducing the number of miracles would not diminish their authority, he argued, but augment it (360, 362).

For Sprat and other Anglicans of the Restoration period as for Spencer, Puritans resembled enthusiasts, occultists, and other sectarians in their love of special providence and prodigies. Spencer consequently referred critically to the various attempts to explain remarkable occurrences by the “finger” of God:

³⁰² On Spencer and his publications, see J. Crawford 175-81, and esp. Burns, “Our Lot.”

. . . perhaps sometimes He [God] acts so accountably, and consonantly to our notions, in the works of *his providence*, that men are forc'd to say, *Verily there is a God which judgeth in the Earthe* and sometimes so irregularly in the works of Nature that men are forc'd to cry out, *The Finger of God!* (*Prodigies* 42)

The motif of the “finger” or “hand of God” had been used in *A Short Story* and also by Richard Baxter to point out the sign character of Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s failed pregnancies (see chapter 3.4), and indeed one of the key pieces of Spencer’s campaign against excessive love of prodigies was a critique of earlier interpretations of the two New England monstrous births. In the Scriptures, there could rarely be found judgments against “some Doctrine of religion,” Spencer began; men wrongly tended to focus on “a little difference of Opinion” in religion “and quickly to blow it out into a schism or heresy”; however, it were not heretics who were “smitten with any great plague from heaven” in Scriptures but “persons of corrupt and depraved manners” (*Prodigies* 89). In short, crimes and sinning, and not heresies, were punished by God. For this reason, to claim

that the births (though granted monstrous beyond the possibilities of Nature) which M^{rs}. *Hutchinson* and M^{rs}. *Dyer* (the two great Prophetesses & Leaders to the Anabaptistical faction in *New-England*) were delivered of, singled out their Opinion, and were visible reproofs from heaven of *Anabaptism* itself, is to interpret the voice of Gods rods by blinde and uncertain gheses [sic] . . . ; for we hereby determine the large and deep thoughts of infinite Wisdom by those little maxims, short thoughts and ends, our selves usually attend unto. (*Prodigies* 90)

In this and related passages, Spencer repudiated conclusions drawn by earlier interpreters of the ill-fated pregnancies. Spencer stated that the monsters were not a judgment against heretical beliefs such as Antinomianism or Anabaptism, as Thomas Weld respectively Richard Baxter had suggested. Weld (see chapter 3.2) had claimed that the two miscarriages were God’s punishment for the Antinomians’ “opinions and practices” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). In the late 1640s, Baxter (see chapter 3.4) had regarded the prodigious births as a powerful “Testimony” of God against “Antinomianists” who had been the subject of “satanicall delusions and enthusiasticke madnes[s]” (Baxter, “Undated Treatise” 203). Also in the context of his dispute with Tombes, Baxter had established a direct connection between the monstrous births and Anabaptism: God had spoken “from heaven” against the “Antinomian Antiscriptural heresies” (*Saints* 232). Spencer, however, pointed out

that there was no example to be found in the Scriptures when God “menac’d any such reproachfull judgement against any such errors” as Anabaptism (*Prodigies* 90).

Spencer’s critique seemed almost tailor-made to counter Baxter’s conclusions, which were with high probability known to Spencer; but Spencer may also have had in mind Clark’s *A Mirrovr or Looking-Glasse Both for Saints and Sinners* (1646), in which the monstrous births were addressed in a chapter entitled “Examples of Gods judgements upon Hereticks, and Schismaticks.”³⁰³ Such works were part of a long tradition that had flourished in the Elizabethan period. John Foxe, for example, had used prodigies for propaganda in his *Actes and Monuments* ([1563]), and large compendia of stories of monsters and marvels such as Lykosthenes’s *The Doome Warning all Men to the Iudgemente* (1581) or Thomas Beard’s *The Theatre of Gods Iudgments* (published in 1648 in the fourth edition) had the aim to foster pious belief by offering narratives of God’s punishments for sinners, ranging from heretics to murderers.

In Spencer’s view, the attempts of men like Thomas Weld and Richard Baxter to ascribe universal meaning to Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s miscarriages were despicable, but at least in some aspects Baxter and Spencer held similar viewpoints. Spencer conceded that God may once in a while punish “persons of corrupt and depraved manners” (*Prodigies* 89). When it appeared as if God had punished errors such as Anabaptism, Spencer demanded to check whether this had happened “in conjunction with great crimes”—because then “it may be more reasonably presum’d, that it was directed rather against the wickedness of the heart then the weakness of the head” (*Prodigies* 90). For Baxter and most of his contemporaries it was clear that heretical thinking inevitably led to a corruption of manners and despicable behavior, as also John Winthrop and other colonial commentators had suspected (see chapter 2.1). Divine judgment sometimes punished those who led “evil lives,” even if they “may for a while seem holy,” Baxter suggested. It was this divine “judgment of a wicked life” that threw “light so visibly also upon the Anabaptists, that may deterr [sic] us from joining with them” (*Plain* 168).

Another difference to earlier commentators on prodigies such as monstrous births concerned the state of mind of those involved. While Weld and others had

³⁰³ In the 1671 edition, see the chapter on “Hereticks and Schismaticks plagued by God.”

regarded Hutchinson and her followers as “silly” (see chapters 2.2 and 3.3), Spencer regarded those as mentally weak who interpreted the two prodigious births of New England as God’s judgment upon Anabaptism. These persons did “interpret the voice of Gods rods by blinde and uncertain ghesses,” Spencer stated (*Prodigies* 90). Spencer associated those with a strong interest in prodigies and omens with persons of “the weakest understandings,” such as “Madmen,” “Fortune-tellers, Women,” and “old men” (*Prodigies* 84, italics in parts reversed; cf. *Prophecies* 12). He linked the belief in prodigies to melancholy (*Prophecies* 95-109), apocalypticism, ignorance, superstition, and fanaticism as they abounded in the period of the Civil War and the Interregnum. Belief in prophecies distracted the mind from reasonable thought, Spencer argued (*Prophecies* 44).

Increase Mather (1639–1723),³⁰⁴ one of the most famous second-generation New England Puritans, must have been aware of these intellectual debates. As will be shown below, at least as of 1689, Mather, an educated man with close ties to England, verifiably had knowledge of John Spencer’s writings. Mather, who was born after Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s miscarriages had occurred, had entered Harvard College in 1651 at the age of twelve. In 1657, he sailed to England and enrolled at Trinity College in Dublin, where his older brother Samuel lived, in order to continue with his studies. In 1661, one year after the Restoration of Charles II had ended Puritan dominance in English politics, Mather returned to Boston. In 1688, he traveled anew to England and stayed again for a few years (Cressy, *Coming Over* 210-2; M. Hall, *Last* 30-34, 43-47).

Mather tried to accommodate the belief in prodigies as presages with the emerging scientific spirit, which can be shown in exemplary form by analyzing his interpretation of Mary Dyer’s monstrous birth in *A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New-England*, published in 1676. The work, Mather’s “first essay toward the writing of history” (Murdock 110), covered King Philip’s War of 1675-76, the armed conflict between the Native Americans of southern New England and the English colonists and their Native American allies.³⁰⁵ In *A Brief History*, Mather combined two historic events in such a way that the reader was artfully guided to see

³⁰⁴ For biographic details, see M. Hall, *Last*; Middlekauff 77-187; Murdock. On Increase Mather as a scientist, see M. Hall, “Introduction;” M. Hall, *Last* 165-74; Middlekauff 139-61.

³⁰⁵ On Increase Mather’s interpretation of the monstrous births, see Schramer and Sweet 17. On Mather’s covering of King Philip’s War and his love of prodigious events, see Nord 21-25. On King Philip’s War, see Lepore; Schramer and Sweet 14-24.

providence as the link between the two without that Mather had to claim as much explicitly. As the editors of *A Brief History* rightly point out, this part of the text shows how Mather struggled to align the emerging scientific spirit with his theological viewpoints. He tried to establish a connection between certain instances of prodigies and historical events in order to support the practice of interpreting such providences as predicting future events (Slotkin and Folsom, eds., 160n100).

Mather began his line of argumentation with a report on unusual occurrences accompanying the armed conflict with Metacomet (the Native Americans' leader, called by the English "King Philip") and his men. Writing on the last phase of the war, Mather first mentioned the signs in the sky that had been witnessed shortly before the Native Americans began their attack on the English settlers: on 15 June 1676 there was seen "the perfect form of an *Indian Bow* appearing in the air" at Plimouth, and, as Mather noted with some reservation, "which the Inhabitants of that place (at least some of them) look upon, as a *Prodigious Apparition*." In the following passage he added further prodigious occurrences that had happened shortly before or during the war, such as "a shaking of the earth," "a considerable Eccho," or guns that had gone off in the air. For Mather it was well possible that all these combined were "an *Omen* of ruine to the enemy" and that an end of the war was near (*Brief History* 34). Mather used these signs for a short excursion on the character and meaning of prodigies:

Nor is this (may I here take occasion to little to *digress*, in order to the inserting of some things, hitherto not so much observed, as it may be they ought to be) the first *Prodigy* that hath been taken notice of in *New-England*. It is a common observation, verified by the experience of many Ages, that *great and publick Calamities seldom come upon any place without Prodigious Warnings to forerun and signifie what is to be expected*. (*Brief History* 34)

As the quotation shows, Mather tried to back up his theory—as Tombes had done before (see chapter 3.4)—by referring to "common observation." By claiming that it was "verified by the experience of many Ages" that usually there are "Prodigious Warnings" heralding "Calamities," he gave his theory the taint of empirical knowledge. Mather obviously was intent upon presenting himself as a disinterested and, therefore, objective commentator who only relied on trustworthy witnesses: Mather asserted that he was "sloe to believe Rumors of this nature" and "would not have mentioned this relation" if he had not "had certain Information" of these

occurrences and “received it from serious, faithful and judicious hands, even of those who were ear-witnesses of these things” (*Brief History* 34). Having thus prepared the ground, he then turned to the most unsettling form of prodigies, monstrous births: “And now that I am upon this *Digression*,” he explained, “let me add, that the monstrous births which have at sundry times hapned, are speaking solemn providences” (*Brief History* 35).

Mather brought forward two examples: the child of Joseph Wright, born at Woburn on 23 February 1670, and the stillborn baby of Mary Dyer. The “Creature” delivered by Wright’s wife lacked the breast and back bone as well as bones in the thighs; it had a huge belly, the feet were distorted and “turned directly outward,” while the “heels turned up” (*Brief History* 35). The body was closely examined, and when it was “opened, there were found two great lumps of flesh on the sides of the seeming belly; the bowels did lie on the upper part of the breast by the Vitals” (*Brief History* 35). As was common in early modern broadsides, Mather pointed out that several witnesses of high standing had seen the deformed child in order to heighten the credibility to the story (see chapter 3.1). The passage giving a detailed description on the child is set in quotation marks, thus it had evidently been taken from a written or oral report Mather had received from someone else. With the help of the summary of the Wright case, Mather smoothly directed his readers’ attention to the Dyer case, which had happened much earlier:

There are judicious persons, who upon the consideration of some relative circumstances, in that monstrous birth, have concluded that God did thereby bear witness against the *Disorders* of some in that place. As in the days of our Fathers, it was apprehended that God did testifie from heaven against the monstrous Familistical Opinions that were then stirring, by that direful Monster which was brought forth by the wife of *William Dyer*, Octo. 17. 1637. (*Brief History* 35)

Increase Mather referred his readers to “Mr. *Welds* his History of the Rise and Ruine of Antinomianism” (that is, *A Short Story*) and “Mr. *Clarks Examples*” for a more detailed description (*Brief History* 35).

The reference to other writers gave Mather’s report not only more authority; especially his reference to Clark, whom he would mention again several times in a later work (*Essay* 64, 216, 240, and *passim*), can be read as an implicit comment on the intellectual changes of the time. Samuel Clark’s *A Mirrour or Looking-Glass Both for Saints, and Sinners* (1671), in which a report on the two New England monsters

was included (249-50), had evolved from about 230 pages in the 1646 edition to more than 700 pages in 1671. In the dedicatory poem to the *Mirroure*, Clark gave as a reason that he was able to show more with such a collection of prodigies and historic occurrences than was possible with those newly devised optic instruments or travels of discovery that were so popular these days. In *A Brief History*, Increase Mather took over Clark's method of putting together a hodgepodge of topics, using the concept of providence as a uniting element. Clark covered for example miraculous deliverances and murderers punished by God, as Thomas Beard and Stephen Batman (see above) had done before; Increase Mather combined the Antinomian Controversy and the tale of the monstrous birth with a history of the war against the Native Americans.³⁰⁶ In doing so, Mather "permits himself an unconscionably wide time-latitude in correlating events" (Slotkin and Folsom, eds., 160n100). In the end, the "little" "Digression," as Mather called it (*Brief History* 34, 35), spanned almost forty years.

As Schramer and Sweet have pointed out, Increase Mather used "representations of physical deformation and monstrosity" to create a link between the Antinomian Controversy and King Philip's War (17). This strategy may have been influenced by the hermeneutic method of typology, the practice of interpreting events and persons of the Old Testament as precursors of figures and events described in the New Testament. Referring to the Old Testament story of Agag, king of the Amalekites, who had been cut into pieces (I Samuel 15), Mather described how Philip was taken captive and killed on 12 August 1676: "like as Agag was hewed in pieces before the Lord," so Philip was "cut into four quarters, and is now hanged up as a monument of revenging Justice." "Thus did God," Mather continued, "break the head of that Leviathan" (*Brief History* 47). King Philip was turned into "the monstrous other" that needed to be destroyed (Schramer and Sweet 17). As in *A Short Story* (see chapter 3.2), the colonial leaders were presented as resolutely and successfully fighting their enemies.

Thus at the time of King Philip's War, Increase Mather's writings show influence of New Science, but his conclusions differed from Spencer's. In *A Brief*

³⁰⁶ In another text published in 1676, Mather established a connection between a prodigious phenomenon and King Philip's War: Mather had been "credibly informed, that a little before the beginnings of this War, an *Indian Squaw* at *Nosset*, being with Child, the Child was heard crying three weeks before it was born into the World," and although he admitted that he did not know the exact meaning of "that Prodigy," he suggested that "of late the Lord hath appeared more for us, and more

History, Mather presented the monstrous birth of Mary Dyer as God's judgment upon heretical beliefs, which Spencer would have despised. In addition, Mather actively promoted the belief in prophecies. Also in later texts Mather stressed the prodigious character of strange occurrences and their ability to predict disaster. In *Heavens Alarm to the World* (1681), Mather interpreted comets and blazing stars as "presages of great calamities at hand" (title). In *A Brief History*, Mather expressed his conviction that God surely "would have such providences to be observed and recorded" since God "doth not send such things for nothing, or that no notice should be taken of them"; therefore, Mather concluded, "I was willing to give a true account thereof, hoping that thereby mistakes and false Reports may be prevented" (35).

It is hard to say whether Mather's reference to "mistakes" and "false Reports" simply served to give more weight to his conclusions or whether he thereby referred to the transatlantic debates over toleration and church order of the late 1640s. It is also possible that he had been influenced by Samuel Groome's *A Glass for the People of New-England* (see chapter 4.1). Both *A Glass* and *A Brief History of the War* had been published in 1676 in London, but *A Glass* with high certainty prior to *A Brief History*. Taking into account the fact that Increase Mather was an experienced writer, the latter probably was finished around mid-August, if we are to trust the announcement on the title page that the work covered events having taken place "[f]rom June 24. 1675 . . . to August 12. 1676." According to Michael Hall (*Last* 125), *A Brief History* was printed in the fall of 1676. *A Glass* is signed on the last page "London, the 28th of the 5th Moneth, 1676," which would be end of July New Style. So it is at least thinkable that Mather learned about the text when finishing *A Brief History*, for example by direct or indirect knowledge of *A Glass* in manuscript. Since *A Glass* addressed "the People of New-England" (title), the publication project may have been mentioned in one of the letters sent to the Mather family from England. As quoted in the prologue (chapter 4.1), Groome had stated that *A Short Story* included a "notorious Lye" regarding Anne Hutchinson and that it "scandalized *Mary Dyer*." Maybe Mather's allusion to "false reports" was a reaction to this—or to similar accusations put forward in the transatlantic sphere in this context.

Another possible explanation is that Mather's reference to "mistakes" and "false Reports" was the outflow of a general distrust of the myths and legends

against our Adversaries, then at the beginnings of this War" (*Earnest Exhortation* 195). For a similar

purported by the common multitude, as expressed so vividly by John Spencer. Already the author of *Newes from the Dead* (1651) (see chapter 2.2) had stated:

There happened lately in this Citty a very rare and remarkable accident, which being variously and falsely reported amongst the vulgar (as in such cases it is usuall) to the end that none may be deceived, and that so signall an act of Gods mercy and providence may never be forgotten, I have here faithfully recorded it (Watkins 1)

As the second part of this chapter will show, Mather conceived of himself and his fellow ministers as privileged interpreters of providence who were better prepared to avoid the trap of superstition than the common multitude, and in this respect he had a lot in common with John Spencer.

The monstrous births: a presage, but no “illustrious providence”?

Although Increase Mather had spent so much effort in *A Brief History* to convincingly present Dyer’s monster as a presage, he did not mention Dyer’s or Hutchinson’s miscarriage in a publication of 1684 dealing with providences: *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*. *An Essay* presented a systematic summary of stories on providence Mather had gathered, including sea deliverances, remarkable preservations, natural phenomena such as thunder and lightning, preternatural happenings such as witchcraft or apparitions, and “Remarkable Punishments inflicted upon very wicked men” (340). A substantial part of these stories is related to New England, and two of the twelve chapters have relevance for the topic of monstrous births. In chapter IV, focusing on “Antipathies and Sympathies” (99), Mather referred to the force of maternal imagination (see chapter 2.2): “It is evident that the peculiar *Antipathies* of some persons are caused by the imaginations of their Parents.” He illustrated his point by reporting on phenomena such as “a Cabbage” that was “imprinted” on a boy “by the Imagination of his Longing Mother” (102). In chapter IX, Mather dealt with cases of petrified human bodies. He gave two examples of women who had been pregnant for twenty-eight and twenty years, respectively. When they were posthumously dissected, in one case it was “found that the Child within her was turned into a Stone” (308); in the other case “a Child was found” in the woman’s body, “neither *putrified* nor yet *petrified*”

story (a baby who was said to have spoken to its nurse), see D. Hall, *Worlds* 83.

(309). This would have been a good occasion to mention Hutchinson's mole (see chapter 2.2) since moles were said to grow in the womb "a yeare or two, yea ten or twelue, and sometimes as long as the woman liues" (Guillemeau *Child-birth* 13). Also petrification was sometimes associated with moles, which have been described as a "hardned swelling . . . , which in the sense of touching seemeth to be stony, like unto a Mill-stone" (Rueff 138).

Before possible reasons for Increase Mather's omission of the monstrous births in *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* are examined (cf. Narváez esp. 203; Winship, *Seers of God* 182n55), the publication history of the work will be delineated (see Middlekauff 143-6), and, in particular, the importance of the doctrine of providence for Mather. As one of his biographers points out, Mather was most occupied with the role of God in the natural order; that God intervened in the world was set, but in what ways and how such occasions should be interpreted by mankind was what stirred his interest (M. Hall, *Last* 167). And Mather was not the only one to ask these questions. The theory of special providences was discussed most intensively in the late 1680s and early 1690s by New England Puritans (P. Miller 228-30; Rumsey 4-6).

In the late seventeenth century, New England Puritans tried to give as much weight as possible to instances when nature left her regular course—which was, according to Perry Miller, "the most noticeable response of its theologians to the new science" (229). At the time, New Science had long reached the Eastern seaboard of the North American continent. John Winthrop Jr., Governor of Connecticut (see chapter 3.1), had not only been one of the first Fellows of the Royal Society but was one of the most active colonial correspondents, and he was the first colonial to hold a formal presentation to the Society.³⁰⁷ Also William Penn, Founder of Pennsylvania, or William Byrd, planter and colonial magistrate of Virginia, became members of the Society.³⁰⁸ But colonial Puritans did of course not change their worldview all of a sudden. Providence tales allowed both for maintaining the belief in an active, dominating God and for displaying acceptance of the new scientific thinking. Being concerned with fulfilling the demands of Baconian science, colonial Puritans even

³⁰⁷ On Winthrop Jr. and the Royal Society, see Black 307-19; D. Hall, "Readers" 137-8; Morison 242; Stearns, *Science* 117-39 and passim; Woodward.

³⁰⁸ On scientific interest in New England and adjacent regions, see Burns, *Science* 133-44; Frick; Morison 241-75; Stearns, *Science* esp. 117-61.

created a new genre, the captivity narrative, which presented tales of prodigious events almost like a truth that could be empirically tested (see Hartman 2, 7, 25; cf. Cassuto 30-35, 64-71; 62-74). Increase Mather probably wrote the preface to one of the most famous captivity narratives, Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682). The Puritans wanted to distance themselves from "enthusiasts" by making use of the methodologies of New Science, thereby saving wonder-working providence from further attacks.

That Increase Mather stuck to his belief in providence becomes more understandable considering that there probably had been a feeling of constant danger prevalent in the Bay colony (see Silverman 55-81). From the beginning, the colonials were threatened by wilderness and in war and conflict with the French and their Indian allies. There were earthquakes, lost ships at sea, fires, epidemics, and supposed acts of witchcraft. The constant danger of losing the charter and the right to appoint the governor³⁰⁹ was accompanied by the gradual decline of the dominance of the congregational system due to the rise of ever more alternative religious groupings and denominations as of mid-seventeenth century.

The doctrine of providence provided solace in a dangerous world. Providence tales helped their authors and readers in coping with change: they incorporated otherwise disturbing occurrences (such as the rise of sects) into a meaningful, coherent narrative. These narratives had not only a religious function or entertained the curious but reestablished order by defining who was wrong and who was right. Last but not least, the concept of providence served as a justification for the settling of the wilderness of New England and fostered the self-stylization as an elected people that had overcome massive obstacles: "And there was a wonderful providence of God seen in making way for the settlement of his People here. For he cast out the Heathen before them; first by the Plague, and after by the Small Pox" (I. Mather, *Doctrine* 57). Instances of special providences fostered the belief that God had made a special covenant with the New England Puritans and still had an interest in his chosen people, even though it was cast away in a periphery region amidst wilderness (Cassuto 30-35; 62-74).

Another motivation for sticking to the belief in providence was that Increase Mather and many of his contemporaries hoped to counter mechanistic thinking,

³⁰⁹ See M. Hall, *Last* 184-254; Hebel, "Negotiation" 118-20; Silverman 59-78.

which became ever more prominent. René Descartes had laid out his mechanical view of the body in *De Homine*, published posthumously as an appendix to his *Traité de l'Homme* (*Treatise of Man*). In his introduction to *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes had stated that “life” was “but a motion of Limbs,” and he had compared the human body to “*Automata*”; the “Body Politique” was “but an Artificiall Man,” created by man, imitating the art of creation (1). These bodies appeared to be void of the presence of any higher power. Atheism seemed to be the unavoidable consequence—the belief that the regularity of natural laws was not a proof of the existence of God but of nature as a self-sufficient and self-organizing system perpetuating itself endlessly.

The drive to counter atheism was what united Increase Mather and John Spencer. Spencer had concluded in the context of the two New England monstrous births that “the most apparent hand of God” should not be reduced to “a chance which hath happened”; otherwise, we would “turn charitable Atheists” (*Prodigies* 91, 92). Mather, for his part, wanted to demonstrate with *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* that there still was “divine mystery in life” (Middlekauff 144) and that the invisible world continued to affect everyday experience, both through the agency of God and demonic powers, as he put it in *The Doctrine of Divine Providence Opened and Applied* (1684): “And behold his Anger is not turned away but his hand is stretched out still.” (97; cf. 22). To adherents of this worldview the monstrous births must have meant something; they could not be the result of mere chance.

The notion that God still was present in the world through acts of providence served well the aim to counter mechanization and atheism, but it brought other problems in its wake. As shown in chapter 3.4, deciding upon the meaning of acts of providence was difficult. In the correspondence of Increase Mather and his contemporaries there sometimes shines through a strong feeling of uncertainty in view of unusual occurrences. In May 1678, for example, John Bishop wrote in a letter to Increase Mather that “[t]here have been, doubtles things of a prodigious nature among us, by which we should be awakened”; but it was to be “bewailed, that the awful workes of God are so variously & uncertainly spoken of; as many times I find that we know not what to beleieve, nor how to be affected as we should with what we heare” (“Letter” 306). Similarly, when William James reported on a

monstrous calf and a cabbage “in the perfect forme of a cutlash” that “fell out before our divisions & troubles in N.H.,” marking the outbreak of King Philip’s War, he had to admit in 1682 that the deeper meaning of this close sequence of events did not automatically reveal itself to him (“Letter” 614).

Increase Mather clearly shared the opinion that providence was difficult to decipher for mankind. In his treatise *Doctrine of Divine Providence* he conceded that it sometimes was hard to distinguish between first and secondary causes of providence, that is, between God as cause of everything and the effects that resulted from God’s power over the laws of nature: the “providences of God seem to Interfere with one another sometimes. One providence seems to look this way, another providence seems to look that way, quite contrary one to another.” (43). But this uncertainty even strengthened Mather’s belief in the importance of providences—or at least he claimed as much:

Hence these works are marveilous. Yea, and that which adds to the wonderment, is, in that the works of God sometimes seem to run counter with his word: so that there is dark and amazing intricacie in the ways of providence. (43)

Also John Spencer had addressed the problem of distinguishing between first and second causes of providence in his *Discourse Concerning Prodigies* (1663). As part of a chapter on how to interpret “Prodigies Penal,” Spencer warned of interpreting too easily “judgements extraordinary” as punishments for sinning (85), since what mankind regards as sinful is not necessarily so to God. God had his own intentions, and sometimes he simply wanted to put mankind to the test with the help of “adverse providences” (*Prodigies* 88).

As shown above, although Spencer tended to deny the possibility that God punished religious errors, he conceded that God judged wrong behavior, and Increase Mather gladly took up this possibility. The “eminent Judgements which befall men in this world” (*Doctrine* 13-14), for example due to sinning, were sufficient proof for Mather that there still were divine acts to be observed on earth. And in most of these cases the kind of punishment fitted the kind of sinning: “Sins with the body are oft punished with bodily diseases and miseries,” and “Spiritual Sins are usually punished with Spiritual Plagues” (*Doctrine* 67). Referring to the doctrine of signatures that held that some herbs were “stamp’d . . . by the hand of Nature” (Spencer, *Prodigies* 91) with clear hints at the cures they could be used for (the upper part of plants, for

example, were considered suitable for cures for the upper part of the body),³¹⁰ Spencer had explained similarly that the divine punishment for sinning could be very similar to the type of sin: just as herbs carried signatures that informed about their healing virtues, so “punishment sometimes carries *signaturas peccati*, and proclaims by its very make and fashion, what sin it is intended to discover and cure in us” (91). An example was when somebody who had drowned others subsequently drowned himself. There were also cases when the judgment happened during the act of sinning or directly thereafter, or “*When the judgement is such as the general experience of times proves the usual consequent [sic] of such a crime. As a sudden and untimely death of sedition*” (*Prodigies* 92).

Paralleling the kind of divine punishment with the kind of sinning was exactly what Thomas Weld had done in interpreting Hutchinson’s miscarriage. Weld had argued in his preface to *A Short Story* that Hutchinson’s multiple monstrous births equaled in number her faulty beliefs (see chapter 3.3). And maybe Increase Mather had remembered this passage when writing the *Doctrine of Divine Providence*, although he did not explicitly mention *A Short Story*. That Mather referred to the Biblical “*Jezabel*” (67)—as Winthrop had done in *A Short Story* when writing about Anne Hutchinson (see chapter 3.3)—is also not sufficient proof that Mather thereby had in mind earlier interpretations of the two monstrous births; Jezebel was a prominent Biblical figure often mentioned in politico-religious texts. But by writing that “*Jezabel had sinned with their Bodyes, and God plagues them in their children the natural fruit of their Bodyes*” (*Doctrine* 67) Mather took up still another popular passage from the Scriptures that had been used by earlier commentators on the New England prodigious births, for example Samuel Groome (see chapter 4.1) and Richard Baxter. Referring to Jesus warning of false prophets (Matt. 7.16), Baxter had given the advice that one was able to recognize Anabaptists

³¹⁰ These “*Naturæ signaturas*, certain signatures and marks stamp’d, [are] serving (as a kind of native labels) to tell us what vertues they contain, and whereby it may be known (even upon sight) to what disease or parts of the body ill affected, they are proper and usefull (because bearing some figures or colours analogous to them)” (Spencer, *Prodigies* 91). It is only a conjecture, but maybe some of the commentators on the two New England prodigies had been influenced by the doctrine of signatures: Dyer, Hutchinson, and Hawkins could be seen as being “stamped” from birth as unregenerate. John Eliot described Hawkins and Hutchinson in 1660 as “some women of her owne [Dyer’s] stamp” because they all mothered “horrid opinions” (30). In 1638, Edmund Browne (see chapter 3.1) referred to midwife Hawkins as being “of the same stamp” as Hutchinson (230). On the force of maternal imagination, which allowed the mother’s mind to leave a “stamp” on her unborn child, see chapter 3.3.

(to whom also the colonial Antinomians belonged to in his view, see chapter 3.4) by their offspring: “by their fruits ye shall know them” (*Plain* 168; cf. [Groome] 29).

If Mather had intentionally abstained from explicitly mentioning and interpreting Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s monstrous births in *An Essay or The Doctrine of Divine Providence*, the reason may have been that he was well aware that the intricate meaning of God’s providence posed a challenge to human understanding. In the creation, everything was laid down by God, and, as a consequence, he alone had omnipotence and possessed complete knowledge of the universe. Due to the fall mankind had lost their share of knowledge with God, wherefore they needed to rely on their senses in order to gain knowledge: “‘tis God only who can find / All Nature in his Mind” (A. Cowley, dedicatory poem in Sprat). Human perception and abilities of cognition were faulty and corrupted, however, wherefore some events were perceived as contrary to nature when they overstrained the human capacity for understanding. As Spencer had admonished: “We are not to conclude the punishment from the sin” since then mankind would pre-define when and how divine justice happened; “neither may we infer the sin from the punishment” since God was free to punish a “good man” and reward a “bad man,” at least “in this world”; only “where we are sure from Scripture . . . that the sin is extraordinary . . . , we may then cry out” (*Prodigies* 93).

Especially the vulgar were not trusted being able to find the right meaning in the intricate workings of God on earth; “the multitude” (Spencer, *Prodigies* 87) were not prepared to distinguish between mere doctrine and real causes. Reaching the higher strata of “the *Tree of knowledge*” was not possible by “idle attendance to such fantastical measures” as “a *Revelation*, some *strange prodigy*, or *prophecy*,” Spencer pointed out. He was sure that God “never intended” that the “*truth*” “should be got upon such cheap and easy terms” (*Prodigies* 89). In Spencer’s view, the ignorant multitude strove for much too convenient ways to gain knowledge, wherefore others were needed who were up to the task.

The way Spencer described this privileged group calls to mind the ideal of the male scientist that emerged at this time (see chapter 3.3).³¹¹ If at all, Spencer held, God's doings on earth could be deciphered by educated men, and this was even to be wished for to counter the threat of atheism. As Spencer made clear, one better relied on "the counsels of wise and good men" and "our own exercised reason" to discover hidden causes (*Prodigies* 89; cf. *Prophecies* 134). To avoid the danger of atheism, "it becomes us" to be God's "notice-takers" and to record "all such great displays of his justice in the world" (*Prodigies* 91, 92). Spencer pointed out that already Francis Bacon, "a learned Personage," had called it "a great defect" in his *Advancement of Learning* "that there is not yet extant . . . a judicious and well attested history of the divine vengeance" (*Prodigies* 92). Referring to Bacon's call for a history of prodigies in his *Novum Organon*,³¹² Spencer stated that he did *not* want to argue against a "*Philosophical study of Prodigies*":

It is to be wisht [sic] that there were a kind of Philosophy-office; wherein all such unusual occurrences were registred; not in such fabulous and antick circumstances wherein they stand recorded in the writers of Natural Magick (designing nothing but wonder in their Readers) nor with a superstitious observation of any such dreadfull events with which such relations are usually stain'd, in the writers which intend a service to religion in them: But in such faithfull notices of their several circumstances, as might assist the understanding to make a true judgement of their Natures and Occasion. (*Prodigies* 104)

The compilation of a history of prodigies would help uncover the secret working of nature, and, in a second step, find the right balance between superstition and atheism, between a focus on first causes (God) and second causes (nature): ignoring "causes natural" would lead "to *superstition*, a slavish observance of and blind devotion toward God," especially in those of "more soft and impressive minds"; ignoring the first cause would, in turn, lead to "*Atheism*." Only "a distinct and full view of second causes, begets *religion*," Spencer explained (104). That it were especially "those of a pious and learned education" (*Prodigies* 84) who could hope to gain understanding

³¹¹ It is also worth noticing that both theologians and early scientists held that a high degree of effort was needed to gain certainty over one's own spiritual state or to gain knowledge. Already Bacon had warned that the new method of induction meant much more labor than the drawing of analogies or syllogisms, since this "mode of judgment" was "extracted not merely out of the depths of the mind, but out of the very bowels of nature" (20, 21). And in a religious context Weld had stated that many of the followers of Hutchinson had hoped to have found "a faire and easie way to Heaven" by setting all hope on the covenant of grace (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface).

³¹² Spencer referred to Bacon by using Bacon's title, "Baron Verulam" (*Prodigies* 101), which had been created for Bacon in 1618.

of God's messages and that Spencer had called for the erection of a "Philosophy-office" must have confirmed Increase Mather in his intention to collect reports on strange phenomena.

In New England, there were basically two inter-related projects to create the "Philosophy-office" Spencer had suggested: creating an institution modeled remotely on the Royal Society and initiating a network of collectors of acts of providence. In April 1683, a small group under the leadership of Increase Mather founded the Philosophical Society at Boston, a scientific circle that was inspired by the Royal Society. No official documentation of the Philosophical Society has survived, but it is certain that Increase's sons Cotton and Nathaniel Mather were among the regular attendants of its meetings. The group probably discussed late "scientific" findings and the experimental method and collected data and descriptions of local natural phenomena (such as the sightings of the comets of 1680 and 1682, Halley's Comet), probably with the aim to compose a natural history of New England. The last meeting recorded in Increase Mather's *Diary* is that of 10 December 1683, but there seem to have been meetings for at least two more years. The Society found an end in 1688 the latest due to the political uncertainties the colony went through at the time.³¹³ From 1684 to 1686, problems with the charter resurfaced; after it had been vindicated, a royal governor arrived at Boston harbor in December 1686. In early 1688, the year of the Glorious Revolution, Increase Mather was found guilty of a charge of defamation and left for England, where he tried to secure a new charter for the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

At about the time when the Boston Philosophical Society was founded, around 1683, Increase Mather was informed by a correspondent that John Spencer's opinions became more and more popular in England (Winship, "Prodigies" 99), wherefore we know for sure that Mather knew Spencer's work. When Mather was in England he even visited Spencer at Cambridge in 1689. According to his son Cotton, who recorded the episode in 1692 (the year his father returned to the Bay colony), Increase Mather learned from his consultation that Spencer "believed the Divels had pramotions of many things and caused strange prodigies, and that hee did not know,

³¹³ M. Hall suggests that the Society lasted until the mid-1680s (*Last* 166); Beall assumes 1687 as end date ("Cotton" 362-3; 370); according to Silverman, the Society had its first assembly in the spring of 1683 and then met fortnightly until 1688 (41). On the Boston Philosophical Society, see also Stearns, *Science* 150-59, 484-91.

Whether he might not err in Something of an Extreme, on one side, as others did on the other.” (qtd. in Winship, “Prodigies” 99).³¹⁴

In 1681, Increase Mather requested the ministers of New England to provide him with reports on prodigious events for a collection of examples of divine providences. In the preface to *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684) Increase Mather referred to the Presbyterian Reverend Matthew Poole’s “Design for the Recording of illustrious Providences,” which had been “under serious consideration among some eminent Ministers in *England* and in *Ireland*” about “six and twenty years ago” (*Essay* sig. A3). Since the gathering of wonder-working providences had been brought into discredit by sects and heretics, Poole tried to add scientific credence to this practice in the late 1650s by formulating a “Designe for Registring of Illustrious Providences,” proposing Baconian methodology. He suggested to the divines of England and Ireland to record instances of remarkable providences and to send them to him at Syon College in London. Poole’s initiative fell on fruitful grounds with the New England ministry, including Increase Mather. Mather had also been influenced by the writings of the English clergyman and natural philosopher Joseph Glanvill,³¹⁵ whose *Saducismus Triumphatus* (1681) fostered the belief in witchcraft by using scientific reasoning. Opposing Hobbesian mechanism, Glanvill had suggested compiling remarkable occurrences as a kind of counter-position to those pushing secularization. All these writers shared the hope that belief in the spiritual world could be strengthened again.

Poole’s project had not been implemented, but “there was a M. SS. (the Composer whereof is to me unknown) then written, wherein the Subjects proper for this *Record*, and some Rules for the better managing a design of this nature, are described” (*Essay* sig. A3 and A3 verso).³¹⁶ Mather had come across this manuscript when he was looking through the papers of the Reverend John Davenport (after the latter had died in 1670), assuming that the manuscript had been sent to Davenport by Samuel Hartlib, a German-British scholar and devoted promoter of the sciences.

³¹⁴ According to Winship, “Prodigies” 99n19, Cotton made this note on a flyleaf of Increase Mather’s copy of Spencer’s *Prodigies*.

³¹⁵ See Beall, “Cotton” 361; D. Hall, *Worlds* 83-84; Schutte 105-6; Werking 283-4; Winship, “Prodigies” 97n11.

³¹⁶ Middlekauff suggests that the manuscript is related to Matthew Poole’s *Synopsis Criticorum* ([1669]), an account of God’s providences. Middlekauff’s argument is strengthened by William Turner’s *A Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences* (1697), in which the *Synopsis* is mentioned as an inspiration (To the Courteous Reader). On Turner, see below.

Mather conversed with other colonial ministers about the manuscript, and they “highly approved of the noble design aimed at therein.” They composed “some Proposals in order to the reviving of this work,” which were then “presented at a general Meeting of the Ministers in this Colony, May 12. 1681” (*Essay* The Preface).

The “Proposals” are cited in eight sections (I to XVIII) as part of the preface to Increase Mather’s *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*: “Some Proposals concerning the Recording of Illustrious Providences.” The “Proposals” suggested the following subjects for consideration, which provide also the framework for *An Essay*:

Such Divine Judgements, Tempests, Floods, Earth-quakes, Thunders as are unusual, strange Apparitions, or what ever else shall happen that is Prodigious, Witchcrafts, Diabolical Possessions, Remarkable Judgements upon noted Sinners: eminent Deliverances, and Answers of Prayer, are to be reckoned among Illustrious Providences. (*Essay* The Preface, Proposal II)

Like Spencer, the author of the “Proposals” maintained that ministers were especially well suited for “the *Recording* and *Declaring* the works of the Lord” (*Essay* The Preface, III). As the “Proposals” made clear, their endeavor clearly was of a communal nature—not only due to its dimensions but also since it was “of high importance for later generations” (IV). And since this was a communal project, there was established a kind of peer reviewing process that was meant to assure the quality of the contributions: “When any thing of his Nature shall be ready for the Presse, it appears on sundry Grounds very expedient, that it should be read, and approved of at some Meeting of the Elders, before Publication” (VIII). Another measure for quality assurance was that “the Witnesses of such notable occurrents” should be recorded by the ministers (*Essay* The Preface, III).

Inspired by these manifold activities, the New England ministers seem to have willingly contributed to the project. Especially in the second half of the seventeenth century ministers actively collected and exchanged information on prodigious events, a practice that Nord describes as the “teleological news system of seventeenth-century New England” (13; cf. 29).³¹⁷ In 1682, for example, William James had answered Increase Mather’s call for an account “of Remarkable Providences” at New

³¹⁷ Already in 1664, Increase Mather’s brother Eleazer had provided him with updates on “remarkable providences” (“Letter” n. p.). In 1678, John Bishop had sent a report to Increase Mather on the “noise of small guns in the air,” an earthquake and a violent storm in the region (“Letter” 306).

Haven (“Letter” 612). James reported on “a Monster Calfe” born in his area on 23 February 1669, having two heads but only one body. When he heard about it, he “caused it to be brought to my house, viewed it well,” before writing down the detailed report that formed the basis for the one he then sent to Mather. He described for example the position of the heads and the eyes as well as the fur of the animal (“Letter” 615). James had made more “observations” of “Awfull dispensations of God towards us,” such as the “Blazing starrs & solemn warnings from H[e]aven” of recent years, but he had “not tyme to enlarge” upon these matters (615; cf. 612). As the author of the “Proposals” had remarked, one needed “Leisure and Ability” for collecting examples of providences (I. Mather, *Essay* The Preface, V), and the colonials often lacked the necessary leisure time to fully dedicate themselves to religiously motivated science. In this respect, their situation resembled that of Poole and his comrades, since they, too, “had their thoughts diverted another way” (*Essay* sig. A3), so that their project remained unfinished.

In August 1683, also the Reverend Joshua Moodey of Portsmouth responded to Increase Mather’s call for stories of interest and sent Mather a detailed description of a “monstrous birth brought forth at Newichuwenog by the wife of one William Plaisted” on 5 September 1682, which in parts resembles the description of Dyer’s “monster” (cf. D. Hall, *Worlds* 83-84; Narváez 203). According to the first-hand witness who had provided Moodey with information, the child’s upper body was severely “defective”: it lacked an arm, had nostrils in the forehead, and the eyes were upon the cheeks; instead of a mouth it had a hole, the belly was “ript open,” and the bowels hung out (Moodey 362). Dyer’s stillborn daughter had similarly deformed and displaced body parts; it had no nose, a hole instead of a mouth, parts of its face were on its back, and its ears were on its shoulders (see chapter 2.1). Maybe also Moodey and other contemporaries were reminded of Dyer’s headless child when they saw or heard about the deformed infant of the Plaisteds, as the following quotation suggests: “A sober woman that told mee of it said, when I have told you the thing, you will say you have seen it already in the Times, every thing out of order.” (Moodey 362).

Moodey’s remark that “every thing [was] out of order” in combination with reference to earlier “Times” calls to mind Increase Mather’s statement in *A Brief History of the War with the Indians* (1676) that, with Dyer’s monstrous birth, God

did “bear witness against the *Disorders* of some in that place. As in the days of our Fathers” (35). Furthermore, witchcraft accusations seem to have affected the interpretation of the stillborn child of the Plaisteds, possibly conjuring up memories of similar accusations in the context of Dyer’s monster story (see chapter 2.1):

There are sundry reports among us of new things that seem to bee matters of witchcraft, but reports are little to bee heeded, & I have not had time to goe thither to bee more satisfied, & therefore shall not trouble you with any of them at present. Only this I am fully certified of. (Moodey 361-2)

That the story of the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson still was remembered by colonials (a phenomenon described by David Hall as “the buildup of a native stock of wonders,” *Worlds* 85) and those in England who had an interest in the overseas colonies is evident from at least two written documents: a letter that Nathaniel Mather had sent to his brother, Increase, and William Hubbard’s *A General History of New England*, which was composed in the early 1680s at the order of the colonial government. Hubbard had mentioned the two monstrous births, and although *A General History* was published only in the nineteenth century, it not only shows that this story still were present in New England minds around 1680 but that Hubbard probably had conversed with ministerial colleagues about the project when working upon it (and he had certainly consulted earlier sources). However, as shown in chapter 3.2, Hubbard had not shown deep interest in the failed pregnancies. More interest in the topic is noticeable in the letter of Increase’s brother, Nathaniel Mather, who had moved to England in the early 1650s. Living in Dublin, Nathaniel openly asked his brother in late 1684 why he had not included Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s aberrant births and other prodigious stories in his narrative:

I have also received by way of London one of your books of Remarkable Providences . . . Why did you not put in the story of Mrs. Hibbons witchcrafts, & the discovery thereof, as also of H. Lake’s wife, of Dorchester, whom, as I have heard, the devill drew in by appearing to her in the likenes, & acting the part of a child of hers then lately dead, on whom her heart was much set . . . ? Storyes, as I have heard them, as remarkable for some circumstances as most I have read. Mrs. Dyer’s & Mrs. Hutchinson’s monstrous births, & the remarkable death of the latter, with Mr. Wilson’s prediction or threatening thereof, which I remember, I heard of in New England, would have done well to bee put in (“Letter to Increase” 58-9)

As the letter shows, stories from New England still were remembered by Nathaniel Mather (even though he had long left the American continent). Another aspect of

interest is that Nathaniel Mather obviously had read *A Short Story* and Baxter's writings on the monstrous births: he mentioned both in his letter ("Letter to Increase" 59). After all, as pointed out in chapter 3.4, there seem to have been close connections between Richard Baxter and the Mather family. Baxter wrote at least one letter to Increase Mather (see C. Mather, *Magnalia* III, 210-1), and Baxter contributed a recommendation on the title page of the London edition of Cotton Mather's *Late Memorable Providences* (1691).

The author of another collection of providence tales, published only a few years after Mather's *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, had not only taken Poole's project as a role model, too, but included the story of Mary Dyer's monstrous birth. William Turner, a clergyman of the Church of England, claimed to have made use of providential stories that had been sent to him "from divers Parts of the Three Kingdoms." The resulting compilation, the voluminous *A Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences* (1697), was "Recommended as useful to Ministers in Furnishing Topicks of Reproof and Exhortation" and to laypersons for their improvement (*Compleat History* preface). Turner explicitly mentioned Poole's *Synopsis criticorum* [1669] as a source of inspiration, and he felt that Poole's call had not been sufficiently answered as yet. He knew Mather's *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* but regarded it as not comprehensive enough—among other reasons maybe because Mather had not mentioned one of the most famous New England prodigies:

A Work of this Nature was set on Foot about Thirty Years ago, by Mr. Pool, Author of the *Synopsis Criticorum*; but for what Reason I know not, it was laid aside, and nothing has since appeared on that Subject, but a small *Essay* (written by Mr. Increase Mather, Rector of *Harvard Colledge* [sic], in *New-England*) to invite some others to go on with the Work, and finding that 'twas not attempted by any other Hand, I was resolved to go on with it, as being fully satisfied, that a Work of this kind, must needs be of Great Use; (W. Turner, *Compleat History* To the Courteous Reader)

Like Increase Mather, Turner was determined to counter atheism, and obviously Mary Dyer's monstrous birth served well his intentions. He included Dyer's monster story in Part II of his work, focusing on "Wonders of Nature." The two preceding entries (Part II, chapter VII, 9) dealt with other famous monstrous births, such as the child born at St. Lawrence in the West-Indies in 1573 (see chapter 4.4) and the Monster of Cracovia (see chapter 2.1). Regarding Dyer's child, Turner more or less

took over (slightly shortened) the corresponding passage in Clark's *A Mirrour or Looking-Glass* (1671; see chapter 4.1):

At Boston in New-England, Anno 1637. Mrs. Dyer was delivered of a Monster which had no Head, the Face on the Breast, the Ears like Apes Ears growing on the Shoulders, the Eyes and Mouth stood far out, the Nose hooking upward, the Breast and Back full of Prickles, the Navel and Belly where the Hips should have been; in stead of Toes, it had on each Foot three Claws; upon the Back it had two great Holes like Mouths; above the Eyes it had four Horns, and was of the Female Sex. The Father and Mother of it were great *Familists*. *Clark's Mirr[?]* 63. p. 249. (*Compleat History* Part II, chapter VII, 9).

Unlike William Turner, Increase Mather did not mention one or both of the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson in his collection of providence tales, although Mather knew about more material than is included in *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, as Nathaniel Mather's letter to Increase Mather testifies to. In his preface to *An Essay* (1684) Mather admitted that he had left out some examples: "There are other particulars no less worthy to be Recorded, but in my judgement, this is not so proper a season for us to divulge them." Why it had not been "so proper a season" was not explained, maybe Mather referred thereby to the problems with the charter of the colony. He pointed out that "some very memorable Passages of Divine Providence, wherein the Countrey in general hath been concerned . . . are to be seen in my former Relations of the Troubles occasioned by the *Indians* in New-England" (*Essay* The Preface; cf. 340). The reference to Mather's "former Relations" probably included his *A Brief History of the War*, in which he had mentioned Dyer's monstrous birth. In *A Brief History*, Mather had introduced the relevant passage as a "*Digression*" (35), but in *An Essay* the "*Digressions*" he included had nothing to do with monstrous births but with "considerable *Cases of Conscience*" (The Preface).

A possible reason for not mentioning Dyer's and Hutchinson's miscarriages is that their narratives did not meet the quality criteria of Mather and his colleagues. For example, Mather (or some ministerial colleagues involved in the network) may have considered the story of the monstrous births not remarkable enough—in the "Proposals" it had been stressed that "it is necessary that utmost care shall be taken that All, and Only *Remarkable Providences* be Recorded and Published" (*Essay* The Preface, Proposal I). Or maybe Mather felt that he was lacking sure evidence, as Narváez suggests (203). It is possible that Mather had been influenced also in this regard by John Spencer, who had explained in "The Conclusion" of his *Discourse*

Concerning Prodigies (1663) that he had not included “some late strange relations” because there was good reason to suspect “imposture” in these cases: one had to consider “the ignorance” of the witnesses who tended to exaggeration (they were prone to report on such “strange and prodigious” objects “beyond their proper and just figures and dimensions”), and the results of these “odd fancies and impressions” were “fables and Legends” (*Prodigies* 100, 101). Similarly, Samuel Groome (see chapter 4.1) had accused Thomas Weld and Samuel Clark of basing their reports on Hutchinson’s miscarriage on lies, and he had claimed that he had witnesses at hand who could confirm his own, alternative version ([Groome] 8-12). But again, this cannot be the reason for not mentioning the monster tale, because some years earlier, in *A Brief History*, Mather had maintained that he had included the story of Dyer’s monstrous birth in order to *prevent* false reports (see above), which implies that he deemed the information available to him trustworthy and reliable.

Another possible impediment for Mather was that the story of the monstrous births had not been new enough. Mather may have sought information on more recent occurrences. Most of the stories included in *An Essay* (1684) stem from the 1660s and later, which is already indicated in the subtitle, where “Remarkable and very Memorable Events, which have hapned this last Age” are announced. With rare exceptions—the earthquake of 1638 is mentioned, for example (322)—Mather kept this promise, even though one of the sections in *An Essay*, dealing with “Remarkable Punishments” upon the Quakers (340), would have offered itself for incorporating the story of Dyer’s monstrous birth; but also in this passage Mather restricted himself to “late” examples (341). As Spencer had pointed out, it was difficult to find out about the truth and accuracy of tales on prodigious events, “especially where the Scene thereof is laid at a great distance off” (*Prodigies* 101). Spencer probably referred to geographical distance, but also Increase Mather was at a great distance from Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s miscarriages: they had happened far away in the past.

Related to the focus on recent events was a focus on instances of providence that had not yet been put into print. The rationale behind Mather’s *Essay* differs from earlier reports on Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s failed pregnancies in that his main criterion for deciding upon whether to include material was that it had not yet been widely published. In *An Essay*, Mather followed the method of selecting material that had been proposed in the manuscript quoted in the preface to *An Essay*: focusing on

stories that had not been published before (sig. A3-A3 verso). William Turner had followed the same rationale and had critically examined whether the existing collections of providence provided enough information (see above). Again, Increase Mather allowed for a few exceptions to this rule, but only in cases when the publications had not been widely known in his home region, New England: “Yet inasmuch as but few in this Countrey have the Authors mentioned, I shall here insert what has been by them already published” (*Essay* 64). This applied certainly not to *A Short Story*, so maybe this was the reason why Mather did not include the monster stories in his *Essay*. This hypothesis is strengthened by Nathaniel Mather’s comment that Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s monstrous births “would have done well to bee put in, tho the story of their births bee printed already by Mr. Weld & mentioned from him by Mr. Baxter & others” (“Letter to Increase” 59).

Maybe Mather had the intention to deal with one or both of the prodigious births in a later publication: “It has been in my thoughts to publish a Discourse of *Miscellaneous observations concerning things rare and wonderful; both as to the works of Creation and Providence*,” but “this must suffice for the present,” he explained in the preface to *An Essay* (1684). In 1694, as president of Harvard College,³¹⁸ Mather seems to have issued another proposal to the ministers of New England to collect memorable providences, as we know from Cotton Mather: in *Magnalia*, Increase Mather’s son quoted from “*Proposals*” dated 5 March 1694 (VI, 1-2): the ministers were asked to send to the President or Fellows of Harvard “all Extraordinary Things wherein the Existence and Agency of the *Invisible World*, is more sensibly demonstrated” (*Magnalia* VI, 2). The remaining part of the enumeration of examples is very similar to the one quoted from the “*Proposals*” in Increase Mather’s *Essay* (see above).

However, as far as is known today, Increase Mather did not publish another narrative of the monstrous births, although he lived for almost another twenty years after publication of *An Essay*. After the Salem witchcraft crisis (see chapter 4.3), the concept of providence had lost much of its persuasive power, and the meaning of the “*Invisible World*” changed: it referred more and more to worlds discovered with the help of the microscope and similar devices. By the end of the seventeenth century, natural philosophers and members of the Royal Society and similar institutions

dominated the learned sphere, and they tended to regard nature as a mechanized system that worked independently of God. Particulars and singular cases were regarded no longer as a deviance from natural law but as cases in their own right. The concept of nature, which had been under debate since the late sixteenth century or even earlier (see chapter 3.4), had changed in substantial ways. Nature and the corresponding natural laws came to be interpreted as a uniform system functioning independently from its creator (Céard, “Crisis”; Daston and Park 205). As a consequence, Increase Mather and many of his fellow ministers became more cautious and selective in interpreting potentially prodigious phenomena such as comets and blazing stars along providential lines (D. Hall, *Worlds* 106-10; Winship, *Seers of God* 22)—or tried to give this practice new credence.

Increase Mather failed to make full use of the possibilities of New Science. Mather gathered material for his various publication projects from his “Readings” of “many Authors” (*Essay* The Preface) and from reports received by others. He used much the same method as Clarke, who had announced in “The Epistle To the Reader” (1646) to present his readers with the outflow of many hours of reading and studying, resulting in a collection of “the choicest, and chiefest things” of “the best Histories which I could meet with” (*Mirrour* sig. A 3). In adopting Clarke’s methodology, Mather gave away his greatest advantage compared to the English members of the Royal Society: Mather had direct access to the flora and fauna of the New World. His son, Cotton Mather, would try to make full use of this advantage—albeit with limited success, as will be shown in chapter 4.4.

To conclude, compilers of providence collections like Increase Mather displayed some characteristics of “New Scientists,” but most often they were simply pulling together information from other sources, ranging from eye-witness reports to learned tracts. Mather’s approach was empirical in that he attentively screened and monitored the material world, but he lacked the systematic methodology that is considered today the *sine qua non* for science, such as the purposeful testing of hypotheses to validate different theories. Instead, Mather simply reported “the empirical statements of others” (Nord 26; cf. Middlekauff 145). Prodigy collectors like Mather knew already what to find and felt no need to build hypotheses since, according to the doctrine of divine providence, the first cause of anything that

³¹⁸ On Increase Mather’s difficult presidency, see M. Hall, *Last* 197-201; Hoeveler 49-50; Silverman

happened in the world was God. Such an approach “was empiricism without science. It was, in a word, journalism.” (Nord 26).³¹⁹ Thus Sievers’s claim that Dyer’s “monster baby” finally turned into “a Baconian natural fact” due to Spencer’s work (227) is only partly true, as also the following two chapters will show.

26-27, 46.

³¹⁹ Nord, who regards Increase Mather as a kind of pioneer of American journalism (20-22), consequently describes Mather’s published texts of the last quarter of the seventeenth century as “the first major flowering of an indigenous American journalism” (21; cf. Murdock 110-1).

4.3 The New England body politic endangered by female agency: Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*

"What man . . . being a father to a son or daughter so blasted in the natiuity, but would at sight of such a horror fall downe and die with sorrow: or curse himselfe that euer his sinnes were so blacke and monstrous, as to moue the Almighty in this wrath to make his body, to be the begetter of an vgly Monster"

--Anonymous, *Gods handy-worke in wonders* (1615), sig. A 3 verso--

In the early eighteenth century, the only one who extensively commented in written form on the two monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson as far as is known today is Cotton Mather (1663–1728), son of Increase Mather, wherefore the following two chapters focus almost exclusively on his writings and on how they are to be situated in the intellectual currents of his time.³²⁰ Cotton Mather was "a transitional figure" (Levin, "Trying" 218)³²¹ in a transitional period: many approved of correct theories for questionable reasons, while others brought forward progressive ideas to foster old-fashioned concepts, and often one and the same person advocated both theories criticized for their backward character and concepts of New Science. As Kuhn has remarked in this context: although the "practitioners" of a certain field "were scientists," the "net result of their activity" often "was something less than science" (13). This also was true for Mather, who showed tremendous knowledge of the ongoing debates among the "virtuosi" but often enough acted as an uncritical compiler of facts. This transitional position makes it difficult to fully grasp Cotton Mather's complex personality and his role in the debates he participated in (Levin, "Trying" 219; Stearns, *Science* 404). Analyzing how Mather interpreted the two monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson gives a clearer picture of his personality and the intellectual, cultural, and socio-political climate of his time. In the first part of this chapter, Mather's comments on the two human prodigies will be analyzed by taking into consideration

³²⁰ In 1702, and again in 1713, Calamy published a collection of Richard Baxter's writings, including a report on the two monstrous births; but since these publications are for the most part a re-publication of Baxter's writings of the mid-seventeenth century they are analyzed in chapter 3.4.

³²¹ Other scholars who see Mather as transitional figure are for example Beall, "Cotton" 371-2; Beall and Shyrock 123-4; Jones xi; xvii, xx; Stearns, *Science* 425. On Mather's life and personal interests, see Middlekauff 188-367; Silverman.

earlier interpretations as well as Mather's biographic background; in the second part, accounts of prodigies and historic events will be taken into account to explore the rationale that drove Mather in his writings.

In 1702, Cotton Mather published the story of the two monstrous births as part of his massive history of the New England Churches, *Magnalia Christi Americana*. As a passionate reader and writer with a general interest in New England history, Mather probably knew a large part of the earlier reports on the deformed births, among them that of his father, Increase, and the writings mentioned in the prologue (chapter 4.1). Mather apparently screened various sources in composing the *Magnalia*, including the letter from the Reverend Thomas Hooker (see chapter 2.1), from which he quoted at the end of his report on the two monstrous births.³²² John Spencer's *Discourse Concerning Prodigies* (see chapter 4.2) was part of Mather's library (Tuttle 83), and Mather surely noticed that in 1692, coinciding with the Salem witchcraft trials, Winthrop's and Weld's *A Short Story* was published a fourth time.

Mather's report on the Antinomian Controversy and Dyer's and Hutchinson's miscarriages in the *Magnalia* strongly resembles the one given in Winthrop's journal and *A Short Story*, whereby it is confirmed that the narrative had not only become an integral part of New England historiography but that Winthrop and Weld had shaped it substantially and in a sustainable way. Mather took up the motif of silly women, which had also turned up in texts written in response to *A Short Story*, most importantly the *Mercurius Americanus* (see chapter 3.3). For Mather, women were the easiest entry door for dangerous viewpoints such as Antinomianism, which, in his view, ultimately led to the corruption of each individual household: "They began usually to seduce *Women* into their Notions, and by these *Women*, like their first Mother, they soon hook'd in the *Husbands* also." (*Magnalia* VII, 15). Although Hutchinson belonged to "the *Weaker Sex*," she managed to take a leading role in the Antinomian Controversy, being the "*Prime Seducer* of the whole Faction" (VII, 18). Silly women were dangerous, but silly women who were great seducers were even more dangerous: "It is the *Mark of Seducers* that *they lead Captive Silly Women*; but what will you say, when you hear of *Subtil Women* becoming the most *Remarkable*

³²² Mather presented his coming across the letter as a sign that it would be better to stop writing about prodigious occurrences: "But of this [Dyer's] *Monster*, good Reader, let us talk no further: For at this Instant I find an odd Passage in a Letter of the famous Mr. *Thomas Hooker* about this Matter" (*Magnalia* VII, 20).

of the *Seducers*?” In explaining this seeming paradox, Mather resorted to the motif of bad mothers spreading poisonous fluids (see chapter 3.3): “Indeed a *Poyson* does never Insinuate so quickly, nor Operate so strongly, as when *Womens Milk* is the *Vehicle* wherein ‘tis given.” (VII, 18). For Mather as for Winthrop it was evident that Hutchinson was to be blamed for all mischief—“*Dux Fæmina Facti*” (VII, 18); Winthrop had used the very same expression, which is taken from *The Aeneid* from the Roman epic Virgil from the first century before Christ (1.364), and had translated it as “the head of all this faction” (*Short Story*, 1644, 31; see chapter 3.2).

Much as in *A Short Story*, Hutchinson’s “Errors” are presented as living beings in *Magnalia*: they were “hatched” and “crawling like *Vipers* about the *Country*,” and only by banishing and excommunicating Anne Hutchinson, Mather suggests, the court managed to “put an *End* unto her vapouring Talk” (VII, 18-19). For Mather, the practice of Antinomianism of putting into doubt outward evidence was “[t]he *Mother Opinion* of all the rest” (III, 87). Using the term “Opinionists” (*Magnalia* VII, 14), Mather pointed out that false opinions were spreading all over the country, and he equaled the number of false doctrine with the number of lumps Hutchinson had produced, as Weld had done before (see chapter 3.3): Hutchinson (who was referred to not by name but as “*Erroneous Gentlewoman*”) was “convicted of holding about *Thirty Monstrous Opinions*,” Mather wrote, and when Hutchinson was “growing Big with Child, and at length coming to her time of Travail, [she] was delivered of about *Thirty Monstrous Births* at once” (VII, 19).

But there are also passages in *Magnalia* in which Mather subtly points out that some of the earlier interpretations of the two monstrous births were disputed. These “very surprizing *Prodigies*,” he commented, “were lookt upon as Testimonies from Heaven, against the ways of those greater *Prodigies*, the *Sectaries*” (VII, 19). Already his father, Increase (see chapter 4.2), had used such reservation clauses with regard to Dyer’s monster, and Nathaniel Morton (see chapter 4.1) had written in 1669 that “by this prodigious Birth” “the Lord” was “declaring his detestation” of the “Monstrous errors (as was then thought by some)” propagated by the Antinomians (108). As Middlekauff remarks, Cotton Mather not only often tended to maintain conflicting theories but “managed to repeat them even while he embraced a different, and contradictory, set” (281). This possibly also applies to Mather’s summary of Weld’s description of Hutchinson’s “*Thirty Monstrous Births*” as not being human:

Mather repeated Weld's suggestion (see chapter 3.4) that there were "few of any *Perfect*, none of any *Humane Shape*" (*Magnalia* VII, 20) and pointed out that

[t]his was a thing generally then Asserted and Believed; whereas, by some that were Eye-witnesses, it is affirmed, that these were no more *Monstrous Births*, than what is frequent for Women, labouring with *false Conceptions*, to produce. (*Magnalia* VII, 20)

Although Mather avoided a clear statement as to whether Hutchinson's mole was the material outflow of her erroneous opinions, he confirmed exactly this analogy by establishing a link between a false conception (as a mole commonly was called, see chapter 2.2) and a spontaneous abortion. It was presented as a fact that "false conceptions" produced monstrous offspring.

A closer look at Mather's biography puts his interpretation of the two monstrous births and his judgment of Anne Hutchinson as a person within a broader context. Since he was a minister, one could expect that Cotton Mather concentrated in *Magnalia* on the unorthodox theological viewpoints of Anne Hutchinson—all the more since he intended to offer an "Ecclesiastical History of New-England" (title). But when Mather wrote about the two ill-fated pregnancies, both the Antinomian threat and the dispute between Presbyterians and Congregationalists, so disruptive in mid-seventeenth century (see chapter 3.2), were things of the past and had lost their fervor. The Congregational churches had lost their dominant role in New England, and other religious groupings were on the rise; furthermore, the Boston merchants gained influence both in the political and the religious sphere (Hebel, "Negotiation" 118-20; Hoeveler 47-49; Ziff 266-79).

And indeed, although Mather gave a short overview on the topics debated during the Antinomian Controversy (such as the covenant of works versus the covenant of grace, or the question of evidence for justification), his comment betrays that he had no keen interest in analyzing these conflicts: "'Tis believed, that Multitudes of Persons, who took in with both Parties, did never to their dying Hour understand what their *Difference* was" (*Magnalia* VII, 14). Mather clearly had no intention to anatomize the "*Eighty Two Erroneous Opinions*" that had been under debate during the Cambridge Synod:

What these Errors were, 'tis needless now to repeat; they are *Dead and Gone*; and, for me, beyond hope of *Resurrection*; 'tis pity to rake them out of their *Graves*; 'tis enough to say, they were of an *Antinomian* and *Familistical* Tendency. (VII, 16)

Unlike Governor John Winthrop, who hoped to fulfill the demands of the doctrine of providence by ordering the exhumation of Dyer's stillborn child (see chapter 2.1), the Reverend Cotton Mather saw no need for a deeper analysis of theological issues debated in the past.

Another realm on which Mather might have focused is medicine. Already as a student at Harvard College, Mather had displayed a strong interest in the field and he even considered pursuing it as a profession when he had to live through a period of intense stammer that made him doubt whether he would be able to preach as a minister (Silverman 15-19, 22, 33-38). As a young man, he was on friendly terms with Dr. Avery, one of the few trained physicians in America at the time; later, Mather married Elizabeth Hubbard Clark, whose father was the Boston physician Dr. John Clark, son to another physician—maybe a descendant of the Dr. Clarke (see chapter 2.2) who had reported on Anne Hutchinson's mole (see Green 8; Silverman 41-42, 261). At times, Mather even practiced medicine himself, for example during the Boston smallpox epidemics of 1721 when he actively campaigned for the practice of inoculation after having tried out the method himself.³²³

Mather derived a large part of his medical knowledge from books. He had access to private collections, such as the library of his father, and the library of Harvard College, which was “the best Furnished . . . in all the *American Regions*” (C. Mather, *Magnalia* IV, 127). Mather's own library held medical works from Thomas Sydenham and William Harvey, and several works of Robert Boyle. Mather admired Galen, albeit considering him a “Pagan Physician” (*Christian Philosopher* 282), and knew the works of Hippocrates, Paracelsus, Sir Kenelm Digby, Anton Leeuwenhook, Nicholas Culpeper, and many other medical writers. He also possessed knowledge of popular works dealing with monstrous aberrations, such as Francis Bacon's *Natural History*, Liceti's *De Monstris*, Pliny's *Natural History*, or the writings of Lykosthenes.³²⁴ Mather's passion for medicine also expressed itself in the style of his writings. He described being attracted to wrongful opinions as if the

³²³ On Cotton Mather's involvement in the inoculation debate, see Beall and Shyrock 97-121; Herzogenrath, “Angel”; Middlekauff 354-9; Silva (chapter 4). Beall and Shyrock state in this context that Mather “emerges as the first significant figure in American medicine” (126). This is denied by Middlekauff who claims that Mather acted upon “non-medical considerations” (356).

persons had attracted disease: people “recovered” or were “cured” from “gross *Miscarriages*” or “*Wounds*”; diverging opinions were “*Anomalies*” or a “*Gangreen*” (*Magnalia* III, 7; 107) that needed to be cut away to avoid infection.

Although he finally chose ministry over medicine as a career, Mather regarded both realms as closely interdependent. Mather was strongly influenced by Van Helmont and works on occult magic (Watson 76-77; 94-95). Physicians acting in the tradition of Paracelsus and Van Helmont deemed it not only suitable but essential to combine religion with medicine: they considered Galen an atheist (as Mather did), and around mid-seventeenth century they had heavily criticized the College of Physicians in London for excluding clerics. In their view, true physicians were qualified for their task not through formal training but a sacred gift: knowledge on medicine was given by God for the sake of mankind as a whole (Elmer 13, 16-19 and *passim*). The English Paracelsians consequently propagated the concept of “priest-physician” (see chapter 2.2). Sharing in parts this view on medicine, Mather legitimated his active interest in medicine by pointing out that medicine should cover not only physical aspects but also spiritual health: “The *Soul* and the *Body* constitute *one person* . . . : hence for the *Sins* of the one, there come *Sufferings* on the other.” (*Mens Sana* 25). In later years, he concluded that there was no such means for fighting disease and maintaining health “like Serious PIETY” (*Angel of Bethesda* 37).

The close connection between the soul and the body may have motivated Mather to take a leading role in the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692 (although he did not attend the trials himself), which probably also affected his version of the famous New England monster tales.³²⁵ While at other occasions Mather stressed the importance of being an eye- or ear-witness, this time he used his absence from the trials to stylize himself as a disinterested observer reporting the “Truth”: “I was not Present at any of *Them*; nor ever Had I any personal prejudice at the persons thus brought upon the Stage” (C. Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World. Observations* 82). Mather presented his reports on the witchcraft trials as a “Service imposed upon

³²⁴ These works are quoted in Mather’s writings and/or are part of the Mather library. See Tuttle 35-39; see also the card box “Mather Family Library” in the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) in Worcester, MA.

me” by the officials of the colony (*Wonders of the Invisible World: Being an Account* 57). Last but not least, despite not having witnessed the trials in person, Mather could claim to be a kind of expert on preternatural events with first-hand experiences with demonic forces: Martha Goodwin, a girl suspected of being possessed by the devil, had spent six weeks in his home—an episode Mather published afterwards in *Late Memorable Providences Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions* (1689), where he pointed out that his narrative was based on “partly my one *Ocular Observation*, & partly my *undoubted Information*” (sig. A2; cf. 40).

Over time, the events at Salem contributed to the decline of the belief in witchcraft in the North American colonies, and also belief in providence increasingly came under attack from the early 1690s onwards, as described in the previous chapter. Winship concludes that Hutchinson’s and Dyer’s monstrous births were “handled discreetly” in Mather’s *Magnalia (Seers of God* 98); but while the authors of earlier accounts did not suggest possible reasons for the shaking of Dyer’s bed and the vomiting of the women attending the laboring scene, Mather explicitly established a connection to witchcraft: he attributed the sickness of the women and the convulsions of the children to the agency of the midwife who “was one strongly suspected of *Witchcraft*” (VII, 20).³²⁶ His explanation for the shaking of the bed shows that his thinking was still firmly directed towards the invisible world: the “odd *Shake*” was given “by invisible Hands” (VII, 20). Mather thereby stressed that the unsettling dangers of witchcraft continued being present in New England—maybe because he was convinced that witchcraft had affected his own family in the early 1690s.

On 28 March 1693, only about one year after the Salem witchcraft craze, Cotton Mather’s wife Abigail had given birth to a son,³²⁷ “a child of a most *comely* and *hearty* Look”; but it soon turned out that “the Child was attended with a very

³²⁵ On Mather and the Salem witchcraft trials, see Silverman 83-137; Werking. Mather’s views on witchcraft have been influenced by texts such as William Perkins’s *A Discovrse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608) and Puritan covenant theology. Although Mather and many other defenders of the belief in witchcraft stressed that accusations of witchcraft had to be treated with caution, they took the alleged increase of preternatural events as a sign that the covenant with God needed to be renewed (Werking 286; cf. Jones xiii; Levack 94).

³²⁶ As shown in chapter 2.1, Hawkins, the midwife in charge during Dyer’s labor, came to be accused of witchcraft after discovery of Dyer’s monstrous birth, so Mather obviously combined two pieces of information.

³²⁷ “Joseph,” according to the editors of Mather’s *Diary*. K. Brown claims that the boy was called “Increase,” named for Mather’s father (“Murderous” 90).

strange Disaster; for it had such an obstruction in the *Bowels*, as utterly hindred the Passage of its Ordure from it” (C. Mather, *Diary* VII: 163). After the boy had died on 1 April, a dissection was performed (what Mather seems to have witnessed), and it was discovered that the rectum had been blocked: “When the Body of the Child was opened, wee found, that the lower End of the *Rectum Intestinum*, instead of being *Musculous*, as it should have been, was *Membranous*, and altogether closed up.” (*Diary* VII: 164). This private tragedy is also covered in the diary of Samuel Sewall, one of the magistrates officially involved in the Salem witchcraft trials. In an entry dated 28 March 1693, Sewall noted: “Mr. Cotton Mather has a Son born, which is his first; it seems was without a Postern for the voidance of Excrements; dies Satterday, Ap. 1.” (I: 308). This bodily defect was no singular phenomenon in New England. The child of Joseph Wright, for example, had, like Cotton Mather’s son, “no passage for nature in any part below” (35), as was explained in Increase Mather’s *Brief History of the War of 1676* (see chapter 4.2). In November 1716, another child, Sarah Stoddard, was born with this defect, which was described by Sewall as “Intestinum Rectum Clausum fuit” (II: 838).³²⁸

Mather believed that the cause of the deformity of his son was that his wife had been frightened through witchcraft during pregnancy:

I had great Reason to suspect a *Witchcraft*, in this præternatural Accident; because my Wife, a few weeks before her Deliverance, was affrighted with an horrible *Spectre*, in our Porch, which Fright caused her Bowels to turn within her; and the *Spectres* which both before and after, tormented a young Woman in our Neighbourhood, brag’d of their giving my Wife that Fright, in hopes, they said, of doing Mischief unto her *Infant* at least, if not unto the *Mother* (*Diary* VII: 164)

Specters, belonging to the sphere of the preternatural (see chapter 3.4), had played a central role in the Salem witchcraft crisis of the early 1690s. It was held that “spectral evidence”—for example the behavior of bewitched girls—was a sign in the visible world of demonic forces that originated in the invisible world (Rumsey 5). The witch trials offered a welcome occasion for Mather and his co-fighters to stress anew the relevance of the spiritual for the material world: the “*Preternatural Vexations*” that plagued the inhabitants of Boston and other places, Mather

³²⁸ It is noteworthy that in Sewall’s list of witnesses no female attendant is mentioned by name, while in previous decades midwives had belonged to the most important witnesses at birthing scenes (see chapter 1.2, n77, and chapter 3.1); among the attendants listed were “the 2 Ministers” and a whole

maintained, “were evidently inflicted from the *Dæmons*, of the *Invisible World*” (*Magnalia* II, Appendix, 60; cf. C. Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World: Observations* 84-90).

While at other occasions it is difficult to decide whether Cotton Mather advocated the theories he wrote about, this time it is rather certain that he did not only firmly believe in the powers of witchcraft (represented by the “horrible *Spectre*”) but also in the concept of maternal imagination, according to which the mother’s whims and fancies or emotional strain left a mark on the skin or individual body parts of the unborn child (see chapter 2.2). It was common knowledge in the early modern period that “fear” and “frights” could have disastrous effects on the fetus in the womb (Lemnius, First Book, 57); deformities such as a hare lip were produced when the mother was frightened “in the time of her Conception” (Culpeper, *Directory* 159). Still in 1724, Mather admonished pregnant women to be temperate since the “*Passions* or the *Surfeits* of the Mother make a Strange Impression on the Infant” (*Angel of Bethesda* 241; cf. 31). Mather even tried to give scientific credence to the concept of maternal imagination by help of the so-called nishmath-chajim—Hebrew for “*The Breath of Life*” (29).³²⁹ The “*Nishmath-Chajim*” was also in “Operation” “in *prægnant Women*” (31), Mather explained; with its help, “*Tendencies* from God [were] imprinted” upon the human body (32), and even “Occurrences of *Witchcrafts*” could be explained by it (*Angel of Bethesda* 34).

Mather used the theory of maternal imagination and the nishmath-chajim to point out the importance of the invisible sphere and divine presence in the human body. Both concepts served Mather to counter the ever more popular view that the body was guided by pure mechanism (see chapter 4.2). As will also be shown in the following chapter, on the one hand Mather was fascinated by these theories, but on the other hand he could not accept that God seemed to have disappeared from nature, even if mechanistic thinkers stressed that God was the creator of the design of the world in its totality. “There are indeed many Things in the Humane Body, that cannot be solved by the Rules of *Mechanism*,” Mather maintained, and he suggested

range of other local worthies, among them John Winthrop Jr., and Sewall himself (II: 838). On the decline of the authority of midwives, see chapter 3.3 of this dissertation.

³²⁹ On Mather’s concept of the Nishmath-Chajim, see Warner; on related concepts (e.g. the “stamina”), see the following chapter.

that the “*Nishmath-Chajim* will go very far to help us, in the Solution of them” (*Angel of Bethesda* 31).

In Mather’s writings, the theory of maternal imagination was closely connected to the belief that God actively punished sinning (a theory propagated also by Increase Mather, Cotton’s father, see the previous chapter). Mather regarded external signs as a reflection of the inner condition: “When the Face is *Patched* the Hart is *Rotten*” (*Ornaments* 18). It did not matter to him whether the patches were caused by face painting or were a birth mark, since the latter was God’s punishment for the former: “the Heart ha’s more *Black Spots* than the Face upon it. Some unhappy Ladies by the Just Judgement of God, have brought forth Children with Natural *Patches* on: so ha’s God been offended at them.” (*Ornaments* 18-19). Like Richard Baxter and John Spencer (see chapter 4.2), Mather believed that at times previous sinning could be “discerned by the Instrument that Providence doth punish with” (*Magnalia* V, 89). At another occasion a few years thereafter Mather stressed that monstrous beings sometimes were “attended with such circumstances, that they who are more nearly concerned may do well, to be sensible of a voice from Heaven therein unto them” (“Monstrous Calf” 364).

It seems surprising that Mather did not see the fault for his son’s birth defect in himself or his wife (cf. K. Brown, “Murderous” 90-91). Mather easily could have drawn a parallel between the type of his son’s deformity and his own shortcomings, all the more since he possessed an acute awareness of his own sinful state of being. Early in 1686, Mather noted that he had “cast myself prostrate, on my *Study-floor* with my mouth in the Dust” with “Anguish of Soul, in the Sense of my own Sinfulness, and Filthiness” (*Diary* VII: 109; cf. 187, 192, 225). With regard to his son’s birth defect, however, Mather seems to have had no inclination at all to examine his conscience. On the contrary, Mather almost proudly stated that he “did not suffer such a Discomposure in my Thoughts” due to “this præternatural Accident” as “to hinder mee, from preaching both parts of the Day following” (*Diary* VII: 163-4). Neither did Mather blame himself nor did he suggest that his wife’s behavior or the power of her imagination were to be blamed for the abnormal body of their son, even though his wife suffered from “a melancholy Temper” (*Diary* VII: 452; cf. 452-3)—a state of mind that was seen in close connection with female mental weakness (see chapter 3.3).

Mather may have located the cause of his wife's melancholic disposition in her surroundings rather than in her personality. He regarded New England as a region where "*Splenetic* Maladies are prevailing and pernicious, perhaps above any other," thus leading to a high number of "*Melancholy Indispositions*" (*Magnalia* III, 119). As a consequence, the settlers of New England—and especially those who fought human sinning and Satanic delusions, like Mather—were greatly endangered by the activities of the devil: "The Devils have doubtless felt a more than ordinary Vexation from the Arrival of those Christians in this Wilderness" (*Magnalia* VI, 66). In December 1692, only a few months before his ill-fated son was born, Mather noted in his diary that "this Assault of the *evil Angels* upon the Countrey, was intended by *Hell*, as a particular Defiance, unto *my* poor Endeavours, to bring the Souls of men unto *Heaven*" (*Diary* VII: 156). The "*Spectres*" that had threatened his wife represented all the dangers that were awaiting Mather and his family.

In the case of Mather's wife, the disastrous effects of maternal imagination had worked at least as much via hearing disturbing things than via seeing, which is in a way symptomatic of Puritan thinking. Puritan ministers and lay people alike attributed much power to words. Protestantism was a "linguistic, hearing culture," "the eyes were directed by being told what to see" (Dillenberger 15; cf. D. Hall, "Readers" 121-3). Speech played an important role in the process of conversion since words could trigger off spiritual rebirth. Due to its transformative power, speech was potentially dangerous, however. Various measures aimed at preventing offensive talk, ranging from fines and admonitions to cruel punishments such as branding faces with a double "S" for "sower of sedition." The tongue, especially the female one, was an organ that needed to be kept under control, as William Perkins explained in his influential *Directions for the Government of the Tongue* (1593).³³⁰ In colonial New England the motif of women verbally abusing or otherwise endangering the posterity of the male elite was a recurring one. Anne Hutchinson, for example, had indirectly menaced her male opponents during her court trial that if they went "on this course you begin you will bring a curse upon you and your posterity" (D. Hall, ed. 338).

The danger of uncontrolled female speech became virulent at various moments in Cotton Mather's life. Shortly after the birth of his ill-fated son, for

³³⁰ For another example, see John Ball's treatise *Of the Government of the Tongue* (1657), which is part of Ball's *The Power of Godlines* (Book Four, Part II, 309-33). See also chapters 2.2 and 3.3 of this dissertation on the dangers of the female tongue.

example, “a suspected Woman sent unto my Father, a Letter full of railing against myself, wherein shee told him, *Hee little knew, what might quickly befall some of his Posterity*” (164). Cotton Mather pointed out that he did not fear such threats: “I made little *use* of, and laid little *Stress* on, this Conjecture; desiring to submit unto the Will of my Heavenly Father without which, *Not a Sparrow falls unto the Ground.*” (*Diary* VII: 164). When a few years later one of his sons was confronted with a serious allegation, Mather was somewhat more disconcerted. In 1717, Increase Mather (“Creasy,” or “Cressy”), named after his grand-father, was accused of having fathered an illegitimate child. For Cotton Mather this felt like a humiliation for the whole family (Breitwieser 65-66), as this note in his diary illustrates well:

The Evil that I greatly feared, is come upon me. I am within these few hours, astonished with an Information, that an Harlot big with a Bastard, accuses my poor son *Cresy*, and layes her Belly to him. Oh! Dreadful Case! Oh, Sorrow beyond any that I have mett withal! what shall I do now for the foolish Youth! what for my afflicted and abased Family? (*Diary* VIII: 484)

Creasy was what could be called a notorious troublemaker, but the way Mather recounted the episode blamed the woman—the “Harlot big with a Bastard”—rather than his son. For Mather, illegitimate offspring was connected to illegitimate behavior that had the potential to disrupt the God-given order of things. Similar to John Hull and John Winthrop, who had established a connection between weakened procreative powers and corporal and spiritual barrenness (see chapter 2.1), Mather paralleled the kind of progeny produced with the moral state of the mother. Wrong conversation—a term that referred both to the manner of speech and the manner of conduct—produces wrong offspring, Mather wrote in May 1718, probably referring to the widow Katharin Russel:

A very wicked Woman is found in the Church whereof I am the Servant. She not only had an unlawful Offspring a few Years ago, which is now discovered, but her Impenitence has provoked her Neighbours to come in with Testimonies of a very lewd Conversation, that she has carried on. The Work of God in bringing forth her Wickedness is to be wondred [sic] at, to be trembled at. (*Diary* VIII: 531)

When the illegitimacy of her child was declared, the woman was “shut out from Communion of the Church” for this offence as well as for “her lewd Carriage towards diverse Men at sundry Times” (*Diary* VIII: 538n1). As Breitwieser summarizes it, “an abuse of proper maternity is at the root of all this discord: the

actual bastard is the first of many bastard deeds and words” (69). The female body and its unclean acts became the symbol of a degenerate, “unclean social body” (K. Brown, “Murderous” 82). For the Mathers, the abominable comprised any behavior that could be described as “filthy” or “unclean”—leading to an untimely death, “monstrous births,” and “leprous children” (qtd. in Middlekauf 378n36; cf. 70-71). These categories comprised any form of sexuality that was not sanctified through marriage and thus did not serve the aim to produce progeny. Seventeenth-century Puritan New England was dominated by “an ideology of reproduction,” with sex being legitimate only in combination with the marital status and for reproductive purposes (T. Foster 723). Over time, terms such as *filthy* or *unclean* came to be used in a broader sense and were no longer restricted to sexual offences such as sodomy or adultery: they covered any behavior that was felt to contradict good carriage (Breitwieser 88-92; Middlekauff 92).³³¹

About two months after the birth of his malformed child, Mather had the opportunity to expound his views on unclean, bad mothers—an opportunity he seems to have longed for. Immediately following the entry on the birth defect of his son, Mather confided to his private notebook that he “had often wished for an Opportunity, to bear my Testimonies, against the Sins of *Uncleanness*, wherein so many of my Generation do pollute themselves” (*Diary* VII: 164-65). Mather focused not on the uncleanness of young men, as Samuel Danforth had done in his *Cry of Sodom* (1674), but on that of murdering mothers who threatened to corrupt the social body through their filthy acts. In June 1693, Mather delivered the sermons *Warnings from the Dead* on the execution of Elizabeth Emerson for infanticide. Emerson had been sentenced to death for murder of one or both of her “Bastard-Children” (C. Mather, *Magnalia* VI, Appendix, 47),³³² and Mather spent “Many and many a weary

³³¹ Focusing on Anne Bradstreet’s poetry (see chapter 3.3), Latta claims that seventeenth-century writers were preoccupied with the idea that “the bringing forth of something, whether child or thought or profit, that God had neither authored nor authorized” was “an act similar to . . . the sin of giving birth to an illegitimate child. To do so, was to mother monstrosity and to demonstrate the utter depravity of one’s soul.” (59).

³³² Both in England and New England concealing the death of an illegitimate child, no matter whether it was born dead or alive, was severely punished. Under the Bay colony’s new charter of 1691, these rules were tightened, leading to a strong increase of convictions for infanticide in the 1690s. The new law made the concealment of a dead, illegitimate fetus sufficient evidence to convict the mother of the crime of infanticide. On infanticide laws in colonial Massachusetts, see K. Brown, “Murderous” 78, 83-84; L. Friedman 5; Hoffer and Hull 59-61.

Hour” in prison “to serve the *Souls*” of such “miserable Creatures” as Emerson (*Diary* VII: 165).

Mather’s execution sermons may have been a kind of diversionary tactic to draw away attention from his own personal defects or those of his family. Kathleen Brown argues similarly that Mather gladly took up the occasion to expel uncleanness in *others*: he tried “to protect himself from the disturbing possibility that his son’s death from an inability to expel uncleanness might have been God’s curse for Mather’s complicity in the sins of New England” such as the Salem witchcraft craze, which increasingly came to be regarded as a mistake (“Murderous” 91). In any case, Cotton Mather could hope that his viewpoints on Emerson and her like would find a positive reception by his contemporaries. In seventeenth-century England, many broadside ballads presented female child murderers as monstrous, unnatural mothers who tended to sexual promiscuity and lacked the tender feelings and care-giving qualities of ideal mothers, and this way of thinking prevailed in New England, too.³³³

For Mather, female child murderers were not only bad mothers but bad daughters who disrespected their parents. In her “Paper of Confessions” (which is reprinted in *Magnalia*), Emerson acknowledged her guilt and accused herself of the sins of uncleanness, “an haughty stubborn Spirit,” and disobedience to her parents, Mather noted (*Magnalia* VI, Appendix, 47). Also in the case of a young nineteen year old woman, executed at Boston on 17 November 1698 for murder of her illegitimate child, Mather stressed that her “*Chief Sin* of which this *Chief of Sinners* now cries out, is, her undutiful Carriage towards her Parents” (VI, Appendix, 449). Such behavior was unacceptable for Mather: “Most of the Evils that abound amongst us, proceed from Defects as to Family-Government.” (*Magnalia* V, 89). That New England was struck by so many evils (be they diseases, unruly servants, or Indian attacks) was interpreted by Mather as the logical outcome of leniency: children and servants “are not kept in due Subjection, their Masters and Parents especially being sinfully indulgent towards them” (*Magnalia* V, 89). In this respect, a child-murderer like Emerson was not much different from Anne Hutchinson who had similarly disrespected her spiritual fathers (see chapter 3.2).

Cotton Mather abhorred insubordinate women, regarding them as a perversion of the ideal wife and mother and as dangerously contagious as far as the

morals of society were concerned, but he praised female piety and acknowledged the special role of women in Christian faith. It was Eve, the mother of all, who had brought about “all our Maladies” due to her transgression in the Garden of Eden (C. Mather, *Angel of Bethesda* Cap. LII, 233), but it was a woman, the Virgin Mary, who had given birth to Christ and made possible his incarnation on earth and the redemption of mankind (C. Mather, *Ornaments* 3-4). The pain mothers went through in the birthing chamber may have been a punishment for Eve’s tasting of the forbidden fruit, but it allowed women to be closer to God and made the female body the vehicle for rebirth: women’s “Travails” gave them special “Exercises of PIETY, which rendered them truly *Blessed* ones”; when acting after Christ’s example, each woman could “have a *CHRIST* formed in you,” Mather maintained referring to Galatians 4.19 (*Angel of Bethesda* Cap. LIII, 236, 241). Childbirth reproduced the divine act of creation (see chapter 3.4), and women played the most visible role in this process (J. Crawford 18-21).

However, in spite of the special role of women in Christian faith, and although married couples were considered as loving companions on an equal level, Puritans expected wives to submit to male authority,³³⁴ and Cotton Mather clearly shared this view: “In every *Lawful* thing, she submits her *Will* and *Sense* to his, where she cannot with *Calm Reasons* Convince him of,” and “instead of *Grudging* or *Capricious Contradiction*, she acts as if there were but *One Mind* in *Two Bodies*” (C. Mather, *Ornaments* 79). Much as the congregation needed to act as “one man” and “one body” (see chapter 3.2), husband and wife needed to form an inseparable entity. In a well-ordered family, every individual—husband and wife, child and servant—acted according to the role ascribed to him or her.

Small wonder, then, that although Mather regarded the Antinomian Controversy mainly as a rhetorical battle and neglected its theological aspects, he blamed Anne Hutchinson and her followers for the crisis: “Now tho’ the *Truth* might easily have United *both* of these Perswasions; yet they that were of the *latter way*, carried the Matter on to a very *Perillous Door*” (*Magnalia* VII, 14). While earlier commentators such as John Wheelwright Jr. or George Bishop had demanded that women like Jane Hawkins (Mary Dyer’s midwife) or Anne Hutchinson should not be

³³³ On murdering mothers and infanticide in England, see Dolan 124n10, 125n12, 133n33, 135n36, 151, 162-63 and passim; Gowing 114; Staub 335; for New England, see K. Brown, “Murderous.”

³³⁴ For secondary literature on the role of women in Puritan society, see chapter 3.3, n254.

punished too harshly in view of their weak capacities for understanding and the subtleties of religious controversy,³³⁵ Mather stressed the dramatic consequences that female stubbornness could have: by insisting “at so Extravagant a rate” on the differences between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, the Hutchinsonians “threatned a Subversion to all the peasable Order in the Colonies” (*Magnalia* VII, 14). In short, monstrous character and conduct—and not heretical opinions—were prodigies to be marveled at:

I must herewithal put my Reader upon the *Wonder* beholding, that as far as the *Seditious Disturbance* raised in the Country by the Distinction between *People under Covenant of Works*, and *People under the Covenant of Grace*, whereby People were sometimes hurried into *Works* that shew'd little of *Grace* in them (*Magnalia* VII, 18)

Thus not only Mather's interpretation of the two monstrous births but also his judgment of Anne Hutchinson's character shows similarities to comments made earlier by Winthrop and others (see chapter 3.3). A few decades later, Thomas Hutchinson, a descendant of Anne Hutchinson (see Mayo), followed in Mather's footsteps: he focused on the seemingly despicable character of Anne Hutchinson and downplayed the theological aspects of the Antinomian Controversy. In his *History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay*, published in Boston in 1764, he sketched Hutchinson as a vane person belonging to the group of “deluded enthusiasts” (49-50, 62-63; quotation: 66). Thomas Hutchinson (who did not mention Anne Hutchinson's “monstrous birth”) dismissed the debates on the covenant of works, which shook the very foundation of the Bay colony, as “these subtleties” (51). He contrasted the obstinate minds of the “opinionists” (66) with the great dangers the colonials had to face from outside and from which they were distracted by the idle fancies of some questionable individuals—mostly women.

For Mather, Anne Hutchinson and all those women molesting him and his family or committing despicable crimes such as child murder were of the same sort, as another episode noted in his diary shortly after publication of the *Magnalia* shows. In May 1703, Mather felt pestered by a “young Gentlewoman” whom he had rejected some time before: she “writes and comes to my Father, . . . and charms the

³³⁵ Since Hawkins was only “a poore silly woman,” the orthodoxy “need[ed] not have been so rigid in his opinion of her,” remarked Wheelwright Jr. (198; see also chapter 3.3). Bishop (see chapter 4.1) wondered in 1661 about the “Cruel Dealings” with Hutchinson and her “Company” simply “because they differed something from you” (*New England* 171).

Neighbours into her Interests; and renews her Importunities . . . that I would make her mine” (*Diary* VII: 484). In July, he admitted that he feared the “Rage” of the young woman who threatened to “contrive all possible Wayes to vex me, affront me, disgrace me, in my Attempting a Return to the married State with another Gentlewoman.” The woman was “of so rare a Witt, but so little Grace” (*Diary* VII: 492). Mather had described Anne Hutchinson with similar words: as “a Gentlewoman of an *Haughty Carriage, Busie Spirit, Competent Wit, and a Voluble Tongue*” (*Magnalia* VII, 18).

What had begun with *A Short Story* was continued by Edward Johnson (see chapter 3.2) and brought to perfection by Mather: the actual opinions of Hutchinson receded into the background and both her overstepping of roles (being a leader instead of a subordinating wife) and her unruly behavior were presented as the main causes of the colony’s troubles. The charge of heresy became an empty label, and the conflict turned into an epic tale of rational men fighting irrational, enthusiastic women of a questionable character and with a tongue let loose (Lang 65-71).

Creating the narrative of the “First Fathers”

In Cotton Mather’s writings, the Mather family represented the body politic of New England, and its male progeny again and again was confronted with monstrous words uttered by females, and Hutchinson perfectly embodied these threats (Breitwieser 63-79; cf. Scheick 21). Hutchinson had almost destroyed the Bay colony by propagating monstrous errors (see chapter 3.2), and she had stained the reputation of John Cotton—also a member of the “Mather dynasty.” Unruly women with a haughty spirit, representing a degenerated form of motherhood, threatened to ruin the fathers of the colony and their posterity and endangered the perpetuation of the saints. Mather consequently conceived of his son’s birth defect not as a sign of an unclean social body but regarded himself as its victim and as a protector against uncleanness; and when Mather dealt with the two monstrous births in *Magnalia* he focused not on the health of individual bodies but the health of the body politic (as Winthrop had done before, see chapter 2.1).

Cotton Mather stylized himself, the Mather family, and the first generation of Puritan settlers as a kind of communal symbol—as “the *Fathers* of New-England”

(*Magnalia* III, 1) who had to confront monstrous enemies (cf. Breitwieser 1-2). In doing so, Mather perpetuated the motif of Edward Johnson's "New-England Souldier" (see Hebel, *Images* 149, 162, 189-90, 225-6) who had to fight enemies of the Puritan mission in the New World to bring Reformation to its end. Field ("Antinomian" 456-8) states similarly that Johnson's *History of New-England* (better known as *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England*, see chapter 3.2) became the blueprint for later historiographers, most famously Cotton Mather. Johnson's *Wonder-Working Providence* can be seen as "a forerunner" of Mather's *Magnalia* (Gura, *Glimpse* 232). In the *Magnalia*, Mather transformed the biographies of national leaders into a communal symbol, and protagonists like John Winthrop were turned into giant-like saints. Winthrop was presented as "Nehemias Americanus," a model and exemplar of the ideal American (Bercovitch, *Puritan* ix).

The guiding motif of the heroic first, second and third generation of New England Puritans having to fight immense threats is reflected in the structure of the *Magnalia*. The topics are grouped around leading figures and formative crises and conflicts of the first decades of the Bay colony. As McWilliams formulates it, the *Magnalia*'s "organizing structure . . . provides the chief example of writing cathartic history based upon communal affliction" (11). The two monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson are mentioned in the third chapter of the seventh book, the "Ecclesiarum Prælia: Or, A Book of the Wars of the Lord." Apart from a summary of the Antinomian—or "Famelist"—crisis, the seventh book contains overviews on the various external and internal threats the colony had to face, for example the dangers to the colony's charter, troubles with the Quakers, or the Pequot and King Philip's War. The allegorical title of the third chapter echoes the adventures of Heracles, who had killed the Lernaean hydra: "*Hydra Decapitata: Or, The First SYNOD of NEW ENGLAND, quelling a Storm of Antinomian Opinions, and many remarkable Events relating thereunto*" (VII, 14). Mather presented the fight against witchcraft and crimes such as infanticide as a heroic fight against monstrous challenges. The greater the danger witchcraft and similar threats posed, the more understandable was the failure of individual men like Cotton Mather in fighting these threats, and the more heroic and adorable were the deeds of those who successfully vanquished enemies.

Both the title and the contents of the chapter "*Hydra Decapitata*" play with associations well established by then, for example the motif of the self-generating

variety of erring beliefs and of errors as lively beings. After the Cambridge Synod of 1637, the “*Hydra of Error*” remained active in exerting her “Virulent and Malignant Influence” throughout the country (VII, 16), and only thanks to the “Vigilancy” and courage of men like Thomas Shepard the heads of the hydra—the erroneous opinions—were “most happily crush’d,” Mather wrote (III, 87). The motif of false opinions multiplying like the heads of the hydra was a popular one in the early modern period, and already Governor John Winthrop possibly had referred to it when writing about Dyer’s monstrous birth (see chapter 3.2).

Mather could draw upon famous examples of historiography in drafting his history of the New England Churches. There proliferated martyrologies and works of history that understood history as a sequel of heroic deeds of eminent, male personalities. Their stories often were accompanied by descriptions of geographic and natural peculiarities, creating a kind of treasury of pride and identity. A good example is Clarke’s *A Generall Martyrologie* (1651), published in several editions, at the end of which were added the biographies of eminent English personages (all male) of the first half of the seventeenth century. Also the motif of heroic men fighting giant-like enemies prevailed in learned tracts of the seventeenth-century. The devoted Presbyterian Thomas Edwards, for example, prided himself in his heresiography *Second Part of Gangraena* (1646) on having encountered not one but many enemies: “five men, esteemed Gyants by many of these times,” one of them resembling the mythical figure Goliath (sig. A). Edwards did not mention the failed pregnancies of Mary Dyer or Anne Hutchinson (to which he had possibly alluded to in *Antapologia*, see chapter 3.2), but he had included a report of a “monstrous birth” that resembled Dyer’s stillborn daughter in substantial ways.³³⁶

In Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia*, the enemies were not primarily enemies in a religious conflict, as in Edward’s *Gangraena*, but enemies of the established order. The role of God consequently was subtly diminished in *Magnalia*. While his father, Increase, had concentrated in 1684 on the great works of God in acts of providence and pointed out to his readers “*Magnalia Dei*, things wherein the glorious finger of God is eminently to be seen” (*Doctrine* 12), Cotton Mather at least as much stressed

³³⁶ The child, born in Colchester in February 1645, “was born without a head, having upon the breast some characters of a face, nose, and eyes” (4-5). Also the overall context reminds of the famous New England prodigies: the father of “this monster” was “a Separatist” and an Anabaptist; the mother tended towards separation, wherefore she “resolved . . . that if ever shee had any more children, they should never be baptized” (Edwards, *Second Part Of Gangraena* 5).

the great deeds of his male ancestors, the First Generation of New England Puritans in *Magnalia Christi Americana*, meaning the working of Christ in America. Human deeds gained in importance in comparison to divine acts, even though the first had been assisted and confirmed by the latter. This subtle re-interpretation parallels the slight change of Winthrop's usage of the term *to scatter* as analyzed in chapter 3.2, which served to point out that it had been the male establishment who finally put an end to destabilizing female agitation.

Apart from reference to the hydra, Mather also resorted to other motifs of classical antiquity when describing Dyer's stillborn daughter. Quoting again from Virgil (Book III of *The Aeneid*), Mather summarized what was found when "the Magistrates ordered the opening of the Grave" of Dyer's child: a "*Monstrum Horrendum, in forme, Ingens*" (*Magnalia* VII, 20), that is, "an awful misshapen monster, huge, his eyelight lost" (Virgil 852-3). Mather does not further comment on this quotation, which refers in the original to cyclops, mythical figures with a single eye placed in the middle of their forehead who were said to possess over-boarding strength, to be stubborn and driven by their emotions, lacking rational control; Hesiod described them as savage members of a primordial race of giants with "wanton hearts," living upon an isolated island (Hesiod 139-46).

The *Aeneid* forms a sequel to Homer's *Odyssey*, and by quoting from this work in the context of the New England monstrous births Mather implicitly associated the colonial leaders with heroic men such as Odysseus and Aeneas who had taken upon them adventures in a remote wilderness beyond the sea. In book three of Virgil's *Aeneid*, from which the above-quoted citation is taken, it is narrated how Aeneas and his crew land on the island of the Cyclops after the Trojan War. Already during their flight from Troy the group had overcome a variety of obstacles, among them the famous sea monster Scylla. After their landing they met Achaemenides, a Greek from Ithaca who had belonged to Odysseus' expedition and had stranded on the island. Odysseus and his men had blinded Polyphemus, the Cyclop who had held them captive and whom Virgil characterized as a horrendous creature lacking the ability to see (see Homer 1.69-73).³³⁷

³³⁷ When Wheelwright Jr. equalled Weld (assuming that Weld had written all of *A Short Story*) with the planet Saturn (see chapter 3.3), he, too, established a connection to Greek-Roman mythology. Furthermore, the motif of a loss of sight calls to mind the metaphor of light that figures prominently in *A Short Story* (see chapter 3.1).

By alluding to the legendary figure of Aeneas, Mather evoked the founding myth of Britain, thereby connecting the history of New England with that of ancient England. According to legend, the founders of the British nation were refugees from Troy, led by the great-grandson of Aeneas, Brutus, who came ashore of an island called Albion (the oldest known name of the island of Great Britain), where they confronted and vanquished the native giants. The defeat of monstrous giants figures as a decisive moment in narratives of the British nation's origins: thereafter, diverse groups, such as the Anglo-Saxons, the Anglo-Normans, and Celtic peoples, were transformed into a new entity. The narrative of this transformation was provided by the medieval cleric Geoffrey of Monmouth, who created "a coherent narrative of the history and glorious origins of Britain" (Bernau 106; cf. J. Cohen, *Giants* 29-31, 45-46). His *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*The History of The Kings of Britain*) tells the story of Brutus who sailed for the island Albion in the western sea, possessed by giants, to found a new empire; Brutus called the island "Britain," derived from his own name.

The narrative of the founding of Britain, with the victory over giants as key element, can be found in most early histories of England, and it also was a popular starting point in accounts of prodigies. A good example is Lykosthenes's *The Doome Warning all Men to the Iudgemente* (1581), a collection of prodigies put together by the professor in divinity Stephen Batman, which begins with a chapter on "The antiquitie of *Englande* first called *Brutaine*." The text relates the arrival of Brutus in Devonshire, where "he had subdued diuerse mightie people, tal and strong, tearmed [sic] *Giantes*."³³⁸ Having conquered and vanquished giants, the perfect symbol of evilness and otherness, became a justification for ruling over other nations (Stephens 6, cf. 98-184). Thus Mather stated by analogy that—like the Britons who had vanquished giants at the island of Albion—the first generation of Puritan settlers of New-England were founders of a kind of new nation.³³⁹

³³⁸ On giants in Biblical and ancient sources, see Twomey 151; 154. For primary sources, see for example Clark's *A Mirrour or Looking-Glass Both for Saints, and Sinners* (1671, 234-44), and Augustine's *The City of God* 512-4, 15:23. On medieval and early modern myths of origins (often with special consideration of giants and gender roles), see Bernau; J. Cohen, *Giants* 29-61; R. Evans 182-8, 192; Geary; Trubowitz, "Crossed-Dressed" 188, 199-200. On English colonial "myths of origin," see Bhabha, "Signs." On the meaning of "the moment of origin" in "medieval Christian sign theory," see Stephens 63-64.

³³⁹ As explained in chapter 1.2, the term *nation* is used in this study only in the sense of a kind of proto-nationalism. See also the following chapter and the conclusion.

While he had presented Anne Hutchinson as the chief culprit of the Antinomian Controversy, Cotton Mather downplayed the role of women as active shapers of the founding history of New England, and also in this respect he followed an established pattern. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* they were men—especially Brutus—who procreated and bore the nation, while the female body only gave birth in the biological sense (J. Cohen, *Giants* 46-47). In earlier versions of the legend of the island of Albion, originating in the fourteenth century, females played a key role: The beautiful but excessively proud daughters of the Emperor Diocletian were banished to Albion because they had conceived a plot to murder their husbands. In Albion, named by the eldest daughter Albynia, they coupled with invisible demons, fallen angels dwelling there, and gave birth to a race of giants who ruled the island until the arrival of Brutus and his men.³⁴⁰

According to Cohen, the legend of Albion is based on Galenic notions of conception and birth (see chapter 2.2): not only the male but also the female part contributes seed, that is, structure, to the child—or, in this case, a new population. The legend of Brutus as told in *Historia* downplayed female participation in building and forming a new community by propagating Aristotelian rather than Galenic models of generation, claims Cohen. According to Aristotle, the mother contributes only formless matter (material) to her progeny, while the man gives the fetus form and structure through his seed. Cohen sees the legend of Brutus in parallel lines: “the woman is the elemental matter from which offspring are produced, just as the land is the raw *materia* of nation” (*Giants* 54). Unlike Brutus, Albina and her sisters generate only monstrous beings: they represent a “monstrous, feminine origin,” symbolizing a “disordered Nature” lacking control, in contrast to an “orderly masculine” origin (J. Cohen, *Giants* 49, 50).³⁴¹

Native Americans were at times described as being similarly deformed and corrupted as the female sex. Much as women were presented as failing to give form to material in myths of origins or texts on human generation, Native Americans were accused of neglecting the raw material at their disposal: land. Since the native inhabitants did not cultivate and “subdue” the earth (Genesis 1.28), America was perceived as a *vacuum domicilium* (Oberg 84-87; Winthrop, *Journal* 122), an empty

³⁴⁰ On the legend of Albina, see Bernau; J. Cohen, *Giants* 47-50, 54. For the biblical narrative of how “the daughters of men” coupled with giants, see Gen. 6.1-4.

³⁴¹ On nature conceived of as female, chaotic, and disorderly, see chapter 3.3.

land that could be taken into possession by the English. Apart from the Scriptures, also sources of the classical antiquity provided the settlers of the New World with a justification for colonizing and subduing the Indians. In Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, it was held that the Cyclops "plant no plants with their hands, neither do [they] any plowing; rather, the crops all grow unsown and without cultivation" (9.107-109). Similarly, in Monmouth's *History*, Albion was presented as being mostly uninhabited, with the exception of the giants dwelling there, and these soon were killed or driven away; the Trojans took possession of the land and transformed it (see Bernau 108-17).

Cotton Mather compared the Native Americans not only to ancient giants but ancient European tribes such as the Picts, once conquered by the Romans, who led them to Christianity and civilization.³⁴² In a text published in 1690, he suggested that the "*Red Snow*, which lay like Blood on a spot of Ground" near Boston, "seem'd a second Edition of" the prodigious "*Bloody Shower* that went before the suffering of the ancient *Britains* from the Picts," "a sort of People that painted themselves like our *Indians*" ("Appendix"). In his report on the Pequot War in *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Mather referred to Gen. 36.24, the biblical narrative of Anah, who "found Mules in the Wilderness," which is translated by Mather as "Emim," meaning the "Giants" who inhabited "the *Horraean* Regions in the Neighbourhood" and "struck *Terror*" until "the Posterity of *Essau* vanquished them" (VII, 42).

Cotton Mather's claim that "this Digression [the story of Anah] serves only to excite my Reader's expectation of *Pequot Giants* to be found in our Wilderness" (VII, 42) creates the impression that Mather simply made use of a rhetorical device; but a few pages later he affirmed anew that also the New England settlers had to defeat giants: he compared the Native American enemies during King Philip's War to "*Serpents*, yea, or *Giants*, that formerly molested that Religious Plantation" (*Magnalia* VII, 56). Cotton Mather's father, Increase, had used a "digression" to link the story of Mary Dyer's monstrous birth and other prodigies with the war against the Native Americans in *A Brief History of the War with the Indians* (establishing a connection with ancient myths of victory and defeat taken out of the Old Testament narrative of Agag, see chapter 4.2), and Cotton Mather used the same stylistic device

³⁴² On the Picts and Britons as a paradigm of the perception of Native Americans, see Vaughan, "Early English" 50-56. On the conflict between European notions of civility and Native American culture, see Oberg 12, 19-20; Pagden, *Encounters*; Sheehan; Vaughan, "Early English"; Vaughan and Vaughan.

to create a connection between the armed conflicts with the Native Americans and the myths of origin of the English people.

Mather's reference to the Picts is worthy of more detailed exploration. One of the most famous early modern texts drawing a parallel between Native Americans and the Picts was the second edition (1590) of Thomas Hariot's *Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, first published in 1588. Added to the main part were copper prints depicting not only the native inhabitants of Virginia but "the Pictes which in the olde tyme dyd habite one part of the great Brittainne" (Hariot appendix), as shown in exemplary form below (see fig. 11).³⁴³



Fig. 11, "The trvve picture of one Pictel"—the first print in a row on the Picts, added to the main part of Thomas Hariot's *Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* [1590].

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On the first page of the appendix it is stated that the picture stems from an old "English chronicle" and that it was placed consciously there in order "to showe how that the Inhabitants of the great Britannie haue bin in times past as sauuage as those

³⁴³ Thomas Hariot was a member of the colony's advisory council and acted in service of Sir Walter Raleigh. Also Richard Hakluyt the Younger, another prominent supporter of the exploration of the Americas, was involved in the publication project. The copper print is one of twenty-eight prints added by the Flemish engraver Theodore de Bry, who published the work in 1590. The first group of prints is added under the title "The trve pictvres and fashions of the people in that parte of America novv called Virginia, discowred by Englishmen sent thither in the years of our Lorde 1585 . . ." The print above is taken from the section following this part, entitled "Som pictvre of the Pictes which in the olde tyme dyd habite one part of the great Brittainne." On the publication and the prints, see Campbell, *Wonder* 51-67; Oberg 8-12; Vaughan, "Early English" 51-53.

of Virginia”: the Picts were “sauuages” that “paint[ed]” their bodies (Hariot appendix). Both the illustration and the accompanying description of the Picts remind of famous exemplars of human prodigies such as the *Monster of Ravenna* (see chapter 3.1)—hybrid creatures that had their bodies covered with various symbols and frightened their beholders:

vppon the bellye sum feere full and monstreus face, spreedinge the beames verye fare
vppon the thighs. Vppon the tow knees som faces of lion, and vppon their legs as yt
hath been shelles of fish. Vppon their Shoulders griffones heads, and then they hath
serpents abowt their armes (Hariot appendix)

But behavior may be changed, and ferocious paintings removed, so there was a possibility to transform and convert these savages—as possibly the Virginian Natives. Christian writers had a teleological view of nature, which included the belief in a kind of scale of humanity. Everyone was assigned a place in God’s creation, the great chain of being, depending on the state of grace and degree of civilization. In medieval accounts of monstrous races, for example (see chapter 2.1), the various prodigies were arranged in such a way as “to show the hierarchical spectrum of those people to whom God offers grace”: the narrative often started with animals; then came humans with animal-like characteristics, such as lack of clothing; these were followed by humans with more and more elaborated societies and political organization, ranging from tyrannical and barbarous men to the ideal of the good ruler (Austin 28; cf. 26-33, 43, 48). Exotic peoples were held to have degenerated from an earlier state of grace, wherefore they were now situated at a “primitive” stage of development—a kind of pre-stage of Christian civilization. Due to the “one world” paradigm, or monogenetic theory of human origin (see Campbell, *Wonder* 286-310), all these exotic peoples were held to have had the same origin as Christians. Bodily difference could be regarded as difference within the same species: “as in individual races there are monstrous births, so in the whole race there

are monstrous races,” wrote Augustine (532; 16:8), who maintained that the monstrous races descended from “one man” (530; 16:8).³⁴⁴

In line with the so-called stage theory of human development, there dominated a “teleological progress narrative” (Bernau 116) that repeated itself with changing protagonists: the Romans subdued the Picts and ancient Britons, and the English subjected the Celtic peoples in the twelfth and the Britons in the sixteenth century (116). Germans, Picts, Scotsmen, Britons, and peoples like the Irish once had been similar to the Native Americans, so one was safe to assume that the Indians would also move towards civilization (Pagden, *Fall* 18-19; Sheehan 120-1). To early modern writers, the Native Americans were situated on an earlier stage of civilization but eventually could reach a higher stage—a process that was started with baptism, which was conceived of as “a *rite de passage*” (Pagden, *Fall* 19).

Also Cotton Mather seems to have been an adherent of the stage theory of human development—not only with regard to the Native Americans but also concerning the colonial Puritan settlers. This idea is reflected in the way Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana* is organized. Mather’s *Magnalia* restaged the process of civilization brought about by the heroes of the “First Fathers” of New England in a similar vein and presented the region as having already reached a high level of civilization. The work started with the Age of Discovery—the “Antiquities,” a term that suggested that these were ancient, long distant times; then followed a report on the lives of the founding generation—“the Governours,” “Magistrates,” and “Famous Divines” of New England; upon this was added an “Account of the University of *Cambridge in New-England*,” the first institution of higher education on the North American continent. An account of “Wonderful Providences” (VI, 3-9) served to illustrate that God’s guiding hand had accompanied all these communal endeavors.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ The belief in a second creation and in a second Adam was considered blasphemous, since God had created the world in its complete form in six days according to the Book of Genesis. The great diversity on earth was explained either by help of physiological theories or Scripture-based concepts. See Asúa and French 210-2; Berkhofer 36; Knoppers and Landes 4-5, 248n7; Needham 206-12; Oberg 79; Pagden, *Fall* 22-23; Stearns, *Science* 13-14; Stichweh 175-6; Vaughan, “Early English” 56-65; Wunderlich 33. For an early modern example, see Daniel Gookin’s “Historical Collections of the Indians in New England” (145-6).

³⁴⁵ The structure of the *Magnalia*, interpreted as an enactment of the rise to civilization, resembles the layout of the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 that was “organized along evolutionary lines,” restaging the way of white civilization to refined culture by exhibiting for example “exotic” peoples from all over the world (Rydell 65).

Mather's restaging of the advent of civilization in New England echoes Thomas Sprat's history of the Royal Society, published in 1667. To Sprat, there was not only "an agreement, between the growth of *Learning*, and of *Civil Government*" (29), but at the beginning of this process stood monstrous beings—among them giants—who needed to be overcome by heroic figures creating the basis for a lawful body politic:

At first in every Country, there prevail'd nothing, but Barbarism, and Rudeness: All places were terrible with *Gyants*, and enchantments, and insolent Usurpers: Against these there first arose some mighty *Heroes*, as *Hercules*, *Theseus*, and *Jason*: These scowr'd the World, redress'd injuries, destroy'd Monsters: and for this they were made *Demi-gods*. But then they gave over, and it was left to the great Men, who succeeded them, as *Solon*, and *Lycurgus*, to accomplish the Work, to found Common-wealths, to give Laws, to put Justice in its course (29)

Sprat thereby alluded to the legendary founding of Britain by the great-grandson of Aeneas, Brutus—the very same legend that Cotton Mather had referred to in his *Magnalia* in the context of Dyer's monstrous birth. A similar rationale seems to have guided the anonymous author of *New Englands First Fruits* (1643), published some twenty years before Sprat's *History*, who had stressed—like Mather—that the Native Americans had been successfully subdued. The tract reports on the first successes in Christianizing the "Indians" and the state of learning in the colony. The founding of Harvard is presented as the logical next step in a teleological narrative of civilization:

After God had carried us safe to New-England, and wee had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our lively-hood, rear'd convenient places for Gods worship, and settled the Civill Government: One of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance *Learning* and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the Dust. (*New Englands First Fruits* 12)

After victory over the Native Americans, the colonials had succeeded in vanquishing monsters such as those brought on stage by the Antinomians, Quakers, and other sects, and after these tasks had been fulfilled, the colonials went on to aspire after higher aims.³⁴⁶ As suggested in chapter 3.2, Weld had possibly authored *New Englands First Fruits* (in which also the two monstrous births possibly are alluded

³⁴⁶ Thomas Shepard stated similarly (albeit in a much less pathetic tone): "Thus the Lord having delivered the country from war with Indians and Familists . . . he was pleased to direct the hearts of the magistrates . . . to think of erecting a school or college" ("The Autobiography" 70). On the founding history of Harvard College, see chapter 3.3. See also chapter 4.4 on the beginnings of scientific activities in the British colonies.

to, see chapter 3.4)—a hypothesis that is strengthened by the strong similarities in style and content of this text and the opening passage of Weld’s preface to Winthrop’s *A Short Story* (1644), referring to the Antinomian Controversy (although this may just as well be an example of inter-textual references):

After we had escaped the cruell hands of persecuting Prelates, and the dangers at Sea, and had prettily well outgrown our wilderness troubles in our first plantings in *New-England*; And when our Common-wealth began to be founded, and our Churches sweetely settled in Peace . . . Lest we should now grow secure, our wise God . . . sent a new storme after us, which proved the sorest tryall that ever befell us since we left our Native soile.

The short “Postscript” that Weld had added to this preface informed the reader that two clans of Native Americans “have voluntarily submitted themselves to the will and law of our God.”

To conclude, in retelling the story of Mary Dyer’s headless child in his *Magnalia*, Mather referred to classical mythology and English myths of origins in order to position New England as a civilized region in transatlantic discourse. Mather used the story of the New England monstrous births to propagate his narrative of an advanced state of New England civilization, which also provided the justification for subduing the native population of New England who were presented similar to the legendary monstrous races. In doing so, Mather acted not so much as someone interested in medicine or theology but as a historiographer—as the biographer of a specific region at a specific period in history. Early historians were both novelists and history writers (see Glasenapp 11-12; 15), and this definition applies to Mather, as well. Mather resembled medieval historiographers who retrospectively changed the moment of origin, which lies in the past, to create “a meaningful narrative” (J. Cohen, *Giants* 32), wherefore historians can be described as “hybrids, monstrous combinations of past and present” (Bynum 36). Cotton Mather perfectly embodies this hybrid figure of the historian.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ Homi K. Bhabha also points out that narratives of national origins are characterized by hybridity. This “prodigious doubling” stems from the fact that “meanings may be partial because they are in medias res; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made” (“Introduction” 3; cf. Bynum 31). Bhabha’s “Janus-faced discourse of the nation” (3) calls to mind the metaphoric meaning of double births described in chapter 3.1 of this dissertation. The God Janus was the gatekeeper of the past and the future and closely related to Saturn, God of monsters (to which Wheelwright Jr. had compared Weld, see chapter 3.2). On Janus and Saturn, see Augustine 208; 7:3.

4.4 The rise of “patriotic science”: Cotton Mather on “Curiosa Americana”

“But our most fruitful Ocean and new world, engendreth & bringeth forth daily new birthes, whereby men of great wit, and especially suche as are studious of newe and marueylous thinges, may haue somewhat at hand wherewith to feed their mindes.”

-- Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, *The historie of the VVest Indies* ([1625?]), 119 --

For Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (also known as Peter Martyr), a member of Charles V's Council of the Indies, the New World provided an immense enlargement of intellectual nourishment. The strong effect of this newly discovered continent on the mindset of early moderns was also acknowledged by Cotton Mather, for whom “the opening of *America*” was one of the “most memorable things which have born a very great Aspect upon *Humane Affairs*,” being of equal importance to “the *Reformation of Religion*” (*Magnalia* I, 2). It may seem to contradict the chronological structure of this study to begin the last chapter of the main part with a reference to the Age of Exploration. But, as will be shown in this chapter, also Cotton Mather's reports on prodigies in the second decade of the eighteenth century seem to have fallen out of time. In order to understand the reasons why and how Mather referred a second time to Dyer's (though not Hutchinson's) failed pregnancy and why his English readers largely ignored his report it is necessary to delineate the role of the British colonies on the North American continent in the emerging scientific discourses of the period. In doing so, an answer will be given to the question Sievers has raised: why Cotton Mather, a third-generation colonist, “presented” Dyer's monstrous birth decades after its discovery “to the Royal Society as a fact of American natural history” (217).

The New World promised to open up a seemingly endless source of knowledge on flora and fauna, which felt like the rediscovery of paradise, once lost due to Eve tasting the forbidden fruit. Drawing upon the prophecy in Daniel 12.4 that there would be an increase of knowledge towards the end of time, many a Puritan eschatological thinker hoped that a close scrutiny of the abundance of natural specimens on the newly “discovered” continent would lead to a restored dominion of mankind over nature. Pioneers of New Science like Francis Bacon actively strove for knowledge in order to bring about this “Great Instauration” (Bacon 17). Following the path opened up by Bacon, scholars such as the English chemist and natural

philosopher Robert Boyle, an original member of the Royal Society, put their hopes on the colonies, whose riches promised to cause the augmentation of knowledge that was believed to precede the Second Coming of Christ.

That the exotic objects of overseas could be used for experiments and for verification of theories was highly valued at a time when first-hand knowledge based on experience came to be regarded as superior to knowledge derived from ancient wisdom. After all, one of the main reasons for “popular errors,” as Browne summarized it in a widely circulating text, was “adherence unto Antiquitie, Tradition, and Authoritie” (*Pseudodoxia* 22). Early “moderns,” measuring and cataloguing ever more specimens, claimed to have surpassed the achievements of the so-called ancients, the Greek and Roman classics. The authority of the scholastics declined—they were regarded as “*Schole-mens*” (Sprat 20) who relied too much on the works of Aristotle. Experience became a legitimating force, and no one could claim with more authority to possess first-hand experiences than the travelers to the New World and its early settlers. The seafaring adventurer John Smith had recognized this effect early on. Although he claimed to “honor, with all affection, the counsell and instructions of judicall directions, or any other honest advertisement” (I: 352), he prided himself in 1624 for having been “no Compiler by hearsay” but “a reall Actor” (*Complete Works* II: 41).

These intellectual implications are captured vividly in the first copper print in Thomas Hariot’s *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Frankfurt, 1590), functioning as a kind of frontispiece to the section added to the main part, containing “The Trve Pictvres and Fashions of the People in that Parte of America Now Called Virginia.” The print depicts Adam and Eve standing beneath the Tree of Knowledge, representing the promise of intellectual as well as material riches of the New World. Both the territories of the American continent and the depths of the Atlantic Ocean stored a wonderful variety of creatures waiting to be explored. This promise was not lost on Cotton Mather or travelers such as Richard Hakluyt, a dedicated promoter of the English colonization of North America; both Hakluyt and Mather cited the famous Biblical passage from the Book of Jonah (107.23-24): “They that go down to the Sea in Ships, these do see the Works of the Lord, and his Wonders in the Deep” (*Magnalia* VI, 3; cf. Hakluyt 2). There were not only “huge

fishes” to be found in the sea but many “other monsters of the water” were “shrined in the bottome and bellye of the Sea” (Boaistuau 47).

In this respect, the Atlantic Ocean and the territory that lay beyond resembled the female womb. Both the sea and the womb were difficult to penetrate with the eye,³⁴⁸ and both were producing marvels; and just as the New World came to be explored in the early modern period, so was the female body with its reproductive organs. Writers from Shakespeare to John Donne described newly discovered territories as female bodies and vice versa (Porteous 73-85; Tichi 4, 9, 12). This motif was became even more popular after the discovery of the spermatozoa by Anton van Leeuwenhoek in 1677: the embryo turned into a self-determined being, and the body of the pregnant mother turned into a territory conquered by male semen and the fetus, which was commonly depicted as a male. These little “Adventurers” (see Keller, “Embryonic” 228-30, 340-1)³⁴⁹ probably would have impressed Francis Bacon, who had announced in “The Plan of the Great Instauration” (the preface to his *New Organon*) that “I do not propose merely to survey these regions in my mind, like an augur taking auspices, but to enter them like a general who means to take possession” (18).

The core metaphor of the upcoming new epistemological system therefore was that of the seafaring discoverer who departed on adventurous expeditions to reach and explore unknown territories. Francis Bacon hoped that not only “the use of the mariner’s needle” but also “a more perfect use and application of the human mind and intellect” would make it possible that “the ocean could be traversed and the new world discovered” (13). Bacon regarded the development of the emerging scientific disciplines as “a coasting voyage along the shores of the arts and sciences received” (17-18).

After the colonials had taken possession of the coastal areas of the American continent, they began exploring the coasts of knowledge. While in the first decades of settlement the colonials had lacked the time and resources to engage themselves in natural philosophy, this began to change in the early eighteenth century. As described in the previous chapter, in works such as *New Englands First Fruits* (1643) it had been stressed that the colonials could devote themselves to educational matters and

³⁴⁸ On the womb as a “secret cabinet,” see chapter 3.3.

³⁴⁹ See also Fissell 188-91; Paster 175; Wertz and Wertz 16. On the notion of nature as passive object, see chapter 3.3.

intellectual activities only after having laid the basis for their surviving, for example by having subdued the Native Americans; they then institutionalized learning with the founding of schools and, most notably, Harvard College. The availability of exotic objects was one thing, but indispensable preconditions of the conduct of science were a stable form of social and political organization, functioning institutions, and enough leisure time and resources to dedicate oneself wholeheartedly to scientific enquiry. The development of science in the British colonies “was a *social* achievement” that needs to be understood as part of “the general cultural maturation of colonial society” (Stearns, *Science* 676), wherefore, as I. Bernard Cohen has pointed out, a study of scientific progress in the colonies “is more truly a part of the discipline of American social and intellectual history than of the history of science proper” (*Some* 5).

Even more important than the rise in leisure time and prosperity, claims Kilgour, was the “tremendous increase in scientific activity in seventeenth-century Europe” (138). The Royal Society’s Secretaries and Fellows kept a far-flung network of correspondence that covered also the British colonies in the Americas (see Shapiro 72-76; Stearns, “Colonial” 220-2). Their proximity to exotic peoples such as African slaves and Native Americans and hitherto unknown flora and fauna such as pineapples or the opossum gave New World explorers and settlers sufficient authority to participate in the learned discourses of the time (Parrish, *American*, esp. ch. 6 and 7; Mulford 80). Cotton Mather acknowledged for example that he was indebted to his African slave for information on smallpox inoculation (Beall, “Aristotle’s” 207-8).³⁵⁰ Mather and other colonials, for example William Byrd II of Virginia, William Penn of Pennsylvania, or John Winthrop Jr. of Connecticut, all Fellows of the Royal Society, willingly shared their knowledge on specimens of the New World with like-minded men in England and elsewhere. In exchange, the colonial amateur scientists received the latest news of what would now be termed the scientific community. New England colonials increasingly took part in the transatlantic exchange of knowledge and participated in learned correspondence.

That settlers of remote regions were willing to assist the Royal Society in the project of creating a large collection of specimens and scientific data to be classified and interpreted was highly welcomed by the Society, since anybody

³⁵⁰ On Mather’s foray into the field of medicine, see chapter 4.3.

willing to put their shoulders, under the burthen of so great an enterprise, as to represent to mankind, the whole Fabrick, the parts, the causes, the effects of Nature: ought to have their eyes in all parts, and to receive information from every quarter of the earth (Sprat 20)

The endeavour to create an overview of “the whole Fabrick . . . of Nature” did not diminish the importance of local regions but augmented it, since early explorers in search of regular laws valued knowledge about the smallest elements of the world (gained, for example, by help of the microscope) as much as theories on the build-up of the heavens above. Works focusing on local natural history, such as Robert Plot’s *Natural History of Oxford-Shire* (1677), served the greater aim of “building the structure of an universal history of nature,” as Henry Oldenburg, Secretary of the Royal Society from 1663 to 1677, maintained (XIII: 323). As Rivett put it, “knowledge produced locally in specific places throughout the Atlantic world gradually began to supersede—though not entirely displace—older scientific paradigms that sought first and foremost to establish universally intelligible laws” (9). The strong relevance of singular parts made the early modern period “an age of synecdoche” (Hillman and Mazzio xiv), the synecdoche being a rhetorical trope describing that “a part is understood by the whole, or the whole by a part; the general by the special, and contrarily” (30), explained John Smith in *The Mystery of Rhetorick Unveil’d* (1683).³⁵¹

Already in 1684 Increase Mather had formulated the aim to create a natural history of New England—if possible by “some Scholar that has been born in this Land, to do such a service for his Countrey” (*Essay* The Preface). As shown in chapter 4.2, Increase Mather had started with such a project, and he hoped that others “whom God has fitted” would go on with it after he had “set this Wheel a going” (*Essay* The Preface). One who took up the task was Increase Mather’s son, Cotton, who not only had been born “in this Land” but was the first in three generation of Mathers who had not known England from personal experience. As a prolific writer³⁵² well-versed in the classics and the writings of natural philosophers and corresponding with educated men of similar interests in England, Germany, France,

³⁵¹ With regard to monstrous births there was a similar development: natural philosophers focused more on more on individual, specific birth defects and body parts; see chapter 3.4.

³⁵² Estimations range from “some 388 separate titles” authored by Cotton Mather (Silverman 197; cf. 199) to “468 published works” (Beall, “Cotton” 367); cf. Jones xii.

Holland, the West Indies, and Scotland, Cotton Mather was a very valuable New World outpost for the Royal Society.

Mather's communications with the Fellows and Secretaries of the Royal Society are known as *Curiosa Americana*, a term Mather had introduced himself. The correspondence seems to have started with a request by Richard Waller, Secretary of the Society (with a short interruption) from 1687 to 1714 and a businessman with a strong interest in the emerging scientific disciplines. Over the years, Mather also corresponded with Dr. James Jurin, holding the position of Secretary in the 1720s, and Dr. John Woodward, the Royal Society's Provincial Secretary and an eminent geologist. Mather sent at least eighty-two letters in batches of four to a dozen letters between 1712 and 1724.³⁵³

In the "Curiosa," Mather usually described phenomena that he had observed or scrutinized himself or that he had learned about from friends and correspondents, for example in the context of the Boston Philosophical Society (see chapter 4.2). Other subjects were taken from his unpublished *Biblia Americana*, a six-volume collection of miscellaneous documents arranged in analogy to the Books of the Bible. Mather took pains to assure his readers of the authenticity of his stories on witchcraft and rare national phenomena, stressing that he had been an eye-witness or that he had received the information from one of his neighbors or a person of high social standing (as he had done in his report on Martha Goodwin, see chapter 4.3).

One prodigy that Mather had seen for himself and that he subsequently dealt with in one of his "Curiosa" letters is "A Monster born at *Boston*, in *New England*," delivered by a woman in Mather's "next Neighbourhood"; the two girls, who died soon after birth, "were so united, as to afford us a shocking spectacle," being grown together "from near ye top of their Breasts, to under their Bottom of their Bellies" ("Monster" 325).³⁵⁴ We know that Cotton Mather saw the girls as a first-hand witness due to an entry in the diary of Samuel Sewall, who had also made a note on Mather's ill-fated son (see the previous chapter). On 15 October 1713, Sewall noted that "a portentous Birth" had occurred "at the North-end in Prince street" and that "Dr. Cotton Mather [has] introduc'd me . . . to this rare and awfull Sight" (II: 729,

³⁵³ On Cotton Mather's correspondence with members of the Royal Society, see Beall, "Cotton" 360-72; Kittredge, "Communications" and "Further Notes"; Parrish, *American* 39-40; Silverman 199, 243-54; Stearns, *Science* 403-26. On Mather as a scientist, see Middlekauff 279-319.

³⁵⁴ The letter, dated August 1713, is part of the Second Series of *Curiosa*, collected since 1713 and sent to England in 1714 (see Kittredge, "Communications" 27, 30).

730). The example shows that information on monsters was passed on at Mather's time much the same way as in the 1630s (see chapter 1.2): apart from letter writing mainly through direct eye-witnessing and oral discourse. Sewall had closely examined the twins: "I measured across the perfect Union about the Hips and found it to hold about eight Inches." (II: 730). Both Sewall and Mather interpreted the twins as "portentous" (Sewall II: 729) and as an example of divine providence—"if it be done," Mather added, "with a due regard unto the Rules of modesty, & of charity; and with the Reservation, which our Saviour made upon the case of the man blind from nativity" ("Monster" 326).

In the range of topics dealt with the "Curiosa" resemble the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder, which offers an encyclopedic stock of knowledge on zoology, astronomy, meteorology, geography, and botany. Pliny covered—as Mather would do centuries later in his "Curiosa"—monstrous births, tritons, showers of wool, the reproduction of animals, and examples of marvelous bodily capacities such as exceptional sight. The largest part of Mather's letters dealt with natural phenomena and the human mind and body. In some letters Mather pondered on questions of generation in human beings, the animal world, or plants; for example, he wrote on two-headed snakes, or exceptional fertility.³⁵⁵ Everything that was "not *common*" ("Monster" 326) was worthy of mention in the "Curiosa."

That Mather entitled his letters on the wonders of the New World "Curiosa" reflects the spirit of his time. By then, scholarly curiosity had replaced wonder as the favored expression for phenomena apparently not fitting into the common course of nature. While *wonder* became increasingly connected with speechlessness, a passive attitude, and "incomplete understanding" (Campbell, *Wonder* 4), *curiosity* expressed an active "disposition toward inquiry" that suggested "subsequent acts of close and careful investigation" (Parrish, *American* 57; cf. 62).³⁵⁶ Such an approach suited better the values of an Age of Discovery that focused on the conquest of new territories, as captured by the motif of the seafaring discoverer. Curiosity and the urge to collect data were important preliminary steps toward science, and the "New World" provided a large, easily accessible stock of knowledge that allowed

³⁵⁵ This interest already is evident in the *Magnalia* (1702), see Book III, chapter XXIX, 162-5.

³⁵⁶ On the fundamental changes in the concept of wonder in the course of sixteenth through the early eighteenth centuries, see Campbell, *Wonder* 3-8; 76-78; Launay.

developing new categories and taxonomies that contributed to the diversification of scientific discourse.

Cotton Mather, however, proceeded not very systematically. Descriptions of natural objects were offered much the same way as tales of witchcraft—as entertaining curiosities. Things which seemed interesting to Mather ranged from elephants to snow, all of which he regarded as a “curiosity” and as “*Entertainments for the Curious*” (*Magnalia* 153; cf. C. Mather, *Christian Philosopher* 58, 90, 205). The bodily phenomena that could be observed when someone was afflicted by witchcraft were “Wonders” and “entertainments” (*Late Memorable Providences* 34, 37),³⁵⁷ and in his report of the witchcraft trials Mather announced that he will be “relating a few of those matchless Curiosities, with which the Witchcraft now upon us, has entertained us” (C. Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World: Being an Account* 57). All these episodes and objects offered enjoyment, which fed the longing for sensationalist news: “I do now likewise publish the History, While the thing is yet fresh and *New*” (*Late Memorable Providences* 40). This approach resembles the strategies of booksellers of the late seventeenth century who presented reports on witchcraft in Salem Village “as a Tast, of more that may follow in Gods Time,” promising that “the Curious will be Entertained with as rare an History as perhaps an Age has had.”³⁵⁸ In his preface to Winthrop’s *A Short Story* (1644), Thomas Weld had also pointed out the entertaining potential of his tale; he promised to present some of the Antinomians’ “opinions” as “a tast” and announced that “afterwards” not only a whole bundle of them were added but also “many new ones of Mistris *Hutchinsons*” [sic].

By pointing out the entertaining potential of his writings Cotton Mather may have hoped to gain a large readership. Mather’s method resembles that of Robert Groves, who had embedded the story of the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson in a hodgepodge of religious and political subjects in his *Gleanings: Or, A Collection of some Memorable passages* (1651), which was meant to offer as much entertainment as possible: “The variety of Objects doth delight the Eye, and the

³⁵⁷ Mather’s account of the afflictions of the Goodwin children, for example (see chapter 4.3 and below), resonates with admiration for the abilities of the human body. Mather seems to have been fascinated and even thrilled by the “variety” of the “tortures” caused by the forces of witchcraft that “increased continually” (C. Mather, *Late Memorable Providences* 4).

variety of Knowledge doth transport the Mind I have therefore indeavoured in this Book, to give thee abundance of Delight, in giving thee abundance of Variety.” (Epistle to the Reader). Mather’s nearness to exotic objects gave him an advantage, though. Unlike the soldier and adventurer Captain John Smith, for example, Mather needed not to travel to see exotic places; he was already living there. Mather advertised his collection of sea deliverance narratives by pointing out that he offered his readers the opportunity to learn about a new world without travelling there: he promised to “carry my Reader abroad upon the huge *Atlantic*, and without so much as the Danger of being *Sea-sick*” (*Magnalia* VI, 3). Mather conceived “of the reader as an armchair traveler” (Hebel, “Survival” 27).³⁵⁹ In this regard Mather resembles Samuel Clarke, who promised his readers in *A Mirrovr or Looking-Glasse* to profit more from reading his book than from taking part in exploration travels or looking through microscopes (see chapter 4.2).

Mather’s approach was miles apart from the ideal of the disinterested researcher devoted to finding truth. Already Sprat (see chapter 4.2) had criticized collecting curiosities merely out of “a little *curiosity* and *delight*” (387). The object of natural history as devised by Bacon was “not so much to delight with variety of matter or to help with present use of experiments, as to give light to the discovery of causes” (Bacon 24.) Mather nevertheless “apparently felt that he was proceeding as ‘scientifically’ here, as when he was observing what we would call natural phenomena” (Beall and Shyrock 39). And he was not the only one to do so. As Thomas points out, skeptics of witchcraft did not necessarily hold more progressive ideas about the natural sphere than those clinging to the belief in witches (*Religion* 570-1); and defenders of the belief in witchcraft, such as Joseph Glanvill, relied on the concept of scientific objectivity to further their cause, claiming to provide “full and plain Evidence, Concerning Witches and Apparitions” (title; cf. Benedict 56-

³⁵⁸ This announcement was made on the verso of the title page of Deodat Lawson’s *A Brief and True Narrative of Some Remarkable Passages Relating to Sundry Persons Afflicted by Witchcraft, at Salem Village*; for the full text, see McCarl 39.

³⁵⁹ As Hebel points out, Mather’s endeavors to provide entertainment “prepare the readers for the literary features of more individualized narratives” (Hebel, “Survival” 27). The products of printing started becoming more varied as of the second half of the seventeenth century: plays, novels, and romances gained in prominence and led to a diversification of printed material, and there appeared more and more works focusing on individual experience and heroic deeds and adventures, as in captivity narratives or accounts of violent conflicts with Native Americans (R. Brown; Hebel, “Survival” 26-29; Reese).

57).³⁶⁰ Mather employed a similar strategy in his *Biblia Americana*: he tried to give biblical narratives scientific grounding by making “all the Learning in the World . . . subservient unto the *Illustration* of the *Scripture*” (C. Mather, *Diary* VII: 169-70); for example, he explained that the Leviathan mentioned in the book of Job was the Biblical equivalent of “the Crocodile” (“Biblia” ch. 41).

It is in this intellectual context that Mather commented a second time on the failed pregnancy of Mary Dyer. Contrary to Mather’s witchcraft tales, the story was not “fresh” or “new,” wherefore it is astounding that Mather provided his overseas correspondents with a report on this prodigy in one of his “Curiosa” letters. As suggested in chapter 4.2, already his father, Increase Mather, possibly had restrained from including the tale in his *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684) because it had not happened of “late.” Also in view of the strong focus of Mather and his contemporaries on personal experience and eye-witness accounts it is surprising that Mather reported on Mary Dyer’s monster, which he had not seen for himself.

Mather mentioned Dyer’s stillborn child in the first package of thirteen “Curiosa” letters sent to London, in a letter addressed to John Woodward, dated 21 November 1712. The “Curiosa” letters once in a while include passages in Latin, but the letter to Woodward is the only one in the package that is entirely written in Latin. The following quotations thus are translations from the Latin original (which at times is added in brackets as additional information).³⁶¹ At the beginning of the letter, Mather offers a short discussion of the meaning of the term *monster*—for example, that it designated those beings not fitting the common order of things due to limbs strongly deviant from the ones of their ancestors (“Letters” 57). This viewpoint

³⁶⁰ Skeptics of witchcraft included materialists such as Thomas Hobbes, who regarded incorporeal substances as a contradiction in terms; they doubted the existence of powerful demons and regarded them instead as vane phantasms and idols (Thomas, *Religion* 570-83). On witchcraft skeptics see also Levack 275-317. As Kuhn rightly points out: “Out-of-date theories are not in principle unscientific because they have been discarded.” (2-3). So-called “myths can be produced by the same sorts of methods and held for the same sorts of reasons that now lead to scientific knowledge. If, on the other hand, they are to be called science, then science has included codes of belief quite incompatible with the ones we hold today” (Kuhn 2).

obviously was influenced by the Aristotelian dictum that “monstrosities come under the class of offspring which is unlike its parents” (Aristotle IV, IV, 770b), and it reflects Mather’s preoccupation with the necessity of obedience to and respect for one’s parents (see chapter 4.3). Probably referring to Marcus Tullius Cicero’s work on portents, *De divinatione*, Mather stated that of old the term *monster* was said to be derived from *monstrare*, meaning that it announced future events, or denoted things causing amazement (“Letters” 57-58). Also in a later letter on a monstrous calf Mather played on the Latin root of the term *monster*—the verb *monstrare* meaning “to demonstrate,” or “show”: “And so, the very Etymology of the Name, will Justify my Disposition, to *show* you what I met[?] withal, when a *monstrous Birth* occurs in my Neighbourhood.” (“Monstrous Calf” 364).³⁶²

In other “Curiosa” letters, Mather stressed not so much the monster’s ability to predict future events (as his father had done in *A Brief History of the War*, see chapter 4.2) but that it allowed for a deeper understanding of the ways nature went on its course: an “attentive consideration of these curiosities, might very much assisst [sic] our Enquiries into that obscene work of Nature, Generation” (“Monstrous Calf” 363). But, Mather added, the “Reasonable Philosopher” should be cautious with the notion “that *monsters* carry lessons in them” since monsters often were the product of fraud, and they are “no where more frequent than in the solitude of *Africa*, where there are few people capable of receiving Admonition from them” (“Monstrous Calf” 363-4). Mather therefore “acknowledge[d]” that “there ought to be much Accuracy in the Observation of *Prodigies*,” and “that those things ought not always to be accounted *Prodigies* which are *Extraordinaries*” (C. Mather, “Appendix” sig. D verso). “And yet, *monsters* may no doubt be . . . attended with such circumstances, that they who more nearly concerned may do well, to be sensible of a voice from Heaven therein unto them.” (C. Mather, “Monstrous Calf” 364).

The story of Dyer’s stillborn child is not only part of the first package of “Curiosa” letters that Mather had sent to England but it is the first of five New

³⁶¹ I wish to thank M. Wandtner † for her help in translating the text. The letter can be consulted at the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) in Boston. It is easily accessible via Frederick Lewis Gay’s transcript of 1916 (also at the MHS), from which all quotations in this chapter are taken. The transcript has the disadvantage that it may include falsely transcribed passages; but since the original letter is in parts difficult to decipher and thus also poses the danger of misreading, I have resorted to the transcript. On Frederick Lewis Gay (1856–1916), a trained medicine and passionate collector of Americana, see “Frederick Lewis Gay.” On the letter itself, see Sievers 229-30; Winship, *Seers of God* 98, 133.

England monstrous births included in the letter itself. Mather announced that he was about to give a truthful account of “some monsters that have occurred among the New Englanders” (“De *Monstris* aliquot inter *Nov-Anglos*”) (“Letters” 58). He then referred to Mary Dyer as “the wife of Gulielmus Tincto”—the Latinized version of William Dyer. As he had done in the *Magnalia* (see chapter 4.3), Cotton Mather created distance to what he wrote by referring to the opinion of others, stating that it had been historians of New England (which probably included the authors of *A Short Story*) who had noted that Dyer’s mind much as her body had nourished “monstra” and that Dyer was a woman stained with monstrous and heretical opinions who delivered an unnatural, monstrous child (“Letters” 58).

Mather referred to Dyer’s stillborn daughter as “Monstrum horrendum” (as he had done before in the *Magnalia*, see the previous chapter) and “Animalculum” (“Letters” 59), a wording that shows influence of his interest in findings made with the help of microscopes.³⁶³ The description of the monster was more or less taken from Winthrop’s earlier report (see chapter 2.1) as given in his journal (safe that it had been translated into Latin): the monster lacked a head; it had its “face upon its breast,” the ears resembled those of apes and were growing on the shoulders, the nose hooked upward, the buttocks were on the wrong side of the body, it had claws on the feet, mouth-like openings on the back part, and four horns above the eyes (59-60). “In short,” Mather concluded, “nothing could be more monstrous than this monster” (“Nihil denique hoc *Monstro* magis *Monstrum* esse potuit.”) (“Letters” 60). Regarding the circumstances of its birth, Mather did not forget to mention that the infant had been stillborn, that at the moment of delivery “the bed and the whole room of the mother shook,” and that the child was buried silently (59).

While Hawkins was described in the *Magnalia* as someone being suspected of witchcraft (see chapter 4.3), in the “Curiosa” letter Mather chose to present her as a kind of fortune-teller, as “*Saga Vetula*”: it were Hawkins’s misdeeds, or harmful magic (“*cujus Maleficio*”), and, “as it was believed,” her “sorceries” that caused the women who had attended the birthing scene to vomit or to fall asleep and their

³⁶² On the etymology of the term *monster*, see chapter 1.1.

³⁶³ Cotton Mather possessed one of the first microscopes of the colonies (Warner 289n35), and he was clearly influenced by Anton van Leeuwenhoek’s “animalcula” (see above). With the help of animalcula, Mather claimed, it can be explained “how Diseases are Convey’d from distant Countreys or Climates” (44); also the smallpox “may be more of an *Animalculated Business*, than we have been generally aware of” (*Angel of Bethesda* 94).

children to be afflicted with convulsions (“Letters” 58). Mather may have distanced himself somewhat from the belief in witchcraft (which came to be ever more criticized) without giving it up completely (cf. Winship, *Seers of God* 98, 133). Mather also summarized how the public learned about the event, pointing out that a few days after the burial “garrulous women whispered something about this monstrous thing,”³⁶⁴ whereby “this rumor” reached the magistrate, who ordered the corpse to be exhumed, which was witnessed by about “a thousand persons” (“Letters” 59).

Then followed a description of the deformed infant born to the wife of Joseph Wright in 1670, which is almost identical to the one provided by his father, Increase Mather, in *A Brief History of the War* (see chapter 4.2), save that it was translated entirely into Latin (including the name of the child’s father, “*Josephi Fabri*”) and that the geographical location—New England—was added (“Letters” 60). The following quotation is taken from Increase Mather’s *A Brief History of the War*, authored in English:

The head, neck and arms in true form and shape of a child, but it had no breast bone nor any back bone; the belly was of an extraordinary bigness, both the sides and back being like a belly, the thighs were very small without any thigh bones; It had no buttocks, the *Membrum Virile* [penis] was a meer bone; it had no passage for nature in any part below; the feet turned directly outward, the heels turned up, and like a bone, It being opened, there were found two great lumps of flesh on the sides of the seeming belly; the bowels did lie on the upper part of the breast by the Vitals. (35)

Like Mather’s son (see chapter 4.3), the child lacked a “passage for nature in any part below,” but Mather did not bring in his own personal experience at this occasion—maybe because this was a too personal matter for him to include in the “*Curiosa*” letters.

The third monstrous child mentioned in the letter was born in Hartford in New England to the wife of “*Samuelis Debellij*.” It had seven fingers on its right hand and six on the left, six toes on each leg, and an uncommonly large stomach; it lacked eyes, a tongue, a neck, and a ureter (“Letters” 60). The fourth example was the child of William Plaisted. The report was taken from the letter Joshua Moodey had sent to Increase Mather in 1683 (see chapter 4.2), and also in this case Cotton Mather simply had translated the passage into Latin, sticking closely to the original

³⁶⁴ In the original: “At paucis [paucis] postea diebus, nescio quid de Re Monstrosa Garrulae inter se

version. Since the passage illustrates in an impressive way that those providing reports on monstrous births took care to provide as much information as possible (see also chapter 2.1), also this passage (for convenience taken from Moodey's letter) deserves to be quoted at length:

From the waste downward it was like another child & a female.
Above the waste all defective or misplaced.
The Head extraordinary large & no skull or Bone in it.
The face as big as a womans face.
It had no right Arm, but somewhat like a Teat, some say like a
finger where the Arm should have come out.
The left Arm extraordinary long, the hand reching [sic] down to the knee.
No Nose, but somewhat like nosethrills [sic], & those in the forehead.
The two eies [sic] upon the two cheeks.
No mouth, but a little Hole & (if I mistake not) misplaced also.
The eares, one under the chin, the other at the top or near the top of the
head.
A very short neck.
Somwhat [sic] on the Breast like a Kidney.
The Belly seemed as if it had been ript open, & the Bowells were out, &
eithr [sic] by one side, or on the Back.
It came before its Time. Had life when born, but soon died.
The persone had been 4. or 5. yeares married, & this was the first child.

(Moodey 362)

Again, the name of the father was Latinized and "New Englander" was added ("Nov-Anglorum *Gulielmi Plaistedi*") (C. Mather, "Letters" 61).

The fifth and last story told of a "certain woman of Dedham" who "recently had a child after a very difficult birth with two heads" (C. Mather, "Letters" 61). As with the narrative of Dyer's stillborn daughter in the *Magnalia*, Mather included a reference to an ancient Roman writer, this time the grammarian Priscian: "But this children (as I may formulate it with permission from Priscian) died immediately after being born." ("Letters" 61). Obviously Mather consciously made a grammar mistake in order to stress that it was hard to tell whether two persons were involved or just one: in the original text the subject ("infantes") is plural, the predicate ("expiravit") singular.

Cotton Mather then turned to "Molas," which he considered a separate class of monsters ("Letters" 61). Mather began with a general statement that natural philosophers have sometimes been amazed at how long moles stayed in the womb of

Mulieres Mussitarunt."

pregnant women. In the following passages, Mather gives several examples from diverse sources, and with each example the period the mole was said to have been carried in the female body rises: from five years to fifteen, seventeen, and more than twenty years, and finally until the end of the life of the woman—a possibility that had already been suggested in Guillemeau’s midwifery treatise of 1612, where it was stated that moles stayed in the womb “sometimes as long as the woman lives” (*Child-birth* 13). As the climax of this enumeration Mather announced “a little story of New England surpassing all these” (“Letters” 62)—not that of Anne Hutchinson’s mole but of a “certain gentlewoman” who “exchanged at the age of 80 life with death, after having gestated in her womb 35 years a mole” (62-63). Mather then gave a detailed account of what was found in her womb when the corpse was opened, including information on the matter of which the mole consisted and where it was situated (“Letters” 63-64). The attendants carefully examined the mole, just as Clarke had proceeded with Anne Hutchinson’s mole (see chapter 2.2).

Already Cotton Mather’s father, Increase, had missed a similar good occasion to refer to Hutchinson’s mole in *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684). As summarized in chapter 4.2, he reported on two women who had endured exceptional long pregnancies; during dissection it was found that one child had “turned into a Stone” (308). Other writers were more prone to comment on moles than the two Mathers. The author of a newssheet published in London in 1642 even grouped “a child without a head” into the category of moles, calling it “a Monster, *Rudes indegestaque* [rudis indigestaque] *moles*” (Locke, *Strange* sig. A3v)—a “rude and undigested mass.” So while some even established a connection between a headless child and a mole, both Increase and Cotton Mather did not see, or did not want to see, that the deformities they mentioned in their writings bore resemblance to Hutchinson’s miscarriage.

Mary Dyer’s monstrous birth as an “American” curiosity

One possible explanation why neither Increase nor Cotton Mather mentioned Anne Hutchinson’s mole is that they had been less familiar with early modern medical discourse than with the metaphoric aspects of monstrous births. As shown in chapter 2.2, the theories on moles were not easy to grasp, and as mentioned in the previous

chapter, Cotton Mather had a penchant for metaphors playing on medical terms in religious writings. Mather often resorted to a playful tone, mixed puns with learned discussions, and added courteous salutations; for example, he finished his report on “A Monstrous Calf” so that his “letter may not for its *Bigness* grow into that which has been the *Subject* of it” (366). Also in the letter on the two conjoined girls he hoped that “my Epistle may not grow in a *monstrous* Digression” (“Monster” 326). In his letter on Dyer’s stillborn child Mather made a similar remark: “But the hand away from the tablet. Where there is nothing to observe but monsters, one should not take out the tablet for too long.” (C. Mather “Letters” 64). Mather, who regarded himself as a member of the *virtuosi*—the “gentleman-amateur practitioners of natural philosophy” (Pender, “Bodyshop” 101)—obviously tried to adapt his style to the learned circles of the London metropolis. Since most of the members of the Royal Society had not been professional scientists at the time, Mather could consider himself as part of a learned elite sharing an interest in the scientific debates of the time. As Round put it, colonials like Mather made use of the “public gestures of civil conversation,” “a linguistic regime” that emerged in early modern England and that was characterized by its “mobilization and modification of aristocratic courtesy discourse for the purpose of establishing a ‘gentlemanly’ and trustworthy ethos” (xi; cf. 15).

The various puns and quotations that Mather included in his writings were probably intended to transport the message that his level of education and knowledge allowed him to deal with ease with scientific topics. It is also telling that Mather wrote his letter on New England examples of monstrous births in Latin, the language of the learned. The sophistication he so meticulously displays betrays an awareness that he was writing from a provincial outpost to cosmopolitan inhabitants of the capital of learning—London. Boston was the capital of a peripheral colony, while London was the striving center of a powerful commonwealth. For Canup, Cotton Mather therefore is the prime example of the difficult identity finding process of the New World settlers: the first, second, and third generation of New England Puritans still felt a strong connection to England, but at the same time there was growing awareness of both an “American” self-understanding and provincial inferiority (*Wilderness* 6; 198-235; cf. Parrish, *American*).

Not only the style of his writing but also his choice of topics shows that Cotton Mather sought for a topic with which he could impress his correspondents in England. At the beginning of a letter reporting on a “Monstrous Calf” (363-5), Cotton Mather explicitly referred to the Royal Society that “allow’d a particular class to the *Monsters*, whereof a Relation communicated now & then, has found a good reception” (363). Mather offered the stories of the monstrous births for Woodward’s stock of knowledge on this topic, so that they could be included in the “catalogue” (“catalogum”) put together by writers such as Fortunius Licetus (“Letters” 58). In *A Short Story* (see part III of this study), Winthrop had offered a “catalogue” of *theological* deformity: a “Catalogue of such erroneous Opinions as were found to have beene brought into *New-England*, and spread under-hand there” (1; cf. Weld, *ibidem*, The Preface). As has been shown in the previous chapter, Cotton Mather was less interested in theological issues; he hoped that his reports would be welcomed by a prestigious institution of learning. As Stearns points out, the “Curiosa” were a kind of application to join the common effort to the public good by contributing to the rise of knowledge on natural history; the hoped for end point was being admitted a member of the Royal Society (*Science* 406).

But although Mather’s use of Latin and his love of stylistic devices indicate that Mather was oriented towards the English virtuosi, his letters also betray a sense of pride of the peculiarity of New England. The use of Latin is addressed by Mather right at the beginning of the letter, where he states that the reader may wonder about the “American Latin of his pen” (“*Americanam calami Latinitatem*”) (“Letters” 57). Mather had used a similar expression in a publication on witchcraft, writing that he had “*briefly touch’t* every thing with an *American Pen*” (C. Mather, *Late Memorable Providences* sig. A2 verso). After a short digression, he continued in the “Curiosa” letter with a pun on the term “mother tongue” (“*Lingua Materna*”) and on the effects of maternal imagination when reading a text to an unborn child (“Letters” 57). Mather thereby established a connection between the mother tongue, identity, and maternal imagination. The concept of maternal imagination (see chapter 2.2) had a regional aspect, since it was the direct environment that affected the mother’s mental and bodily capacities; as a consequence, monstrous births that were caused by the effects of maternal imagination often were related to the peculiarities of the place where the mother dwelt. A good example is the “Monster born at *S. Laurence* in the

West-Indies” in 1573 (More, III, 227) that was claimed to have been caused by “some fright the Mother had taken from the antick dances of the *Indians*”; the newborn being displayed outward particularities that reminded of Native American clothing (228).³⁶⁵

The place where one lived and the language one spoke influenced one’s offspring, whereby a link was established between following generations living in this place. On the negative side, this brought along the risk of being affected by the wilderness of New England. As shown in chapter 2.1, Galenic medicine conceived of the human body as being influenced by external surroundings, and as shown in chapters 3.2 and 4.1 external observers had indeed associated New England with monstrosities. Anyone settling in the New World had to consider the possibility that the natural surroundings corrupted minds and bodies. And, what was worse, starting in the seventeenth century, it was argued “that an accidental variation or defect in one person might infect a whole race of men with abnormality” (Deutsch and Nussbaum 8; cf. 8-9). Slowly but surely there emerged the idea that bodily deviations could lead to whole different races, and theories on generation increasingly came to be influenced by pre-racial concepts and vice versa (Chaplin 235-6).³⁶⁶ While the monstrous body was more and more accepted in its extreme singularity and individuality, there occurred at the same time a communalization of difference that ultimately resulted in the concept of race. On the positive side, these theories fostered the emergence of a strong sense of belonging, since all settlers were subjected to the same environment, which, in the long run, would distinguish them from groups of people living in other parts of the world.

Mather’s letter on Dyer’s monster illustrates well this ambivalent stance. “Not only Africa,” Mather claimed, “but also America has, in fact, brought about her monsters, and even New England itself is not at all empty of monsters” (“Letters” 58).³⁶⁷ The idea that America was a region producing at least as many monsters as Africa had already turned up in the *Magnalia* (1702), where Mather described how

³⁶⁵ It had not only a horribly deformed face and “two horns on the head” but there was “a fleshy girdle about his middle, double, from whence hung a piece of flesh like a purse, and a bell of flesh in his left hand, like those the *Indians* use when they dance” (More, III, 228). The same prodigy is mentioned in William Turner’s *A Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences* (see chapter 4.2).

³⁶⁶ On the development of racist thinking in North America, see Bailey; Braude 142; K. Brown, “Native”; Cassuto; Dain; Vaughan, *Roots* 16-18. On the concept of race, see Todorov 370-2.

Antinomian viewpoints had spread across New England: “From the Womb of this fruitful *Opinion* . . . ‘tis not easie to relate, how many *Monsters*, worse than *African*, arose in these Regions of *America*” (III, 87). Heresies were paralleled with monsters, and Mather seems to have been thrilled by this phenomenon, as he had been by the effects of witchcraft and demonic possessions on human bodies (see chapter 4.3). The passage almost conveys a sense of pride that so many monstrous religious opinions were to be found in New England. While Thomas Edwards had claimed in his *Antapologia* (1644) that “daily the Independent Churches like Africa doe breed and bring forth the Monsters of Anabaptisme, Antinomianisme, Familisme” (262; see chapter 3.2), Cotton Mather used the two monstrous births in a positive sense. He turned Groome’s polemical critique in the wake of the debates on Quakerism that New England was full of monsters (see chapter 4.1) into a marker of distinction.

Mather explicitly paralleled the American continent with those regions in Africa where monstrous races were said to abound.³⁶⁸ Maybe Mather was driven by the wish to present New England in parallel lines to England. In the course of the Age of Discovery, monstrous races had moved to the center of Western civilization by being transformed into monstrous births (Brammall 10-11).³⁶⁹ While Geoffrey Goodman had claimed in 1616 that “Monsters are rare, and seldom appeare to vs, though Affrica be a fruitfull mother of monsters” (23), John Spencer declared in 1663 “that *England* is grown *Africa*, and presents us every year . . . with a new Scene of Monstrous and strange sights” (*Prodigies* sig. B verso; cf. *Prophecies* 44; 98), referring to the flood of pamphlets on prodigies after the Restoration (see chapter 4.2).

The abundance of monstrous beings could be interpreted either as a sign of degeneration or as a necessary stage in a teleological narrative of civilization (see chapter 4.3). Regarding the first aspect, a text authored by John Bulwer, a London physician, serves as a good example. Bulwer argued in his *A View of the People of the*

³⁶⁷ In the original: “Non tantum Africa, sed et ipsa America quidem sua Monstra protulit aetque [ipsa] Nov-Anglia non Monstris prorsus Vacua.” See very similarly in a text published in 1690: “New-England also seems to have had its Prodiges” [sic] (C. Mather, “Appendix” sig. D2).

³⁶⁸ According to Aristotle, the proverb saying that some regions in Africa were bringing forth ever new species could be explained by scarcity of water, wherefore the animals met at the rare springs, where animals of different species united (II, VII, 746b).

³⁶⁹ On this “new geographical distribution of wonders” (Daston and Park 175), see also chapter 2.1.

Whole World (1658)³⁷⁰ that it was culture and not nature that carried the potential for monstrosity. The large tract, produced during the period of the Civil War and the Interregnum, presented England as having degenerated since its inhabitants were corrupted by an over-excessive love of fashion. Like the Elizabethan Puritan Philip Stubbes in his *Anatomie of Abuses* (1584) (and as Cotton Mather would do later, see chapter 4.3), Bulwer condemned the practice of artificially altering the human body by face-painting and other vices and maintained that culture was not to be found in England but in exotic, far-away territories, such as Africa and America. Civilization seemed to follow a cyclical pattern: England had become over-civilized, so that its civilization was on the decline. But degeneration only was possible for regions that already had reached a certain level of civilization, and, as shown in the previous chapter, tales of heroic fights against monstrous sins other enemies provided a communal experience and a potential source of a common identity.

Paradoxically, by stressing that New England was a region at the fringes of the world, full of monsters and thus capable of providing exotic and strange specimens, Mather sought to move this peripheral region to the center of Western civilization. A comparison to Africa served to argue for an advanced state of civilization—monstrosity brought civilization. Much as monstrosity had moved from exotic regions in the South and Far East (today's Ethiopia and India) to England, knowledge (and thus civilization) had moved westward, as the concept of the *translatio studii et imperii* postulated. While Weld and Winthrop had done their best to present the monstrous outflow of Hutchinson and Dyer as being *not* typical of New England (see chapter 3.3), Mather presented them as being peculiar to and characteristic of this region (cf. Sievers 230).

Mather was not the only one to embrace prodigious diversity for the purpose of stressing the advanced state of civilization of the place where he lived. Dr. Charles Smith, for example, an eighteenth-century Irish topographer, similarly used the aberrant to present his home region, Ireland, as civilized region. Smith had been involved in the founding of the *Physico-Historical Society* in Dublin in 1744. The institution was modelled after the Royal Society of London, and, like the members of

³⁷⁰ The work initially had been published under the title *Anthropometamorphosis* (1650); in 1653 and 1654 there appeared an expanded edition under the title *A View of the People of the Whole World, or, A Short Survey of their Policies, Dispositions, Naturall Deportments, Complexions, Ancient and Moderne Customes, Manners, Habits and Fashions*. On this work, see Burns, "King's" 187-8, 192-6; Campbell, *Wonder* 233-50; St. George 164-7.

the short-lived *Boston Philosophical Society* (see chapter 4.2), Smith had in mind producing a survey of his home land. In the 1740s and 1750s, Smith published the “Natural, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Historical, and Topographical” surveys of Down, Waterford, Cork, and Kerry with the aim to counterbalance imperial texts like Edmund Spencer’s *View of the State of Ireland* (1596) that presented Ireland as “uncivilized, rude and barbarous” (*Down* vi). Stating that he used the “Method of Enquiry” propagated by Robert Boyle (see *General Heads*, 1692) and Robert Plot, Smith started his survey with an “Account of Plants, Birds, Fishes, and other natural Rarities in this County” and ended “with Observations on Men and Women, as to their extreme Age, unusual Accidents at their Birth, and uncommon Sizes in Defect or Increase.” As an annex he added “an Account of Men eminent for their useful Inventions, Learning or Promotions” (C. Smith, *Down* 251)—men who were to be admired for their heroic achievements that served the good of the place where they were living. Smith’s *The Antient and Present State of the County of Down* (1744) told of remarkable figures and monster who were not destroying the body politic but rather helped creating a form of collective identity that functioned as a precursor of a “national identity,” as Reed points out (172):

“What the national heroes and national monsters have in common is that their representation here contributes a sense of uniqueness, or of particularity, to the nation; they allow the nation to claim an identity completely separate from that of other nations, and this uniqueness is itself a source of pride.” (Reed 172).

Individual heroes “collectively merge into a national body that has *its* own particularity.” (Reed 172). Mather’s aim similarly was to create a founding myth not only of New England but “America.”

The “Curiosa” followed a political rather than a scientific aim, but science played an important role in reaching this aim. Similarly, Sievers—answering the question why a third-generation Puritan offered Dyer’s monster tale to the Royal Society “as a fact of American natural history” decades after its discovery (217)—argues that one reason was that “New Englanders” tried “to position America within the English empire of knowledge and possessions” (218). Much as the bottom of the sea had stored a wonderful variety for Christian natural philosophers, so the New England earth offered prodigious objects to marvel at—no matter whether it were heterodox viewpoints, rare animals, or cases of witchcraft. Cotton Mather advertised

for example his report on “the character and Condition” of “that people” that lived “at a Thousand League distance” from England by pointing out that “The Reports of *Travellers* . . . of late entertain mankind with no little *Novelty* and *Variety*, and have something *Extraordinary* perhaps lying at the Bottom of them.” (“Right Honourable” 205).

Apart from reference to distant regions full of monsters such as Africa, Mather referred in the “Curiosa” to the distant past, as he had done in the *Magnalia*. In a letter to Woodward dated 17 November 1712, Mather sent a description of a gigantic prehistoric tooth, presumably human, that was found near Claverack, New York, in 1705.³⁷¹ Referring to Genesis 6.4, Mather discussed the existence of giants in prehistoric time whose remains lay hidden in the depths of the earth since the Flood. That the tooth had been “found in *America*” rendered the discovery “curious and marvelous”: “For, I beseech you, How did the *Giant* find the way hither?” (“Woodward” 764).³⁷² Mather gave himself the answer by referring to the English medieval chronicler Ralph de Coggeshall who had told of two enormous teeth of giants that were found on the sea-shore at the time of King Richard. For Mather, there could be only one conclusion: “But *America* too, will come in, to shelter the Reputation of these Historians. They may *Shield* themselves with the *Teeth* Lately dug up, at Albany.” (“Woodward” 766). As he had done in earlier writings (see chapter 4.3), Mather linked the history of the American continent (and in particular New England) with the history of England and the latter’s legends on giants. Mather tried both to present New England as strongly resembling England and as being totally different from it—and narratives of monsters and prodigious findings served well this purpose.

It was as if Mather wished to prove in line with the theory of pre-existence (see chapter 2.2)³⁷³ that much as the parts of any organism existed since the moment

³⁷¹ On the “giant” of Claverack, see Beall, “Cotton” 367; Semonin, *American* 15-40; Stephens 2-3. Already in 1705, soon after the bones had been found, Governor Edward Hyde of New York had sent a letter and “the tooth of a Giant” to the Royal Society. The excavation had also been covered in the *Boston News-Letter* in July 1705 (Levin, “Giants” 755). On Mather’s letter to Woodward and the latter’s scientific interests, see Semonin, *American* 42, 55-61. See also Sievers 275-86 on Cotton Mather’s communications on fossils.

³⁷² That the curiosity had been found in New York was not decisive for Mather: at least it was “an American plantation” and one “adjoining to New England” (“Letter” 764).

³⁷³ That Mather had been familiar with various theories on embryology is evident from his writings of the 1720s, in which he referred to the theory of pre-existence (C. Mather, *Angel of Bethesda* 30-31; *Christian* 144-6).

of creation of the world, so the giants in New England's grounds had lain there since the beginning of time, waiting to return to daylight when the time was ripe. The theory of pre-existence held that the fetus had existed as a miniature being even before fecundation, its form being already pre-delineated (Todd 109-10). The process of evolvement of these miniature beings, as observed with microscopes, was explained with the help of the so-called stamina, a "*Spirit*" that activated the seed that was stored in the body and that was "*shaping the Bones, and other Parts, in the Womb of her that is with Child*" (Mather, *Angel of Bethesda* 31).³⁷⁴ The concept had a strong mechanistic component that both frightened and fascinated Mather. In the course of the seventeenth century, the drive towards mechanization triggered by Descartes and Boyle (see chapter 4.2) had seized embryology, and mechanistic models of generation gained in prominence. Embryos became little engines, reproduction a mechanical process.³⁷⁵ Also Mather maintained that findings made with the help of "our *Microscopes*" suggested "[t]hat our *Bodies* are Originally folded up, in inconceivably minute *Corpusculicuncules*; and that *Generation* is nothing but the *Evolution* of the *Stamina* so involved" (*Angel of Bethesda* 30). Even the existence of giants could be explained with the help of this theory: there may be some, Mather conjectured, "whose Original *Stamina*, may be much larger than others, and capable of being Drawn forth, to the most *Gigantic Dimensions*" ("Woodward" 769).³⁷⁶

The theory of pre-existence and the concept of the stamina gave Cotton Mather a certain justification to argue that New England's way to civilization was a

³⁷⁴ The stamina belonged to "the first principles" that worked in "every human body, long before it becomes the body of the human being" (J. Edwards, *Miscellanies* 416, Entry 769). In one of his "Curiosa" letters, Mather described the unfolding of the stamina in the seeds of plants ("Monstrous Imprignations" 367). In the same letter, he mentioned the "plastic Power" (369, or the "Plastick Spirit") that permeated the whole universe and through which "God Formeth all things" (C. Mather, *Warnings* 47; cf. Silverman 122). On the concept of "plastic nature" in early modern natural philosophy, see W. Hunter.

³⁷⁵ Sir Kenelm Digby, for example, sought to explain the development of the fetus with physiochemical processes in the first half of the seventeenth century (Fouke 367n5; cf. Bodemer "Embryological" 4-5). On Descartes and mechanism in theories on generation, see Fouke 365-71. On Mather's views on embryological development, see Bodemer, "Natural" 237. Since Mather was strongly influenced by the idea of the body as a machine directed by a soul, Jones suggests (referring also the concept of the nishmath-chajim, see chapter 4.3) categorizing him as an "iatromechanist" (xxii-xxiii; see xx-xxi). On iatrochemistry in Puritan New England, see Watson 97-121.

process that could not be stopped and that was even caused by divine will. It was God who had provided each body with the stamina and the blueprint for its development, so he had pre-determined all developmental processes.³⁷⁷ Mather did not only want to give biblical authority to scientific findings (as in the *Biblia*) but scientific proof to his thesis that New England was part of civilization—by referring to prodigies like monstrous births that characterized exotic places, and to giants, who formed a kind of missing link between England and America.

This objective could only be reached if Mather's arguments became widely noticed—that is, published—and the letter on the gigantic tooth illustrates this in exemplary form. According to Mather, Woodward had asked colonial correspondents to provide him “with such *Subterraneous Curiosities*, as may have been in these parts of *America* met withal,” and Mather was willing “to obey” these “Commands” (“Woodward” 757). Apart from this literal meaning of “subterraneous” there was also a metaphoric aspect to it. Mather wrote to Woodward that “you must Look upon all the *American Curiosities* which are sent you, as being in some sort *Subterraneous*,” regarding “the Inhabitants of *America*” similar to “[t]he *Things under the Earth*, which the Sacred Oracles tell us, are to *bow in the Name of our Glorious JESUS*” (“Woodward” 757; see Rev. 5.13) But Mather doubted this interpretation and suggested that the discoveries of the New World demand an alternative view: “But indeed one must be as ungeographical as the *Dayes of Lactantius*, to admitt the Interpretation; and therefore I shall endeavour a nearer Approach unto your satisfaction.” (“Woodward” 757-8; cf. Levin, “Giants” 753-4).

This “nearer Approach” meant pointing out the unbalanced publication activities of English printers. The material Cotton Mather was about to present was “fetch'd from an *Amassment of Treasures*, which I could wish, did not ly too like the *Subterraneous* ones” (758), wherefore he hoped that “they had the *Publication* which

³⁷⁶ The concept of the stamina helped explain in line with the “monogenetic theory of origin” (see chapter 4.3) that giants, too, belonged to the descendants of Adam, despite their strongly deviant outlook. Sinning could activate the stamina to grow enormously: “when the Carnalities of the world, were grown to a *Gigantic* Enormity, they should be [cha?]stized [sic] with a *Gigantic* posterity.” (C. Mather, “Letter” 769). On the connex between sinning and giant size, see also chapter 2.1.

³⁷⁷ This view is summarized succinctly by Jonathan Edwards, who also adhered to the theory of pre-existence (see chapter 2.2): “As all the future seed of Adam were in some respect in his loins, so all the future posterity of the woman are in the womb or ovary of Eve. . . . There is a seed of the woman to be afterwards impregnated in the immediate mother, if not in the first mother of mankind. And what number of these ova or seeds should be impregnated, is determined of God beforehand, and so every individual human being that should have existence from thence.” (*Miscellanies* 416, Entry 769).

they are waiting for, and that your presses would return to print something else besides your *Politicks*” (C. Mather, “Woodward” 759). Mather redefined the meaning of “Subterraneous” as (my words) “not yet published.” Referring to his massive work *Biblia Americana*, which had not yet found its way into print,³⁷⁸ Mather wrote (and by the way established a connection between his *American* biography and *European* beacons of learning and civilization):

There is an *American* Friend of yours, who tho’ he never travelled out of *America*, has had the Honour to be Related unto one of your *European* Universities; and has been desirous to oblige a Number of the best people in *Europe*, with a composure, which now arises to Two considerable Volumes in *Folio*, wearing the Title of, *BIBLIA AMERICANA*. (“Woodward” 759)

Cotton’s father, Increase Mather (see chapter 4.2), had similarly wished that “the *Natural History of New-England*” would be “published to the World” (*Essay* The Preface)—and if possible by the Royal Society. In the 1680s he explained that he would not have included the two examples of petrification in human bodies (both not of local New England origin) in his *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* “were it not mentioned in the *Philosophical transactions* . . . as a thing most undoubtedly true”; otherwise, he “should hardly give credit to a Story so stupendous and incredible” (*Essay* 309). If the story of a New England monstrous birth was included in the Royal Society’s *Philosophical Transactions*, it would be an honor, elevating its place of origin to one that deserved closer scrutiny. *Philosophical Transactions* was the leading scientific publication organ in the English-speaking world, wherefore it functioned as a source of legitimization.

In sum, the emancipation process from the mother country included the desideratum of being no longer dependent on the goodwill of European printers. As Mather’s line of argumentation in his letter on the giant tooth shows, New England (impersonated through the Mather family) wished to be heard and to have its works published. Cotton Mather hoped that his “Curiosa” letters and the *Biblia Americana* would be printed—in the *Transactions* and as a large tract, respectively. “Publish or

³⁷⁸ On Mather’s attempts to have the *Biblia* published, see Semonin, *American* 35. Edward Johnson’s *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England* had shared a similar fate: for about two years after its completion, Johnson (see chapter 3.2) could find no publisher for his work; and when it finally got printed, it was done anonymously, incomplete, and with a wrong title (Bercovitch, “Historiography” 268-9).

perish” refers nowadays to the individual researcher; in the early eighteenth century, Cotton Mather felt obliged to publish, so that his home region may flourish.

Cotton Mather was, however, only partly successful with his endeavors to have his work published. Mather was the second New England settler (after Governor John Winthrop Jr. of Connecticut) to be published in *Philosophical Transactions*: Mather’s and Zabdiel Boylston’s experiment of 1721/1722 with smallpox inoculation (see chapter 4.3) was fully reprinted. The “Curiosa Americana” usually were included in the minutes of the Society’s meetings, but only few of them were printed in *Transactions* (Stearns, *Science* 415). In the April-June edition of 1714, a summary (including commenting remarks) of his “Curiosa” appeared as “An Extract of Several Letters from Cotton Mather, D.D., to John Woodward, M.D. and Richard Waller.” Notably, at about the time his works were partly reprinted in the *Transactions*, Mather was officially admitted to the Royal Society.³⁷⁹

However, the Society’s members often were discontent with the topics or the quality of the reports Mather had sent. As to the “giant” unearthed near Albany, they expressed doubts whether the bones and teeth were of human origin, and they missed a detailed illustration in Mather’s report: “It were to be wish’d the Writer had given an exact Figure of these Teeth and Bones” (“Extract” 63; cf. Parrish, *American* 39-40; Stearns, *Science* 413-4). When Mather sent a drawing—“a lovely Icon” of a “Monstrous Calf” (366)—they regarded it as insufficient since it did not fit the textual description.³⁸⁰ The Society often found that Mather’s reports were not relevant for “Natural Philosophy” (“Extract” 67, referring to Mather’s relation of the discovery of a murder in a dream), did not contain enough “of Philosophical Information” (65, referring to a letter on cures of wounds), or reported on phenomena where the persons involved did not show “any Regularity, or Method, in their manner of Diet, Exercise, or the like” (“Extract” 71, referring to cases of exceptional fertility and longevity). Regarding Mather’s reports on the sighting of tritons or mermen on the coast of New

³⁷⁹ Already in October 1713, it had become known that it was planned to make Cotton Mather a Fellow of the prestigious Society, but his name was included in the Society’s official list of members only as of 11 April 1723. On Mather and the Royal Society, see Kittredge, “Election” and “Further Notes”; Parrish, *American* 125-6; Silverman 222-6, 254, 260; Stearns, “Colonial” 209-18 and *Science* 407-8. Jones doubts that Mather had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (323n2).

³⁸⁰ See Stearns, *Science* 415, who gives 1717 as date; according to Kittredge (“Communications” 37), the letter “A Monstrous Calf” is part of the Third Series of the Curiosa, sent to Woodward in July 1716, dealing with a calf with a supposedly human face and including an “icon” of it that is lost now. Also the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) gives 1716 as date, see microfilm P-207 (5) (Cotton Mather. Miscellaneous Documents), 0196.

England, the Society commented that the witnesses may have only thought to have seen tritons, when what they had actually seen was a large seal: the great distance may have deceived their senses (Stearns, *Science* 415).

Not only Mather's reports on monstrous calves and tritons but also those on monstrous births were not much appreciated by the Society. In a letter to John Woodward, dated 20 November 1712, Mather had enclosed a letter from the minister Zechariah Walker, whose daughter-in-law was said to have left a physical mark upon the head of her child since she had longed for peas during her pregnancy. On this reputed example of the force of maternal imagination the Society's Secretary Richard Waller commented in 1713 that such observations more likely proceeded from the imagination of the witnesses than of the mother (Stearns, *Science* 413-14, 414n51; cf. Parrish, *American* 40). The short, anonymously authored summary in *Transactions* of Mather's letter on "Antipathies and the Force of Imagination" (64), giving the example "of a Woman longing for Peas," was not further commented upon ("Extract" 65). Mather's letter on the New England monstrous births, including that of Mary Dyer, made it into *Transactions*, too, but the entry is by way the shortest of all, being only one and half lines long; and the comment of the compiler was even more sobering: "The fifth Letter gives an account of some *monstrous Births*, but nothing very observable." ("Extract" 65). In short, Mather's reports were mostly regarded as not relevant, not reliable, not up to date, or not detailed enough, and the findings described were not considered being transferrable from singular experience to universally valid conclusions.

That Cotton Mather's theories on monstrous births were met with skepticism was symptomatic of the transitional period of which Mather had been a part of. Although learned tracts on monstrosities continued to refer to legendary cases of monstrous births and although the editors of *Philosophical Transactions* continued to print stories of longevity, aged women who still had their menses, or "a monstrous double birth" up to the 1720s (1723, 346-7), a transformation process was well under way. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, speculative philosophy—which sought explanations without systematic experimentation and observation—was on the decline. Experimental natural philosophy came to be the preferred mode of scientific practice. The eighteenth century has been termed "période positive," since

by then mainly “real” monsters were anatomized, and their legendary qualities were rejected by scientifically minded people (Fischer, *Genèse* 1).

Even if Mather had included a report on his most direct experience with a birth defect—that of his son—it probably would have either been met with resistance or largely ignored. Although practitioners with a formal education in medicine still were rare in New England at Cotton Mather’s time (the medical school at Harvard College would be founded only some fifty years after his death), the concept of the preacher-physician had already become outmoded. From ministers taking an interest in eye-witnessing unnatural births (as in the case of John Cotton), to those assisting actively in childbirth (as for example John Fiske and Hugh Adams had done, see chapter 2.2) there finally emerged by mid-eighteenth century professional physicians like Edward Augustus Holyoke of Salem, or Zabdiel Boylston of Boston. Ministers were increasingly expected to stay with their main field of expertise instead of meddling with medicine.³⁸¹ Cotton Mather’s *Angel of Bethesda* (1724), for example, was heavily criticized by the physician Oliver Wendell Holmes, who came across the manuscript in 1869. Holmes saw the work as a typical example of the negative consequences of joining religion with medicine (see Beall and Shyrock 55-57). In addition, there unfolded not only a professionalization of medicine but also a “professionalization of the clergy” (Ziff 199).

Mather wanted to participate in the scientific discourse of the time but failed to meet the standards that his fellow members of the Royal Society had set. For Cotton Mather, monstra continued to be “object of scientific interest” instead of an “object of science” (Moscoso 69), to repeat the definition quoted in the introduction (chapter 1.2). While for influential members of the Royal Society such as Robert Boyle the admirable regularity and symmetry in nature’s laws came to weigh more than the less frequent “Physical *Anomalies*” (*Free Enquiry* 244),³⁸² Mather still put emphasis on the irregular. Mather was not versed in the methods of New Science, such as systematic experimentation, which led him to rely too much on singular

³⁸¹ The argument brought forward by Cotton Mather and others that the soul and the body were closely affiliated and therefore justified mixed callings did not convince any longer. Already in the 1620s, James Hart (see chapter 2.1) had concluded that if this idea was used to justify “that whosoever undertaketh the charge of the soule may also take upon him the charge of curing the body,” then “the phisitian,” taking care of the body, might just as well “take upon him the cure of soules” (Hart 383).

³⁸² But Boyle conceded that this “Divine Maker of the Universe” surpassed men by far in intelligence, so it was well possible that “in the Production of seemingly irregular Phænomena” he had “Ends unknown to us” (*Free Enquiry* 245).

observations and on reports sent to him by “neighbors.” As a consequence, his observations were of little use for his correspondents of the Royal Society, as the example of his report on Dyer’s “monstrous birth” shows. As they were born some decades earlier, the two monstrous births could no longer be made the object of systematic examination; they existed only as phantoms within textual discourse and, having withered away, could not anymore be physically examined.

Thus, although Cotton Mather contributed substantially to the increase of scientific activities in America in the early 1710s,³⁸³ he cannot be considered a “true scientist”—and probably would not have seen himself like one (Kilgour 135-6). To measure Mather’s scientific activities against modern standards in science would be as inappropriate as regarding early skeptics of witchcraft as “true scientists.” During his lifetime, Mather showed great interest in and knowledge of the scientific debates of his day, but science and religion remained inseparably connected in his writings and thinking, as his *Biblia* shows. In later writings, in particular *Christian Philosopher* (1721) and *The Angel of Bethesda* (1724), Mather shows influence of the Cambridge Platonists, who believed in the compatibility of knowledge based on reason with divine revelation. Enlightened theologians propagated the necessity of correct deduction and of applying the methods and principles of New Science for making meaning of God’s creation, which led to a heightened importance of reason in theology. “Natural religion” and New Science complemented each other rather than being opponents.³⁸⁴

Not being scientists in the sense as we understand it today, both Increase and Cotton Mather had influence on the spreading of news and information on prodigies less as ministers but as a kind of precursor of journalistic reporters. In a way, Cotton Mather’s letters of overseas can be considered as “scientific journalism” (Beall and Shyrock 44)—similar to the writings of his father, Increase (see chapter 4.2)—even though the story of Dyer’s headless child did neither fulfill Increase and Cotton Mather’s own demands nor that of the emerging newspaper journalism: to be “fresh” and “new.”

³⁸³ Cotton Mather sent for example the first recorded observation of hybridization in plants to the Royal Society of London (see Bodemer, “Natural” 236; I. Cohen, *Some* 15; Jones xi; Kilgour 128).

³⁸⁴ On Mather and “natural theology,” see Middlekauff 305-19.

4.5 Epilogue: the dawn of a new era in discourse on monstrosity

Spectacular cases of monstrous births as those of Dyer and Hutchinson offered colonials like Cotton Mather an opportunity to take an active role in the debates on one of the favorite topics of the gentlemanly elite, as shown in the two preceding chapters. This subject matter was so appealing because it not only promised to lay bare God's working in the human body but offered the curious mind longing for knowledge endless variations. While wonder, admiration and curiosity were regarded by the early virtuosi as "the very parents of philosophy" (Pender, "Bodyshop" 101), these terms also point out the risk that early scientists at times were easily carried away by an exuberant enthusiasm for their objects of investigation, which was not a far cry from religious enthusiasm, as the example of Cotton Mather aptly shows (see chapter 4.4). Around mid-eighteenth century, those attracted to the study of monsters and other strange phenomena increasingly came to be ridiculed, and this included even members of the Royal Society. Collecting objects simply because they were rare came to be considered as a useless, somewhat strange hobby that produced no useful knowledge (Benedict 4-5, 50-51, 72; Pender, "Bodyshop" 110-4).

These changes were not lost on colonials in New England, as the satirical pamphlet *The Monster of Monsters*, published in Boston in 1754 under the pseudonym "Thomas Thumb, Esq.," shows.³⁸⁵ According to the author, the title-giving prodigy "was first seen" by an "Assembly of *Matrons*" (4) who planned to put the monster at public display across the country in order to make money: "We shall all find out *Profit* in it; and others, their *Pleasure* and *Amusement*" (6). Such "common idle Stories about *Monsters* and *Prodigies*," the author maintained, may "amuse and please the Vulgar," but "they disgust sober and reasonable Men" (Thumb [3]). Those who pondered on how to categorize mixed, monstrous beings were "peeping under the skirts of nature," as a satirical pamphlet of the early nineteenth century put it (*Gerry-Mander*).

³⁸⁵ The text is a satire on some of the members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, presumably on the occasion of a bill debated in the General Court for laying an excise on spirituous liquors and wine retailed and consumed within the province (the bill is not mentioned in the text). Samuel Waterhouse and Benjamin Church are considered as possible authors (Wroth 36n2; 7-8).

The Monster of Monsters (1754) calls to mind some aspects of the interpretations of the two New England monster tales analyzed in this study. Using comparisons to animals and the rhetoric of accounts on monstrous races (stylistic devices that also characterize early reports on Mary Dyer's stillborn daughter, see chapter 2.1), Thumb describes a monster with horns, teeth resembling those of a lion, the "Trunk" of an elephant, a protuberance on the back like that of a camel, long ears, only one eye, wings like those of an eagle, hair (or feathers), claws like a bear, and a tail (4). The creature had "many" heads (*Monster* 20), like the hydra that was referred to in the title of the section dealing with the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson in Cotton Mather's *Magnalia* of 1702 (see chapter 4.3). And there is still another parallel to one of the reports on Dyer's monster: on the title page of *The Monster of Monsters* it is noted: "*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens*"—the same quotation taken out of Virgil's *The Aeneid* that Cotton Mather had used for describing Dyer's stillborn child in *Magnalia*.

There is one decisive difference to the narratives of the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson, though: Thomas Thumb presents his tale as an ironic joke, which serves him as an instrument to ridicule "*the Virtuosi of New-England*," to whom the work is dedicated and who are described as an "Assembly of *Matrons*" (4). Although he claims to deliver a "*true and faithful Narrative*" (19), Thumb admits towards the end of the text that he had "been speaking in *Jest*" (Thumb 21). Thumb, referring to a lion, an elephant, a camel, an eagle, and a bear, seems to make fun of reports on hybrid monsters by pushing to the extreme the common early modern practice of describing monsters by help of comparisons to animals. Thumb describes a monster that was singular in the whole region but possibly paralleled in other regions of the world:

There lately appeared, in this *Metropolis*, a MONSTER of the most hideous Form, and terrible Aspect; such an one as was never before seen in *America* by any Man's Eyes; and, I believe, no where else; to be sure not in the *British* Dominions. There was indeed one formerly a little like him in *Turkey*; another in *Italy*; and, as some say, there is one in *France* at this Day. ([3]-4)

Thumb's prodigy shares similarities with the description of a cyclops (the mythical figure described with the above quoted passage from *The Aeneid*) depicted in a costume book dating from the late sixteenth century: its body was covered with hair; it had knee-long ears, one eye in the head, its nose and mouth on the breast, just one

leg, and sagging breasts. The object combined not only various types of animals in one body but various forms of monstrous races, among them a cyclops, a blemmy, a sciopod, and a giant—many of them already in themselves hybrid beings assembled of disparate elements (Campbell, “Nude” 296; cf. 286, fig. 1).

Campbell convincingly shows that the extreme “singularity” of the cyclops of the costume book does not only hint at the birth of the Renaissance subject but designates a purely metaphorical being. The creature demonstrates that an over-excessive focus on the singular renders any attempt to categorize such beings useless.³⁸⁶ the cyclops is characterized by “*counter-scientificity*,” it “provokes an experience, rather than augmenting our knowledge. Its appeal is subjective.” Due to its extreme singularity, the cyclops “has become poetic, imaginary” (Campbell, “Nude” 298-300). The author of *The Monster of Monsters* similarly states that “Tales” of monstrous beings soon were “found to be destitute of all Truth and Reality” ([1]). Thumb made fun of the attempts of other people to make sense of his text, the result being that they “fix such an arbitrary Meaning to this idle Tale” (23). In the cyclops of the costume book as in Thumb’s *The Monster of Monsters*, the metonymic aspect of monstrosity (see chapter 2.1) has reached a hyperbolic crescendo. The cyclops and Thumbs “monster” can be seen as the monster par excellence. They perfectly represent the category crisis characterizing early modern monsters (see chapter 1.1), and in this respect they resemble the famous Monster of Ravenna (see fig. 4 in chapter 3.1), which has been described as “a pictorial myth of the super-monster,” “sum[ming] up in a single iconic form the essential nature of all Freaks”: it is at the same time “*monstre par default*” and “*monstre par excès*” and “*monstre double*” (Fiedler 25).

The cyclops in the costume book and, much later, Thumb’s monster are like prodigious signs heralding the breaking apart of hitherto related discourses. Discourse on monstrosity split up in sub-genres, and new forms of interplays developed. While in the seventeenth century monstrous births were equally relevant to the discourses of politics, religion, and early science as well as the entertainment of all strata of the population, a process of specialization set in as of the eighteenth century. Aberrant bodies became an object of study of diverse scientific disciplines, and outside of this scientific discourse monsters were used either for entertainment (as in literary works)

or for persuasive rhetoric (as in political satire). Unlike early modern discourse on monstrosity (see chapter 3.1), modern monster tales often are (if not always) detached from monstrous births that are known to have occurred in reality; they are consciously un-objective, but, and this they share with early modern monster discourse, not irrational. As Hebel explains in his study of sea deliverance narratives in Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*, the "tensions . . . between the incomprehensible wonders of the invisible world and the observable facts of empirical reality" were "resolved in favor of fictional narratives of individual experiences in an increasingly secularized world" ("Survival" 29).

Heretical opinions (which could have an entertaining function in the early modern period, too, see chapter 4.4) were transformed in a kind of freak show, as the public display of human oddities was termed in the nineteenth century (see Fiedler). A good example is the story of the so-called Devonshire prophetess, Joanna Southcott (see Juster 249-52), in which many of those motifs so popular in religiously motivated mid-seventeenth century transatlantic discourses on monstrous births (see chapters 2.2 and 3.3) can be found. In 1792, Southcott maintained to have had "a vision from the Lord" (339); she "vented her blasphemous plans" (339), and the "weak and credulous . . . flocked to the standard of the imaginary Joanna" (341). Some years later, in 1814, at the age of sixty-four and unmarried, Southcott claimed to have been impregnated by the Holy Spirit and to carry the Messiah within her (Kirby 352-3). In 1820, R. S. Kirby included the narrative in his *Wonderful and Eccentric Museum* (337-63), from which the passages just quoted are taken. Southcott's antics were presented along with stories of "A Raddish in the Shape of A Human Hand," "Flying Fish," and "The Irish Dwarf."

The religious faded from discourse on monstrous births and other prodigies or was transferred into other fields, and the entertaining function gained in importance. Cotton Mather had focused on the supposed remains of giants as part of his scientific communications with members of the Royal Society (see chapter 4.4); about 150 years later, in 1869, the copy of a "Petrified Giant" that was said to have been found at Cardiff, New York, was exhibited as the "American Goliath" in P.T. Barnum's famous *American Museum* that functioned as a kind of institutionalized freak show

³⁸⁶ As D. Williams points out, hybrid and composite beings are not only overstepping species borders but can be seen as representations of "the dissolution of individuality into original oneness" (59).

(Stephens 2-3). As of the Early Republic, shows and exhibitions incorporating prodigies proliferated.

Apart from the spheres of entertainment and literature, belief in supernatural phenomena did “transform and reemerge in a politicized form” (Knoppers and Landes 14). Political opinions came to be treated as prodigies. A good example is the early-nineteenth-century broadside *The Gerry-Mander* (1812). The text was printed in reaction to the re-structuring of the election districts in the state of Massachusetts by the Republican Governor Elbridge Thomas Gerry in 1812. The title page of *The Gerry-Mander* displays the Essex South District in form of a dragon with two claws and wings. Mather’s claim that frightening terror could cause aberrant births (as in the case of his son, see chapter 4.3) probably would have sounded like satire to the author of *The Gerry-Mander*, who recounted the following episode: After having received a letter threatening him with death and fire, the Governor and his party “must of course have been thrown into a most fearful panic, extremely dangerous to persons in their situation, and calculated to produce the most disastrous effects upon their unborn progeny” (*Gerry-Mander*). The author mockingly attributed the hybrid being referred to in the title to the

alarm which his Excellency the Governor . . . experienced last season . . . while his Excellency was pregnant with his last speech, his libellous message, and a numerous litter of new judges and other animals, of which he has since been happily delivered.
(*Gerry-Mander*)

Again, multiple, lively offspring was involved, as had been the case with Hutchinson’s dead but dangerously lively religious viewpoints (see e.g. chapter 3.3). But this time the effect was to ridicule the interest in monster lore and hitherto accepted wisdom on monsters, such as the theory of maternal imagination. The author of *The Monster of Monsters* (1754), for example, wrote that many of those “Matrons” referred to earlier “were not past the Age of Pregnancy; yet I have not heard of a single one that miscarried” (4). Already Montaigne had put forward doubts in 1580 whether all those stories “Of the Force of Imagination” were true

(*Essays* 98; cf. 106-7), and in the course of the eighteenth century the decline of the theory of maternal imagination gained momentum.³⁸⁷

In the wake of these changes, learned and lay discourses on monstrous births came in parts to be separated again, as they probably had been before the advent of printing.³⁸⁸ Seen from this perspective, it is easier to understand why Cotton Mather's attempts to use Dyer's monster story for pointing out the distinctiveness and relevance of New England (see chapter 4.3) were ignored by his overseas correspondents or that the validity of some of his reports on prodigious oddities was put into doubt. Mather wanted to present Dyer's monstrous birth both as a scientific fact and a kind of precursor of a national symbol. As will be shortly touched upon in the conclusion, icons of monstrosity became a standard repertoire of polemics in the Revolutionary Period, and Mather's treatment of this early episode in the history of New England seems like a first attempt in this realm. Mather would have had more success, if he consequently had followed one line of argumentation—focusing either on the sphere of politics or science; scientific discourse on human prodigies increasingly required facts, not fiction.

³⁸⁷ See Benedict 74-75 and passim; Huet 64-67; Todd 1-37; 107-18. A key primary source expressing skepticism of the theory of maternal imagination is James Blondel's *The Strength of Imagination in Pregnant Women Examin'd* [1727]. Daniel Turner defended the theory in several tracts, e.g. *De Morbis Cutaneis. A Treatise of Diseases Incident to the Skin* (1726).

³⁸⁸ That entertainment was increasingly regarded as a category of its own is a phenomenon that can also be detected in the history of journalism. As Nord points out, early American newspapers began "to distinguish between news that is *important* (stories of official public action) and news that is merely *interesting* (stories of unusual private occurrences)" (10).

V Conclusion: from hybrid bodies to myths of origin

“And if this Composure be never so Mean, yet you will cast a benign Aspect upon it, for This very cause, It is American”

--Cotton Mather, *Parentator* (1724), 73--

As has been shown throughout this study, the two failed pregnancies of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson form the subject of a whole range of texts in various fields of discourses and differing forms of genres. As Schutte (104-5) points out—and as was to be expected in view of scholarly work on monstrosity in the early modern period (see chapter 1.1)—it is rather difficult to categorize and find meaningful order in the interpretations offered in these texts; there is no linear progression from ignorance and superstition to objective judgments—if these exist at all. As Field has remarked referring to an essay of the 1950s that provided a medical diagnosis of Hutchinson’s “mole”: “Anne Hutchinson arrives in contemporary medical discourse in a way that is not appreciably different from Winthrop’s treatment of her”; in this specific case, “progress” amounts to nothing more than “a change of name from ‘monstrous birth’ to ‘hydatidiform mole’” (“Ourselves”)

While Thomas Weld presented the monstrous births as instances of divine providence in his preface to *A Short Story* (chapter 3.4), John Winthrop was less inclined to do so (chapter 2.1). Although (or rather because) his doings were guided by political motifs and although his motivation was grounded in the doctrine of providence, Winthrop did his best to gather every shred of evidence—much as the members of the Royal Society would demand decades later regarding rare natural phenomena: Winthrop had the corpse of Dyer’s child exhumed and obtained testimonies from eyewitnesses of its birth; furthermore, he asked a medical authority, John Clarke, for a report on Hutchinson’s miscarriage. Later commentators often acted on a more emotional basis than Winthrop had done decades or even centuries before.

In the 1640s, John Wheelwright Jr. pointed out possible natural causes of the monstrous births, all the while presenting Anne Hutchinson as a “silly” woman deluded by the devil (chapter 3.2). In 1676, Increase Mather used Dyer’s monster tale

to stress the predictive character of natural prodigies, but he did not include the story in his collection of New England providence tales (chapter 4.2). Cotton Mather, finally, incorporated the narrative first in a work on the history of the New England churches, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), and then, years later, having established close affiliations to the Royal Society, he used Dyer's headless child with both a personal and a political motivation in his "Curiosa" letters (chapters 4.3 and 4.4).

That the two New England monstrous births also were of interest to English polemical writers, historiographers, and natural philosophers has been shown in parts III and IV of this study. Hutchinson's miscarriage was included in John Vicars's *Prodigies and Apparitions* (1643), and Dyer's prodigious child forms part of the *Newes from New-England* (1642), where it is featured in the title and presented along with monstrous births from all over continental Europe (see chapter 3.1). The stories of the two failed pregnancies formed the pivotal point of the public debate between Tombes and Baxter as to the nature of miracles (chapter 3.4), and they figure prominently in a publication of the influential Anglican clergyman John Spencer, who used them for expressing skepticism regarding the belief that God punished heretical viewpoints by such prodigies (chapter 4.2). However, in the 1710s, the editors of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* were not willing to print Cotton Mather's report on Dyer's and other New England monstrous births, deeming the information provided by their overseas correspondent not interesting enough (chapter 4.4).

Considering the object of study—two "monstrous" human bodies—as well as the evolving interplays of the spheres of religion, science, and politics on both sides of the Atlantic, the complexities of the reception history of the two ill-fated pregnancies of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson are easier to understand. As has been pointed out in chapter 1.2, scientific progress moves cyclically rather than by following a linear path, and this applies particularly to the interpretation of "abnormal" human bodies. More so than other prodigies, the monstrous human body refused naturalization and secularization: the element of sinfulness, which characterizes a great part of early modern interpretations of monstrous births (see chapter 1.1), gave them an "emotive resonance" (Pender, "No Monsters" 149). On the one hand, this emotive aspect complicates any linear story of progress, but on the other hand it was exactly this emotive resonance that contributed to the widespread

fascination with and interest in human anomalies, which furthered the development of medical disciplines such as embryology.

Although the narratives of the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson form an integral part of the history of “New Science” in the Atlantic World, they have to be regarded as a symptom of this process rather than a catalyst.³⁸⁹ First, at the time of their occurrence in the late 1630s, only the first stirrings (if any) of these epistemological changes were discernable. The Royal Society would not be founded until early in the 1660s, and it would take another half a century until the new way of creating knowledge fully took hold in the minds of Western thinkers. This applies even more to the colonies on the American continent with their lack of scientific institutions; until well into the eighteenth century, the Bay colonials lacked the time and resources to dedicate themselves whole-heartedly to scientific enquiry. Second, when news of the two prodigious births reached England (where the future members of the Royal Society had already been active in attentively studying the works of nature), the story was deeply embedded in a religious and political conflict. The charges brought against Hutchinson, Wheelwright, and other “Antinomians” were complex and in many ways resembled “orthodox” doctrine, which is why the prodigious births were naturally suitable as an anchor in a vast ocean of unfathomable meaning. Third, when Cotton Mather tried to direct the attention of his correspondents in England on Dyer’s failed pregnancy in late 1712 (see chapter 4.4), the professionalization of science had already advanced to a point that such a legendary story failed to stir scientific interest: the fetus was no longer available for close scrutiny, not even as theoretical possibility.

As suggested in the introductory part of this study, a more promising approach than focusing on narratives of monstrosity as an indicator of scientific progress is to regard them as a means to build, change, and structure communities and to re-establish order, for example by re-asserting or re-defining authority and moral responsibility, or by creating new categories for human anomalies. The discourses on the two monstrous births in the course of almost a hundred years served as a mechanism for coping with change in times of socio-political and epistemological

³⁸⁹ Taken into consideration the riches of the American continent in its totality creates a different picture, however; by offering such a large volume of materials to be studied, explored, and catalogued, the American colonies had a profound impact on European Enlightenment thinking and epistemology (Parrish, *American* 6-7; cf. 24-76).

upheaval, to be adapted according to need—a process described by Bynum as what she considers the two basic concepts of change (see chapter 1.2): the substituting of one element for another, as summarized by the rather static and spatial concept of the hybrid, and metamorphosis, a dynamic, temporal process that helps redefine existing categories through narrative (30-32).

Both concepts can be applied to the deformed bodily offspring of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson and their reception history. Dyer's stillborn daughter was the perfect embodiment of a hybrid being: combining horns, "pricks," "scales," and "claws" (Winthrop, *Journal* 254) all in one body, it was a "monstrous shape" (contrary to Hutchinson's "shapeless monster," which lacked form and structure).³⁹⁰ Without a head, Dyer's child had the potential to be used as a symbol of the corruption of the body politic, as shown in chapter 3.2. At the same time, this hybrid being already contained the nucleus for what Bynum describes as a process of metamorphosis: the lack of a head metaphorically pointed out the need for a new head, a new authority. Even more important, the duality visualized by means of the hybrid double births depicted on the title pages of the publications with the first printed comments on the Dyer and the Hutchinson monster, *Newes from New England* (1642) and *Prodigies and Apparitions* (1643), served as a sign that these were not stable entities and that something new was at the brink of coming into existence. As shown in chapter 3.1, conjoined twins had the potential to symbolize a possible separation from an existing entity; in this aspect they share similarities with giants who implicitly point out that something new is on the verge of coming into existence: "they appear terrifyingly inflated because the future is as yet imaginary, unknown," wherefore, despite of their size, they remind of childhood rather than parenthood (Prescott 83).

Not only the abnormal births themselves but the way the Bay colonial authorities reacted to them can be put in relation to Bynum's concepts of "replacement-change" and metamorphosis. At the height of the Antinomian Controversy the foremost aim was to contain the hybrid. Officials such as Governor

John Winthrop employed strategies that could be termed “mechanistic” and—having the purpose to avoid the “two-ness” characterizing hybrid beings—that had mainly a spatial dimension, serving the aim of a creating or maintaining a homogeneous body politic: during the church trial, Winthrop uttered the wish to “cut off” all those among them who “trouble us,” obviously including Anne Hutchinson (D. Hall, ed. 342); Hutchinson was placed under house-arrest to separate her from the remaining congregation and to prevent her from spreading her heretical thinking; she was banished from the colony in order to reestablish order and excommunicated so as to protect the health of the congregation and to silence her in public discourse (see chapter 3.3). Measures such as excommunication and banishment—that is, “cutting away” parts of the body politic that did not conform to the norm as defined by the ruling elite—were intended to counter the threat of disorder as symbolized by a headless birth and formless lumps of flesh that paralleled the multiplicity of religious doctrines challenging the ministers’ authority.

While the strategies used for maintaining or restoring order during the Antinomian Controversy and in its aftermath focused on keeping the community intact by expelling the hybrid, by the early 1640s strategies grounded in narrative that were nearer to the concept of metamorphosis moved to the fore. For one, the initial strategy had failed in view of continuing diverging opinions within or at the borders of the colony; even the measure of banishment had failed to stop Hutchinson and her followers spreading their viewpoints. Hutchinson’s heretical ideas were as difficult to contain as the lumps of flesh that her body had produced and that seemed like a reminder of the difficulties in controlling female speech (see chapters 2.2 and 3.3).³⁹¹ And second, opponents of the New England Way cast doubt both on the effectiveness and adequacy of the measures chosen by the Bay colonial authorities. The colonials

³⁹⁰ I borrowed the two expressions from the title of the early modern print *A Monstrous Shape, Or A Shapelesse Monster* [1639] (L. P.), which is mentioned in chapter 1.1. While I consider the expression “a monstrous shape” more suitable for Dyer’s headless child (said to have horns, pricks, and claws), Edmund Browne used the very same expression with regard to Hutchinson’s miscarriage (“Letter” 230). When Browne made this comment in September 1638 (see chapter 1.1), he was not aware yet of the exact “form” of the outflow of Hutchinson’s womb; he knew only that it was “reported to be many false conceptions in a lump” (“Letter” 230).

³⁹¹ Anne Hutchinson’s mole was symbolic of the dangers of such transformational processes. It represented a process of metamorphosis that had gone terribly wrong: her multiple offspring could be seen as a process of gestation that had not been fully completed; it was a child or—metaphorically speaking—an only partially-formed idea (see chapter 2.2).

reacted by trying to create a coherent narrative that suited their purposes and served the attempts of self-representation in the contested transatlantic sphere (chapter 3.2).

The narratives of the prodigious births helped to define what belonged to the body politic and what was regarded as dispensable—or even needed to be excised, which is why remnants of the earlier spatial, “mechanistic” strategy survived in the rhetoric. A good example is the use of terms relating to anatomization (see chapter 2.1), or of expressions such as “to reduce” or “chopping off” “necks” as analyzed in chapter 3.2. Another example is the phenomenon that the texts of many colonials betray an endeavor to remove protagonists like Anne Hutchinson from colonial historiography. In Edward Johnson’s *Wonder-Working Providence*, for instance, Hutchinson is referred to simply as “this woman” who was “the grand Mistresse” of those creating disorder (132).³⁹² When Cotton Mather related the story of Dyer’s miscarriage in *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), he followed the same pattern and wrote of “one very nearly Related unto this Gentlewoman [Hutchinson], and infected with her Heresies,” who was “delivered” of a “hideous . . . *Monster*” (*Magnalia* VII, 20).³⁹³

There may have been a variety of reasons for leaving out the names of supposed heretics,³⁹⁴ but denying a name had the advantage that the culpability of single persons could be stressed without according them the power of authorship and authority. As Geary shows in his study on the role of women in European origin myths up to the twelfth century, women often were removed from these narratives because female public power was perceived as unsettling: “Unable to eliminate women from the practice of public power . . . , these clerical authors eliminate them from the only world over which they have full control: the world of texts.” (6). For Puritan historiographers such as Cotton Mather and Edward Johnson, Hutchinson and her sympathizers had not been and must not be the active shapers of New England history whom they considered for their project of drafting a history of New

³⁹² Inconsistent page numbering: chapter four ends with page 120, chapter v is continued on page 103.

³⁹³ Also in the chapter on the Quakers, which followed immediately upon the summary of the Antinomian Controversy and the monstrous births, Cotton Mather referred to Mary Dyer only in a short note as one “M. D.” who was spared of execution (*Magnalia* VII, 23), although Mary Dyer had played a prominent role in the conflict; George Fox, by contrast, is mentioned several times (VII, 23).

³⁹⁴ One reason may have been the wish to give misguided protagonists a chance to repent (see e.g. Weld, in Winthrop, *A Short Story To the Reader*; C. Mather, *Magnalia* III, Remarks, 7). Another reason put forward was the wish to protect the reputation of those “Worthy and Useful Persons” that were involved in these conflicts in one way or another (C. Mather, *Magnalia* VII, 18; cf. Hubbard, *General History* 283; Hull 171).

England. Notably, males who held official positions and were reputed to have had a positive effect on the fate of the colony are treated differently; the second and third book of the *Magnalia* focus on “the Lives of the Governours” and “The Lives of Sixty Famous Divines”—including the “Names of the Magistrates of *New-England*” (contents): they constitute the heroic first and second generation (see chapter 4.3).

Like the earlier “mechanistic” strategies, the strategies grounded in rhetoric, such as denying a name, were only partly successful, and the results as well as the underlying assumptions were at times rather paradoxical. Although the Hutchinsonians were dismissed as “silly” and, therefore, irrelevant troublemakers (see chapters 2.2 and 3.3), the opinions of Dyer and Hutchinson proved so powerful and disruptive that even the normal course of nature was altered. Hutchinson and her followers may have been silly and credulous, but it was Hutchinson’s opinions and the force of her imagination that caused the form of her multiple births and finally infected the whole congregation and even neighboring churches (J. Crawford 15; Lang 57). Weld denied Hutchinson the power to give form to her mental idols, but at the same time he constructed her as the main culprit in a crisis that threatened to destroy the Bay colonial community. Last but not least, Anne Hutchinson influenced modern historiography tremendously, despite the efforts of the Bay orthodoxy to the contrary.³⁹⁵ Just as Protestant iconoclasm further heightened the power of images (see chapter 1.2), so the banishing of female voices from works of history only emphasized how powerful they were.

Another paradox is that although the names of the mothers of the monstrous births often were avoided, the stories of their monstrous offspring figure prominently in New England historiography. One reason may have been the wish to free the image of the Bay colony from any flaws that the congregational system had been accused of (see chapter 3.2). The focus on monstrous births in narratives of the Antinomian Controversy presented the conflict as something that could be centered upon singular bodies that stood for an abnormal disruption of an otherwise stable order. In short, disorder was presented as exogenous: the narratives of Weld, Baillie, Johnson, and Mather had “disparate ideological reasons, but a common thread

³⁹⁵ Modern scholars therefore feel the need to stress that other, male protagonists such as Henry Vane or John Cotton had been at least as important for the colonial Antinomian Controversy as Anne Hutchinson. See Moseley (71) for Roger Williams, Staloff (40-54) for John Cotton, and Winship (*Making Heretics* 6-7) for Henry Vane. In this context it is also worth considering that, as shown in chapter 3.3, John Wheelwright felt that he had unjustly been made responsible for the crisis.

appears—these narratives locate dissent in the body of Anne Hutchinson, exemplified by the episodes of monstrous birth” (Field, “Antinomian” 458).

Monstrosity helped to get attention at a time when countless polemical prints appeared and colonials like John Winthrop, Edward Johnson or Cotton Mather depended on the printers in London for having their works published (see chapters 3.1 and 4.4). In general, the monstrous gives a story variety and the reader pleasure, thereby stirring interest in the tale. Broadside ballads on prodigies sold by street peddlers attracted potential readers by meeting the demand for variety and the appetite for entertainment,³⁹⁶ and also the narratives on the monstrous births of Dyer and Hutchinson promised to attract the attention of the transatlantic public sphere. As shown in chapter 3.1, this may be the reason why the title page of *Newes from New-England* (1642) displays a double birth covered by signs, although the illustration does not correspond with the “strange and prodigious Birth, brought to Boston in New-England” that is mentioned in the title of the publication. The stranger the descriptions, the easier they stayed within the mind, as visual icons, like the metonymic creatures on coats of arms.

Thomas Weld, John Winthrop, and Cotton Mather quite clearly tried to attract the attention of their transatlantic counterparts by stressing the singularity of the New England monstrous births. The narrative of Dyer’s stillborn daughter in *A Short Story* was almost identical to the one given by Winthrop in his *Journal*, but it was added that Dyer’s child was “so monstrous and mis-shapen, as the like hath scarce been heard of” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, 44). Weld pointed out that the “monstrous births” were such “as no Chronicle (I thinke) hardly ever recorded the like” (Winthrop, *Short Story*, 1644, The Preface). Similarly, when Cotton Mather related the story of Dyer’s child in 1702, he stressed that it was “as hideous a *Monster* as perhaps the Sun ever lookt upon” (*Magnalia* VII, 20). Last but not least, Mather concluded his letter on Dyer’s monstrous birth to a member of the Royal Society (see chapter 4.4) with the statement that “nothing could be more monstrous than this monster” (“Letters” 60).

Both in religious and early scientific discourses the enormity, singularity, and monstrousness of objects and occurrences were pointed out. With regard to the

³⁹⁶ As the sixteenth-century chronicler Pietro Martire d’Anghiera (Peter Martyr) explained: “for, as in fashions of apparell, and ordinary diet wee like extraordinary varietie, and change, though both transgresse the rules of modestie, and sobrietie” (*The Historie of the West Indies* sig. B2).

Antinomian Controversy it was stressed how dangerous the opponents in conflict were (see chapter 3.2), which heightened the glory of those who vanquished them and served as a perfect instrument for gaining attention in the contested transatlantic public sphere;³⁹⁷ furthermore, colonial Puritans thereby could “prove” that they were able to deal with problems arising from sects and other threats. When Mather related the story of the gigantic prehistoric tooth unearthed near Claverack, New York, to Dr. John Woodward in 1712 (see chapter 4.4), Mather proudly claimed that he knew “none” of “all those *Curiosities*” found earlier “that exceeds what has lately been found in an *American* plantation” (“Letter” 764).

New World oddities such as prodigious births obviously shaped the self-understanding of the overseas colonies and, as the example of Cotton Mather shows, fostered their self-understanding as a region relevant for disciplines such as natural history. Studying the variety and peculiarity of the objects to be found on the American continent allowed those interested in scientific enquiry to excel and gain honor for their place of origin. John Tradescant, an English collector of plants who had travelled to Virginia with the aim to gather material, accordingly had claimed in 1656 in his *Collection of Rarities*

that the enumeration of these Rarities, (being more for variety than any one place known in *Europe* could afford) would be an honor to our Nation, and a benefit so such ingenious persons as would become further enquirers into the various modes of Natures admirable works (To the Ingenious Reader)

While for quite some time objects of the American continent had filled the precursors of today’s museums, the cabinets of curiosity, that symbolized the taking into possession of distant territories, America began taking into possession its own riches.³⁹⁸ The New World turned from a cabinet of curiosity that was dominated by the English into a region that used its exotic objects for its own purposes. While in 1656 an Englishman, John Tradescant, had prided himself for having put together a collection of “Rarities” of Virginia, in 1712 Cotton Mather, born on the American

³⁹⁷ Thomas Hooker, for example, is said to have stated regarding Anne Hutchinson’s viewpoints: “I do believe, such a heap of hideous errors, at once to be vented by such a self-deluding and deluded creature [A. H.], no history can record” (qtd. in Hutchinson, 1970, I, 63). Similar statements can be found in contemporary English publications as well, see e.g. H. Ellis, *Pseudochristus* 3; see shortly in chapter 3.1 on this publication.

³⁹⁸ On cabinets of curiosity, see Bredekamp 41-42, 76; Findlen, *Possessing* 4, 9-10; Impey and MacGregor, eds.; Kenseth, ed. On museums taking into possession newly explored territories, see Jed 195-203.

continent, began taking possession of the natural prodigies to be found in his home region. The richness and uniqueness of natural resources fostered patriotic feelings and pride.³⁹⁹ As Stearns points out, gaining confidence in science was closely connected to the emancipation process that would culminate in the American Revolution (*Science* xiv-xv; cf. 4). Mather's "assertion that the monster of Claverack [the giant tooth, see above] was the largest giant ever known was filled with a nationalistic spirit" that was "foreshadowing" the self-confidence of the shapers of the future new nation (Semonin, *American* 11; cf. 2-4; 10-12). Giants functioned as "an ideal representation of national identity" (Stephens 6, cf. 98-184).

Especially Cotton Mather's use of the term *American* shows how the feeling of being a peripheral, backward outpost gradually gave way to a new self-understanding. Mather was not the first to refer to objects or people as "American," but while for example Winthrop had used the term in a typological setting (Winthrop had called Hutchinson the "American Jesabel," see chapter 3.3), with Mather, it changed from a mere geographical description to a term connoted with a specific identity (Herget 44n64; cf. Bercovitch, *Puritan* ix). Mather wrote with an "*American Pen*" (C. Mather, *Late Memorable Providences* sig. A2 verso) and stressed for example that Harvard College was "an American *University*, presenting her self, with her Sons, before her *Europæan* Mothers for their Blessing" (*Magnalia* iv, 125). In 1724, Mather promoted the publication of his works by pointing out that "tis from the Distance of a great and wide Sea, that the Fruits of the Land are brought as a Present unto you. . . . And if this Composure be never so Mean, yet you will cast a benign Aspect upon it, for This very cause, It is American" ("Parentator" 73). Cotton Mather conceived of his own intellectual products as "Fruits" and presented them proudly to his English readers ("Parentator" 73), and the New England churches were like plants that had fallen on fruitful ground (*Magnalia* 140; IV, Part II; cf. Breitwieser 120-7). Already publications such as *New Englands First Fruits* (1643) had proudly pointed out that New England had produced its first fruits (see chapter 4.3), and these were not monstrous at all.

³⁹⁹ A good example is the early history of the Philosophical Society (today's American Philosophical Society), founded by Benjamin Franklin and John Bartram in 1743. Located in Philadelphia, which was for the first 25 years the capital of the newly founded nation, it "performed almost as an agency of government" in the first decades of the Republic (Bell 166; cf. 170-172; cf. Oleson xvi; xx). On American learned societies, see also Bell; Oleson and Brown, eds. For studies stressing the connection between science, wondrous objects, and the evolving American identities, see n51 in chapter 1.2.

As Mather's wording of "American" "fruits" that were presented to his correspondents across the "sea" aptly shows, the sea was not only one of the core metaphors of the birth of "New Science" (see chapter 4.4) but also of the birth of an "American" identity in all its variants, both on a collective and individual level. The transatlantic voyage of the early settlers served as a *rite de passage*, transforming English travelers into inhabitants of another continent, as "The Autobiography" of Thomas Shepard exemplifies (see e.g. 35; 59-64). The migration to New England "Americanized" not only persons but objects (e.g. the remains of giants found in the earth), concepts, and literary genres: the experience of the passage across the Atlantic Ocean added an "American" experience and flavor to the English providence tale (Hartman 1; cf. Hebel, "Survival"; Sievers); and John Winthrop turned Anne Hutchinson into the American version of the biblical figure Jezebel.

Cotton Mather and like-minded colonials proactively tried to use the potential of metamorphosis that narratives on prodigious beings contained, and especially Cotton Mather consciously made use of rhetorical strategies to stress that the process of civilization slowly but surely transformed his provincial outpost into a region that was able to keep up with English historical and intellectual achievements. Both Dyer's headless child (a category of monstrous births at times presented as having a giant-like stature, see chapter 2.1) and alleged remains of giants retrieved from the New England soil served him well in his attempts to demonstrate that New England was part of the grand narrative of the history of civilization but possessed its own, peculiar character. Natural history provided the colonies with their own distinctive past that connected New England to the mother colony and at the same time set it apart (see chapters 4.3 and 4.4). Much as the hermeneutic method of typology aimed at finding analogies between the Old and the New Testament, so Puritan settlers of the New World searched for parallels between Old and New England and used them for their own purposes—and it did not bother them at all to use seemingly monstrous objects in this endeavor. In Mather's "Curiosa" and in the writings of some of his contemporaries, monstrous, prodigious objects function as carrier of metamorphosis. Narratives that put metamorphosis at the center tend to incorporate the aberrant instead of banishing it, as rhetoric grounded more in mechanistic thinking tends to do.

Monstrosity came to be acknowledged as an integral part of the development of civilization and communal entities. The Antinomian Controversy and the occurrence of monstrous births were more and more regarded as necessary crises fostering a process of maturation, much as the monster was considered a necessary element of discord and a prerequisite for the propagation of the human race. Long before, Aristotle had made the point that monstrous aberration could be regarded as an inevitable defect. He considered females a deviation from the norm (see chapter 3.3), but one that was an integral part of nature: “and we should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity, though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature” (IV, VI, 775a; cf. IV, III, 767b).⁴⁰⁰ In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, embryologists increasingly began acknowledging the importance of deviance; deformity came to be seen no longer as a *defect* but as a form *perfect* in itself, as a stage in an evolutionary process (Hagner, “Monstrositäten” 8; Hagner, “Naturalienkabinett” 77; Moscoso 57; 69-70).

This new rhetorical strategy is aptly illustrated by two episodes, one focusing on a *natural* prodigy, the opossum, the other centering upon a *cultural* curiosity, the first known female author of poetry from the North American continent. In 1697, the planter William Byrd II had brought the live specimen of a female opossum from Virginia to London to present it at the Royal Society. Natural historians in England and British-America were especially interested in the female opossum’s organs of generation and gestation. In 1698, a sixty-page paper on the anatomy of Byrd’s opossum, authored by Edward Tyson (a fellow of both the Royal Society and the College of Physicians), filled an entire issue of *Philosophical Transactions*. In earlier times, the opossum had represented monstrous fecundity, but in the Age of Enlightenment it turned into a symbol of live-giving power, thereby contributing to the positive image of the prodigies of the American continent (Parrish, *American* 54-57; Parrish, “Female Opossum”; Asúa and French 223). Tyson contradicted hitherto accepted wisdom that regarded the opossum as a monstrous creature. As an

⁴⁰⁰ See similarly Crooke’s *Mikrokosmographia* (1631): The female, possessing less heat, was “much lesse perfect then a man,” but “this imperfection turned vnto perfection, because without the woman, mankind could not haue beene perfected by the perfecter sexe.” It was a necessity that “the one halfe of mankind [was created] imperfect for the instauration of the whole kind” (216-7). Augustine saw the monster as part of the admirable variety of God’s creation: “the similarities and diversities . . . contribute to the beauty of the whole. But He who cannot see the whole is offended by the deformity of the part, because he is blind to that which balances it, and to which it belongs.” (531, 16:8; cf. Book XI, chapter 23).

alternative interpretation he suggested that the opossum was “an Animal *sui Generis*” (3), and he claimed that earlier descriptions of the opossum—and not the animal itself—were “faulty” and “monstrous” (4). A new category was created and established, and this time the editors of *Philosophical Transactions* regarded the report on a natural prodigy of the North American continent as worthy of being published—unlike Cotton Mather’s letter on Mary Dyer’s headless child (see chapter 4.3).

The publication history of Anne Bradstreet’s poetry (see chapter 3.3.) can also be analyzed along problems of categorization and as an exemplar of the constant efforts to incorporate prodigies of the New World in English concepts of civilization. Bradstreet’s poetry was published in 1650 under the title *The Tenth Muse, lately Sprung up in America*—a title that probably had been supplied by John Woodridge or an English partner. The wording implicitly points out that the nine classical muses, who provide knowledge and inspiration for the arts in Greek mythology (Hesiod 53-75), were complemented by a new one. The public was not, at the time, used to female authors of literary works, so the introduction of a tenth muse made the work more “vendible”: Labeling Bradstreet the “Tenth Muse” “marked her gender ambiguity. A ‘curious’ kind of neutral, she occupied a category all her own” (Jed 196-7). *The Tenth Muse*, the first collection of poetry by a writer of the New World to be published, was “a cultural phenomenon—the spectacle of a woman-as-poet, a marvel deserving of wonder, but also a threat requiring serious attention” (Schweitzer 127). The formulation of the title of the publication that the tenth muse had been “lately Sprung up in America” served as a reminder that this poetry was part of a European cultural tradition but added something new that had to be seen as independent from it. As Jed put it: the *Tenth Muse* “incorporated Bradstreet’s parthenogenetic verses into an English genealogy and continuity of power” (198; cf. 197).

Both episodes, the presentation of the opossum and the first publication of Bradstreet’s poetry, show in exemplary form that monstrosity was instrumental in creating new categories which then existed in their own right. The monstrous represents a kind of evolutionary step between two states of being and knowledge. At the beginning stood the abnormal, hybrid body, consisting of seemingly disparate parts, which over time metamorphosed into a new form of being. Rhetoric could be

used to defend the existing order, but it could also be used to create a *new* order and an evolving identity.

However, in order to draft a convincing narrative one needed to heal the fissures and ruptures of this conflict-ridden transformation. By means of the narratives of the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson Bay colonials like Cotton Mather did not only aim to create a link to the evolution of Western civilization and early English history but created a sense of continuity *within* early and mid-colonial history, which served the aim to provide New England with its own history. That the aberrant births of Dyer and Hutchinson were tied to or reappeared in discourses on fundamental crises of seventeenth-century American colonial history—ranging from the Antinomian Controversy to the transatlantic debate on the congregational system of church order and to King Philip’s War—created a connection between these crises. This is most obvious in Increase Mather’s report on King Philip’s War, in which he used the concept of providence to link this conflict of monstrous dimensions with the birth of Dyer’s monstrous headless child (chapter 4.2). In the writings of Cotton Mather (chapters 4.3. and 4.4), the monstrous births were used as an element of a myth of origin of the American continent: having overcome obstacles and various threats such as the passage at sea, “monstrous” Native Americans, and the monstrous products of heretics created all a sense of belonging.

The narratives of the monstrous births seem like a test bed for the creation of what Benedict Anderson termed “an imagined political community” (6). This is not to apply Anderson’s thesis of the origin of the “idea of nation” (in the sense of an awareness of exterior borders and an inward sense of belonging) as it emerged in the eighteenth century unaltered to seventeenth-century New England. But some elements that are said to characterize “imagined communities” can already be discerned in writings of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century (cf. Deutsch and Nussbaum 3-8).

According to Anderson, the nation “is imagined as a community” since the feeling of “a deep, horizontal comradeship” is helpful for coming to terms with experiences such as war (7). These experiences then are transformed into “continuity” (11)—into a meaningful narrative that turns “chance” into “destiny” (12). In the 1670s (a period that can be regarded as the era when “New England

Puritan culture” had reached the highest degree of “self-awareness” according to M. Hall, *Last* xiv), the settlers of the Bay colony had experienced “fatality” and “contingency” in view of the many deaths caused by King Philip’s War. King Philip’s War probably had a similar profound effect on the settlers of New England as the Civil War had on a great part of the population of England, Ireland, and Scotland. As Increase Mather remarked in 1676, almost no family in New England “hath wholly escaped the Distemper” (*Brief History* 32). It has been stated that the casualties of the English settlers during this conflict were greater in proportion to the overall population of the time than during any other war in American history (Lepore xi; Schramer and Sweet 14). Seen from this perspective, Lepore’s choice of title for her study on this war, *King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (1998), is rather convincing. Drawing upon the writings of Cotton Mather and William Hubbard, McWilliams drew the conclusion that King Philip’s War “consolidated and confined New England’s regional identity in the very act of defining its expanded borders” (121).

It could be said that Increase Mather used the story of Dyer’s monstrous birth to create what Anderson has termed “continuity” between the various crises of the colony (albeit with the intention of fostering the doctrine of providence, see chapter 4.2). As Cassuto has remarked, an important preliminary step for building up a sense of national belongings is to develop “a sense of present and past—of communal belonging and a collection of shared, constructed memories” (32), and the transatlantic debate on the monstrous births furthered the creation of an imagined common past, which in part was constructed in hindsight. By acknowledging the achievements of the preceding generations who had vanquished monstrous enemies, Cotton Mather and like-minded colonials laid the basis for the creation of one of many “American” narratives of national beginnings that would come to full rise in the Revolutionary Period, and I argue that the two monstrous births possibly played their part in this process. After all, New England Puritans influenced the historiography of the colonies tremendously, as also scholars stressing the heterogeneity of cultural experience have conceded: they acknowledge “the American Puritans’ most impressive achievement, the sublimation of radical

ideology into the emerging ‘myth of America’” (Gura, *Glimpse* 14; cf. 215-6; cf. Emerson, *John* 1).⁴⁰¹

Motifs that were used in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century discourse on the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson, such as the tropes of failed motherhood or the parallels drawn between deformed children and deformities of the body politic as well as those between alleged heresies and diseases that had to be purged (see chapters 3.2 and 3.3), prepared the way for the rhetoric in the Revolutionary Period. Much as Hutchinson disdained her parentage by dishonoring her parents (or so claimed Winthrop, see chapter 3.3), so New England began dishonoring its mother, England. The more the colonial settlers regarded the land of the New World as the womb that nourished them, the less they felt that England was the mother of New England and nursing it. New England ceased to be seen as the product of the English womb and, like seed or a plant, had found a new womb, a new place of origin. Already in publications like Robert Gray’s *A Good Speed to Virginia* (1609) the land of the North American continent had been conceived of as nourishing the population “it hath brought forth” with “milke” of its “breast” (sig. [B 4]).⁴⁰² In the eighteenth century, England, once the nursing mother, turned into a monstrous, unnatural mother (Burnham, *Captivity* 70; Herzogenrath, “Join” 256).⁴⁰³

In the long run, strange as it may seem, the existence of monstrosities offered the possibility to argue in favor of greater independence. The colonial authorities’ fight against monstrous enemies and their monstrous outflow helped them to present themselves no longer as a mere limb of England but as a fully-formed body—both in the negative sense of having to endure regular diseases and abnormal outgrowths, and in the positive sense of a harmonious functioning of all organs, which empowered the body (politic) to suppress disease.

New England Puritans and settlers increasingly were not only proud of New World prodigies but also identified with them. By turning the prodigious other into objects that characterized the distinctiveness of a place, it was incorporated and

⁴⁰¹ See also Egan 95-7; Hebel, “Negotiation,” esp. 95; Semonin, *American*. See Egan (154-5, n1) for secondary literature on scholars tracing streams of American national consciousness to New England.

⁴⁰² As shown in chapter 4.4, much as the land was equaled with a female body so the female womb was compared to the earth: seed was “cast into the wombe of the earth” where it did “bud, or increase” (Rueff 1). On the metaphor of the uterus as a “field” in which the fetus is nurtured, see Sawday 214-6.

assigned a new function. In cartoons and political pamphlets of the Revolutionary Period, typical New World curiosities such as the rattlesnake or the Native Americans were transformed into political iconography and used to create a common identity for the colonies in their resistance to English politics; they were turned into symbols of unity representing a proto-national self-understanding. In 1754, in one of the first political cartoons of America, Benjamin Franklin devised for example the illustration of a snake that was hewn into pieces as a symbol of the English colonies in North America that needed to “Join or Die,” as the caption of the print read (Herzogenrath, *American* 7-8). The rattlesnake turned into a national symbol (Herzogenrath, “Join” 248-56).⁴⁰⁴ A new iconography was created in order to foster unity and represent communal integrity in view of external threats and internal divisions.⁴⁰⁵ However, Dyer’s and Hutchinson’s monstrous births were not suitable as symbols to be used in the emerging discourse of an “American” nation in and after the Revolutionary Period. As shown in chapter 3.2, the idea of a headless body politic had not been a tempting option for New England colonials in the transatlantic debates, when the Congregationalists tried to convince their critics of the advantages of their way of church order, and the formless lumps of Anne Hutchinson were equally unattractive.

Nevertheless, transatlantic discourse on the monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson offered New England writers the possibility to define what they considered a fully formed body politic and to gain experience with polemics on a transatlantic scale. Just as the female-centered Albina myth was a prelude of sorts to the more popular, male-dominated founding myth of Britain centering upon Brutus (see chapter 4.3), so the two monstrous births functioned like a prelude to the polemic use of prodigies such as the snake or the motif of the pitiless mother in the Revolutionary Period. According to Bernau, the legend of Albina “posits an inherently flawed and troubled beginning for British history” (107), leading it to lose its popularity “as a preface to the Brutus myth” after the sixteenth century, to

⁴⁰³ Another variant was the motif of Britain as a helpless maiden whose limbs had been brutally severed. In Anne Bradstreet’s “A Dialogue between Old England and New” (1642) England is represented as an allegorical mother neglected by its daughter, New England (141); see New 114-6; Rosenmeier 47-51.

⁴⁰⁴ Even early scientists suggested a connection between abnormal snakes and the North American continent. The distinguished eighteenth-century scientist John Hunter, a Scottish surgeon and Fellow of the Royal Society, added shortly after having commented on the hereditary principle of monsters: “America would seem to abound more in double-headed snakes than any other country” (*Essays* 251).

⁴⁰⁵ On the iconography of the Revolutionary Period, see Brandt and Fellner, eds.; Burnham, *Captivity* 69, 112-5; Herzogenrath, “Join”; Mizelle; Parrish, “Female Opposum” 508-11; Samuels, esp. 10-1.

disappear, slowly but surely, from historic writings (106). Edmund Spencer, for example, “dismisses the story of Albina as ‘[t]hat monstrous error’” in his *Faerie Queene* (113). The monstrous births of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson represent a similar monstrous and flawed albeit necessary beginning.

Appendix

Overview on primary sources (1638–1714) on the “monstrous births” of Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson

Preliminary remarks

In most cases, only the first known edition of a publication is included; later editions have been considered in cases where the new edition shows strong differences in quality or quantity, has exerted noticeable influence on the reception history of the two monstrous births, or testifies to a continued interest in the topic.

When a text was published much later than authored, an entry is included to mark the date of authorship as far as it is known or can be reconstructed in hindsight; in the early modern period, manuscripts have often been passed on privately, wherefore a manuscript may have reached quite a number of readers before being published.

After information on the date it is indicated in brackets whether the entry refers to Mary Dyer’s (MD) or Anne Hutchinson’s (AH) “monstrous birth” or both (MD, AH). When it is only assumed that a source refers to them, the entry is put into square brackets: [MD]; when it is highly uncertain whether a source refers to one or both of the monstrous births, a question mark has been added [HD?].

The page numbers refer to passages in which one or both “monstrous births” are mentioned; they are not to be mistaken for the bibliographic data given in the list of Works Cited (which includes all publications mentioned in the Appendix, with the exception of the “Commonplace Book” mentioned in Sewall’s entry for the year 1680).

1638 – March/April

(MD)

Winthrop, John. *The Journal of John Winthrop. 1630-1649.* Ed. Richard Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle. Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1996 (The John Harvard Library. Published in association with the Massachusetts Historical Society). 253-55.

1638 – April 11

(MD)

Bradford, William. “Letter to John Winthrop, April 11, 1638.” *Winthrop Papers* Vol. IV (1638-1644): 23-24, MHS Publications. Boston: The Merrymount Press, 1944. 23.

1638 – “Providence 16th of this 2nd [1638],” that is April 16 (MD)

Williams, Roger. “Letter to John Winthrop, April 1638.” *Winthrop Papers* vol. IV (1638-1644), 25-27, MHS Publications. Boston: The Merrymount Press, 1944. 25.

1638 – [late March or April] (MD)

[Winthrop], John (“Wentthrop”). “A monstrous berth brought forth att Boston in New England, October 1637.” In: Pearl, Valerie and Morris Pearl. “Notes and Documents. Governor John Winthrop on the Birth of the Antinomians’ ‘Monster:’ The Earliest Reports to Reach England and the Making of a Myth.” *Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings (MHSP)* 102 (1990), 21-37, Appendix II, 37.

[1638] – [date unknown, probably June 1638] [MD]

Hooker, Thomas. Letter (addressee unknown) quoted in Mather, Cotton. *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England, from Its First Planting in the Year 1620. unto the Year of Our Lord, 1698.* London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, MDCCII, 1702, Book VII, 20.

1638 – [June] (MD)

Yonge, Walter. “A Monster borne.” In: Pearl, Valerie and Morris Pearl. “Notes and Documents. Governor John Winthrop on the Birth of the Antinomians’ ‘Monster:’ The Earliest Reports to Reach England and the Making of a Myth.” *Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings (MHSP)* 102 (1990), 21-37, Appendix I, 35-36.

1638 – June 29 and September 30 (MD)

Josselyn, John.

In 1638, John Josselyn made two notes on Dyer’s “monstrous birth” on board his ship near Boston harbor; these were published later in *An Account of Two Voyages to New-England* (1674). See the entry for the year 1674.

1638 – September 7 (MD, AH)

Browne, Edmund. “Letter to Sir Simonds D’Ewes. September 7, 1638.” *Letters from New England: The Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1629-1638.* Ed. Everett Emerson. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976, 224-30.

1638 – September, before 21

(AH)

Winthrop, John. *The Journal of John Winthrop. 1630-1649.* Ed. Richard Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle. Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1996 (The John Harvard Library. Published in association with the Massachusetts Historical Society), 264-5; cf. 266.

1639 – [April]

(MD, AH)

Howes, Edward. “Letter to John Winthrop Jr.” [April 1639]. *Collections of the MHS*, 4th series, vol. 6 (1863), 505-6.

1642

(MD)

[**Anonymous**]. *Newes from New-England: Of a Most Strange and Prodigious Birth, Brought to Boston in New-England, October the 17. Being a True and Exact Relation, Brought over April 19. 1642. by a Gentleman of Good Worth, now Resident in London.* London: Printed for John G. Smith, 1642, n. pag.

1643

(AH)

Vicars, John. *Prodigies and Apparitions, Or, Englands Warning Piece Being a Seasonable Description by Lively Figures & Apt Illustration of Many Remarkable & Prodigious Fore-runners & Apparent Predictions of Gods Wrath against England, if not Timely Prevented by True Repentance.* [London], 1643, 26-27.

1643

[MD?]

[**Anonymous, possibly Weld, Thomas**]. *New Englands First Fruits; In Respect First of the Conversion of Some, Conviction of Divers, Preparation of Sundry of the Indians. 2. Of the Progresse of Learning, in the Colledge at Cambridge in Massacusets Bay.* London: Printed by R. O. and G. D. for Henry Overton, 1643, 22.

1644 – January

(AH)

[**Winthrop, John**]. *Antinomians and Familists Condemned by the Synod of Elders in Nevv-England: with the Proceedings of the Magistrates against Them, and Their Apology for the Same. Together with a Memorable Example of Gods Iudgments upon Some of Those Persons so Proceeded against.* London: Printed for Ralph Smith, 1644, 43-45.

1644 – After January

(MD, AH)

[**Winthrop, John**], with a preface by Thomas Welde. *A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines, That Infected the Churches of New-England: And How They Were Confuted by the Assembly of Ministers there: As also of the Magistrates Proceedings in Court against Them. Together with Gods Strange and Remarkable Judgements from Heaven upon Some of the Chief Fomenters of these Opinions; And the Lamentable Death of Ms. Hutchinson: Very Fit for these Times; Here Being the Same Errours amongst Us, and Acted by the Same Spirit. Published at the Instant Request of Sundry, by One That Was an Eye and Eare-witnesse of the Carriage of Matters There.* London: Printed for Ralph Smith at the signe of the Bible in Cornhill neare the Royall Exchange, 1644, The Preface, B3 verso f; 43-45.

1644

[MD ??, AH ??]

Edwards, Thomas. *Antapologia: Or, A Full Answer to the Apologeticall Narration Of Mr Goodwin, Mr Nye, Mr Sympson, Mr Burroughs, Mr Bridge, Members of the Assembly of Divines.* London: Printed by G. M. for John Bellamie, 1644, 34, 262.

1645

(MD, AH)

P[agitt], E[phraim]. *Heresiography: or, A Description of the Heretickes and Sectaries of these Latter Times.* London: Printed by M. Okes, 1645, 100-1.

1645

(MD, AH)

Wheelwright, John [Jr.] *Mercurius Americanus, Mr. Welds His Antitype, Or, Massachusetts Great Apologie Examined, Being Observations Upon a Paper Styled, A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Familists, Libertines, &c. which Infected the Churches of New-England.* 1645. John Wheelwright. *His Writings, Including His Fast-Day Sermon, 1637. And his Mercurius Americanus, 1645; with a Paper upon the Genuineness of the Indian Deed of 1629.* Ed. Charles H. Bell. New York: Burt Franklin, [1967]. (First Published by The Prince Society, Boston, 1876, Vol. 9). Publications of the Prince Society, Vol. IX; Research and Source Works Series, n° 131. 195-7.

1645 – [early that year; the text is dated “December 10, 1644”]

[MD ??, AH ??]

Shepard, Thomas. *New Englands Lamentation For Old Englands Present Errours, and Divisions, and Their Feared Future Desolations if Not Timely Prevented. Occasioned by the Increase of Anabaptists, Rigid Separatists, Antinomians and Familists.* London, Printed by George Miller, MDC.XLV [1645], 3-4.

1646

(MD, AH)

Baillie, Robert. *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time vvherein the Tenets of the Principall Sects, Especially of the Independents, are Drawn Together in One Map, for the Most Part in the Words of Their Own Authours, and Their Maine Principles Are Examined by the Touch-stone of the Holy Scriptures.* London: Printed for Samuel Gellibrand, 1646, (58-9), 63, 72.

1646

(MD, AH)

Clark[e], Samuel. *A Mirrovr or Looking-Glasse Both for Saints and Sinners: Wherein, By Many Memorable Examples Is Set Forth, as Gods Exceeding Great Mercies to the One, so His Severe Judgements upon the Other.* London: Printed by Ric. Cotes, for John Bellamy, 1646, 114-6.

1648

(MD, AH)

Rutherford, Samuel. *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist. Opening the Secrets of Familisme and Antinomianisme in the Antichristian Doctrine of John Saltmarsh, and Will. Del., the Present Preachers of the Army Now in England, and of Robert Town, Tob. Crisp, H. Denne, Eaton, and Others.* London: Printed by J. D. & R. I. for Andrew Crooke, 1648, 181-2.

1648

(MD)

Danforth, Samuel. *MDCXLVIII, An Almanack for the Year of Our Lord 1648.* Printed at Cambridge, 1648; entry for the year 1637.

[1649]

(MD, AH)

Baxter, Richard. "Undated Treatise." [1649]. In: Cooper, Tim. *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England. Richard Baxter and Antinomianism.* Aldershot, Burlington USA, Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate, 2001, 203.

1650

(MD, AH)

Baxter, Richard. *The Saints Everlasting Rest: Or, A Treatise Of the Blessed State of the Saints in Their Enjoyment of God in Glory.* London: Printed by Rob. White, for Thomas Underhil and Francis Tyton, 1650, 232.

1650

(MD, AH)

Tombes, John. *An Antidote against the Venome of a Passage, in the 5th. Direction of the Epistle Dedicatory to the Whole Book of Mr. Richard Baxter Teacher at Kederminster in Worcestershire, Intituled, The Saints Everlasting Rest,*

Containing a Satyricall Invective against Anabaptists. London: Printed by Charles Sumptner for Thomas Brewster and Greg. Moule, 1650, 21-22.

1651

(MD, AH)

Baxter, Richard. *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants Church-membership and Baptism: Being the Arguments Prepared for (and Partly Managed in) the Publike Dispute with Mr. Tombes at Bewdley on the First Day of January.* London: Printed for Robert White, 1651, 168, 189, 198.

1651

(MD, AH)

Groves, Robert. *Gleanings: Or, A Collection of Some Memorable Passages, Both Antient [sic] and Moderne. Many in Relation to the Late Warre.* London: Printed by R. Ibbitson, 1651, 42-5.

1653

(MD)

Johnson, Edward. [The Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England.] *A History of New-England. From the English Planting in the Yeere 1628. untill the Yeere 1652, Declaring the Form of their Government, Civill, Military, and Ecclesiastique. Their Wars with the Indians, Their Troubles with the Gortonists, and Other Heretiques.* London: Printed for Nath: Brooke, 1653, 131-4.

1659

(MD)

Hull, John. *The Diaries of John Hull, Mint-Master and Treasurer of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay. From the Original Manuscript in the Collection of the American Antiquarian Society. With a Memoir of the Author.* Boston: Printed by John Wilson and Son, 1857. Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society. Vol. III, 1857. New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation Boston, Printed by the Society, 1857, 188-9.

1660 – May 19, 1660

(MD)

[Eliot, John]. “Letter to Thomas Brookes, May 19, 1660.” In: Winsser, Johan. “Mary Dyer and the “Monster” Story.” *Quaker History* 79 (Spring 1990), 30-31.

1663

(MD, AH)

Spencer, John. *A Discourse Concerning Prodigies: Wherein the Vanity of Presages by Them is reprehended, and Their True and Proper Ends Asserted and*

Vindicated. Cambridge: Printed by John Field for Will. Graves Bookseller, 1663, 90.

1667

(MD, AH)

Williamson, Joseph. "Memoranda of Sir Joseph Williamson." *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 1st ser. (1873-1875), vol. 13, Boston, 1875, 132.

1669

(MD)

Morton, Nathaniel. *New-Englands Memoriall: or A Brief Relation of the Most Memorable and Remarkable Passages of the Providence of God Manifested to the Planters of New-England in America. With special Reference to the First Colony thereof, Called New-Plimouth*. Cambridge: Printed by S. G. and M. J. for John Usher of Boston, 1669, 108.

1671

(MD, AH)

Clarke, Samuel. *A Mirrour or Looking-Glass Both for Saints, and Sinners, Held Forth in Some Thousands of Examples; Wherein is Presented, as Gods Wonderful Mercies to the One, so his Severe Judgments against the Other. Collected out of the Most Classique Authors, both Ancient, and Modern, with Some Late Examples Observed by My Self, and Others*. The Fourth Edition very much Enlarged. London: Printed by Tho. Milbourn for Robert Clavel, Tho. Passinger, William Cadman, William Whiswood, Tho. Sawbridge, and William Birch, 1671, 249-50.

1674

(MD)

Josselyn, John. "Chronological Observations of America, From the year of the World to the year of Christ, 1673." *An Account of Two Voyages to New-England*. London: Printed for Giles Widdows, 1674, 11, 17-18.

1676

(MD, AH)

[Groome, Samuel]. *A Glass for the People of New-England, in which They May See Themselves and Spirits, and if Not too Late, Repent and Turn from Their Abominable Ways and Cursed Contrivances*. London, 1676, 8-12; cf. 29-30.

1676

(MD)

Mather, Increase. *A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New-England. From June 24. 1675. (when the First Englishman was Murdered by the Indians)*

to August 12. 1676. when Philip, alias Metacomet, the Principal Author and Beginner of the War, was Slain. London, Printed for Richard Chiswell, at the Rose and Crown in St. Pauls Church-Yard, according to the Original Copy Printed in New-England, 1676, 35.

1680, after January

[MD ??]

[**Sewall, Samuel.** Commonplace Book, at the Massachusetts Historical Society, 38-40.]. According to Winsser (33 and 33n54), Sewall included a report on Dyer's monstrous birth in his Commonplace Book "as part of a meditative exercise" as well as the story of a "monster" "brought forth by the wife of Samuel Dible" on January 10, 1679[80]." I have not been successful in locating these quotations.

Early 1680s

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1692

(MD, AH)

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1697

(MD)

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1702

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1712 – November 21

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1714

(MD)

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