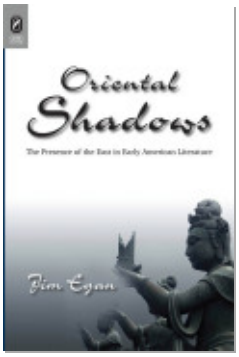
Chapter 1. The Colonial Body Travels East in Anne Bradstreet's Poetry



CHAPTER 1

The Colonial Body Travels East in Anne Bradstreet's Poetry

Anne Bradstreet wrote far more poetry concerning Alexander the Great, well over 1,000 lines, than on any other topic or person. Let me put this another way. Bradstreet devoted more poetry to Alexander than to her husband, her children, her grandchildren, her father or her mother, either individually or combined. She devoted more lines of poetry to Alexander than to one of the most important icons of her age, Queen Elizabeth, or to one of the most important political events of her time, the English Civil War. She wrote more poetry about Alexander than she did about the New England Way or her life in the New World. She wrote more about Alexander than she wrote about her experiences as a woman. She wrote more poetry about Alexander than she wrote about Native Americans, the people who were the Puritans' sometimes combatants, sometimes allies, but who were always involved in some way in seventeenth-century Puritan New England and English thinking. In fact, we might never have had a published work from her in the first place had Bradstreet not been quite so fascinated with Alexander. After all, virtually all of the material on Alexander appears in "The Four Monarchies," and this poem alone, as Jane Eberwein points out, "takes up more than half of *The Tenth Muse*." "Without its sheer mass," Eberwein continues, "it is improbable there ever would have been such a book." As Eberwein goes on to note, "[I]t is Alexander that dominates the poem."[1] One might even say that *The Tenth Muse* is as much about Alexander as it is about any other topic.

Given the interest Bradstreet demonstrated in all things relating to Alexander, how could it be that scholars have paid so little attention to "The Four Monarchies" in general and to Alexander in particular? Why have we chosen to focus our interpretive attention on Bradstreet's other poetry, even though we know Bradstreet devoted an extraordinary amount of her time and energy over many years to "The Four Monarchies," more time and energy, it seems clear, than she spent on any other piece of writing? Even more importantly, what can be learned about Bradstreet's writing and, more broadly, colonial British American writing and culture from a more careful analysis of the figure of Alexander as he appears in "The Four Monarchies" and Bradstreet's other poetry?

I suspect that we have ignored this poem and, more specifically, the figure of Alexander who dominates it, because the poem and person seem to have little to tell us about what is specifically colonial and/or American about colonial British American poetry, culture, and life.[2] The first book of poetry published in England by an American poet provides us with no scenes of encounters with Indians, adjustments to the wilds of America, descriptions of America's distinctive landscape, meditations on colonial political squabbles, or colorful portraits of colonial life in general.[3] Instead, Bradstreet fills her poetry with references to "antique Greeks" such as Alexander, and she provides us with detailed scenes of England regaining its strength after the Civil War so that it can "lay waste" to "Turkey."[4] Bradstreet recounts stories of "barbarous" people, "sottish kings," and incestuous relations in the East.[5] She writes of Egyptian revolutions. She devotes hundreds of lines to scenes set in Asia and "less Asia" in which she speaks of "Asiatic coast[s]" alongside "Asiatic cowardice."[6] She writes of the "manners, habit, gestures" of the "luxurious nation" of Persia.[7] Bradstreet does write about "Indian Kings," but she uses the phrase without exception to refer to Southeast Asian royalty rather than Native Americans leaders.[8] She compares Queen Elizabeth to the "potent empress of the East" and follows Alexander's attempts to conquer what she refers to as the "East" as he relentlessly battles to "his empire extend / Unto the utmost bounds o' th' orient."[9] While a colonial British American poet wrote these words, the images in the lines seem to ignore rather than engage with what William Spengemann has labeled "American Things."[10] Yet, depending on how one counts what should be classified as "Eastern Things," at least a third of Bradstreet's poetry is devoted to references just like those above.

In an effort to begin filling this void in scholarship concerning the significance of "Eastern things" in Bradstreet's poetry, this chapter will analyze her representation of Alexander the Great.[11] Such a focus on Bradstreet's

portrayal of Alexander will require investigation into the figure of the East in the Puritan New England poet's verse. This is true first because, as I noted above, the poem in which Alexander appears most often, "The Four Monarchies," contains many references to the East, and these references are most prominent in the section of the poem in which Alexander takes center stage, Bradstreet's versification of the third monarchy. Even if, though, Bradstreet had written of Alexander in "The Four Monarchies" without once mentioning any people, places, or things associated with the East, we still would have had to consider the region in some fashion in our analysis of Bradstreet's representation of Alexander given the frequency with which writers in the early modern period connected him to the region. Alexander's connection with the East—both his confrontation with it and the allure that it held for him—were such integral parts of his seventeenth-century image that it was virtually impossible to speak of him without invoking the specter of the region he ultimately failed to bring under Western control. In the early modern world in which Bradstreet lived, Alexander's very identity—the qualities, characteristics, and features with which he was associated and which served to define him as a distinct character—was inextricably bound with the East.

Before we consider the significance of the East in Bradstreet's representations of Alexander, we must first understand the paradoxical qualities associated with the region when Bradstreet wrote. As the dominant political, economic, and military power throughout most of recorded history—at least as Bradstreet and her contemporaries tell the story of human history—the East stands in the way of the desire expressed by many in England and her colonies to extend the range of Protestantism's hegemony across the globe. Indeed, given the Ottoman Empire's attempts throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to bring more of Europe under its political control through military conquest, Bradstreet's brand of Christianity seemed, at least to many of its supporters in Europe, to be in a fight for its very life with its foes to the East.[12] Our historical vantage point looks at the late seventeenth century as precisely the period when the Ottoman Empire began its slow decline. This perspective was not available to Bradstreet or her readers. When English Puritans and their allies in the American colonies viewed their plight in light of what was happening around the globe as a whole, they tended to see a world dominated by countries and worldviews they cast as fundamentally "Eastern," countries and worldviews that had, in their opinion, turned hostile toward the "true" religion of Christianity to which the East had given birth. They still viewed the Ottoman Empire, in other words, as a real, ongoing threat to Christendom's way of life.

But this view of the East as purely or even primarily a threat to the West fails to account for other, more positive ways in which the East was understood by people writing in English around the time Bradstreet composed her poetry. Indeed, we should be careful to avoid reading back onto seventeenth-century New England writing a strict East–West binary that would come into life in the nineteenth century. Bradstreet wrote and revised her poetry before Orientalism came to dominate what in the introduction I called the symbolic spatial economy.[13] As Daniel Vitkus points out, "'the East' was not yet the clearly defined geographic or cultural category that it would become"; an "imaginary construct" that cast East as diametrically opposed to West "was yet to be built."[14] In this moment of history before Orientalism took hold, Bradstreet and her contemporaries found much to emulate in Eastern people, places, and practices.

For one thing, the East was the birthplace of Christ and the geographic location of the events in the Bible. New England Puritans associated the East, in other words, with God's representative on Earth, the being with whom all Puritans longed to be one in the afterlife, and they considered the East the holiest of lands by virtue of its being the birthplace of the being they considered humanity's savior. In addition, for those communities who longed for a seat at the table with the truly civilized nations, the East's status as the center for centuries of the civilized world provided an image of what it meant for a nation to be truly civilized, an image that had received the sanction of historians and educators for centuries. If, as scholars have long noted, the people in Britain's American colonies learned what it meant to be refined by aping the ways of their supposed betters in London, early modern Europeans and British Americans looked, in a similar way, still further East for behaviors and practices to emulate that would allow them to claim that they, too, should be counted as civilized people.

In order to explore the ways in which the sometimes paradoxical qualities these issues, ideas, and images attached to the East come to life in Bradstreet's poetry, this chapter will focus on the two poems in which Bradstreet mentions Alexander the Great: "The Four Monarchies" and "An Elegie upon that Honourable and renowned Knight, Sir Philip Sidney." Each of these poems appears in the two seventeenth-century editions of Bradstreet's poetry over which we believe she had some control, *The Tenth Muse,* issued in London in 1650, and *Several Poems,* printed in Boston in 1678.[15] "The Four Monarchies" of *The Tenth Muse* is unfinished.[16] It abruptly ends during the early years of the last monarchy. She was unable to finish the poem before she died, so the version to appear in *Several Poems* is also unfinished.

This second version of Bradstreet's longest poem contains relatively minor revisions. The most significant revision can be found at the end of the section on the fourth and final monarchy when Bradstreet attempts to explain, in a 27-line "Apology," her inability to complete the poem. The London elegy to Sidney, on the other hand, underwent significant revision before it made its second appearance in Boston in 1678. At some point after the poem's initial publication, Bradstreet substantially revised her memorial to Sidney, trimming it from approximately 150 to just under 100 lines. We will, in the pages that follow, need to consider the nature of some of these revisions as they pertain to Alexander.

The chapter is divided into two sections. First, we need to examine the connection Bradstreet makes in her poetry between Alexander and the East. Therefore, the first section focuses on Bradstreet's representation of the East in general in "The Four Monarchies." This discussion is followed by a careful consideration of the way she portrays Alexander in relation to the East in the poem. Our examination of the Great Conqueror reveals that the figure of the East in Bradstreet's poetry served as both a threat and a model, an object of debilitating fear and intense, unsatisfied, and unquenchable desire. Once we have considered Alexander's connection to the East in "The Four Monarchies," we then turn our attention to the implications Bradstreet's vision of Alexander has for our understanding of the two versions of her Sidney elegy. Bradstreet uses Alexander in both versions of this poem as a way of sneaking the colonists into identity categories from which they were usually excluded. Through the magic of figurative language, Bradstreet engages in what I think can accurately be described as a kind of imaginary grave robbery in which colonial corpses rob classical ones of their very identities. She does this when she represents Britain's American colonists as being part of the very same body politic as Alexander. Through this rhetorical sleight of hand, she ties to the East all those living on the very far reaches of England's burgeoning empire and, in so doing, brings colonial British Americans into the realm of civilized nations. In this poem, Bradstreet grounds colonial British American claims to be civilized on classical figures associated with the East rather than, for instance, by turning our attention to the new world that lay before her or the peoples and places she and the colonists had left behind in Europe. In order to see how she accomplishes these rhetorical feats, we need to turn now to the poem, "The Four Monarchies," in which Bradstreet focuses our attention most often on Alexander and the East.

WHILE FIGURES of the East play a key role throughout Bradstreet's poetry, the Eastern focus of *The Tenth Muse* and *Several Poems* grows primarily if not exclusively out of what is by far the longest poem in either collection and the longest poem Bradstreet ever wrote, "The Four Monarchies."[17] The poem is divided into four sections corresponding to each of the monarchies that—according, at least, to seventeenth-century historians—had governed the world from just after the Great Flood until the fall of the Roman Empire. At approximately 3,500 lines, the poem is more than five times longer than Bradstreet's next longest poem, the approximately 600-line "Of the Four Humours in Man's Constitution." We should hardly be surprised that even 3,500 lines of poetry would be insufficient to cover so vast a topic as the history of the world and, in fact, Bradstreet never finished the poem.

Bradstreet explains in what, at first glance, appear to be the final 13 lines of the third monarchy that she is "done" with a poem whose "errors" make her "blush."[18] Any careful reader of Bradstreet knows better than to take the explanation she offers here—that the "task befits not women like to men"—at face value, and we are even less inclined to do so in this case given that these 13 lines announcing her decision to abandon the poem are followed by another 10 lines in which she proclaims that, after "some days of rest," she has decided "To finish what's begun" (1. 3412; 3422–23). Even her newfound energy proves insufficient to the task at hand, though, and the final lines of the version of "The Four Monarchies" in *Several Poems* announce one last time that Bradstreet will be unable to complete the task. But not for lack of effort. She speaks of the "hours" she spent and the "weary lines" she "penned" in an effort to fulfill her "desire" to "prosecute the story to the last" (1. 3560–65). Try as she might, though, a "raging fire" destroyed her most recent additions to the poem, and, in the end, she decided she could not see the history of the world through to its completion (1. 3566). If nothing else, Bradstreet's repeated efforts to finish so gargantuan a project after so many years and in the face of so many daunting personal obstacles suggests the great importance she attached to this poem.

If it is to be expected that a poem aiming to versify world history would end up being the longest poem Bradstreet ever wrote, so, too, should we hardly be surprised, given the history of the world up to that point, that "The Four Monarchies" focuses attention on the East. Bradstreet and the histories she adapted and/or used as background for her poem had little choice but to concentrate on matters associated with the Eastern part of the globe, for Europe and the West had played relatively insignificant roles in the shaping of world history up to that point. The Eastern orientation of the historical record in "The Four Monarchies" reminds us of what any

seventeenth-century reader would have known but we might have forgotten: far from being the dominant imperial and/or economic power it would later become, England and its European enemies and allies had long been second-tier communities whose clout on the world stage paled in comparison to the political and economic entities to their East. The very development by Western writers in the middle ages of the concepts of translatio studi and translatio imperii—the march of learning and rule from East to West—indicates that Europeans were well away of the East's historical supremacy over the West, and the continuing invocation of these concepts by Britain's American colonists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shows that people of English descent living in the colonies were equally aware of their culture's own inferiority in comparison to those to be found in the East.[19] The theory might even be understood as motivated by a deep anxiety about the West's place in the hierarchy of civilized nations. If those in the West found themselves less advanced when they looked back over the historical record, why not lay claim to greater learning and eventual rule in a yet unrealized but no doubt inevitable future?

The greater learning and the vast body of sophisticated cultural products to be found throughout history—learning and products that account in part for the sense of inferiority out of which theories such as translatio studi and imperii grow—confer on the East a cultural sophistication to which those of English ancestry can only aspire. We catch a glimpse of the great cultural power attached to the East in the way Bradstreet's poem suggests that one can never be East enough. All of the rulers to be found in the first poem's first book want to control territory to their East, including rulers who lord over what would seem to be the very center of Eastern power. So even though the poem begins in what it calls the East, Assyria, it nonetheless demonstrates the grandeur of one of the very first rulers mentioned, Ninus, by showing how he extended his reign even further east throughout "all the greater Asia" (1. 64). The focus on the East as the object of insatiable desire becomes clear when control of virtually the whole of Asia fails to satisfy Ninus's successor, his widow Semiramus. She dies leading her armies on "[a]n expedition" even further "to the East" (1. 130).

The poem does not bother to tell us where in the East she led her armies. Instead, the East remains an undefined region here and elsewhere in "The Four Monarchies," a region whose precise boundaries matter less than its function as a signifier of desire for accumulation, wealth, and status. One cannot be entirely successful, the poem suggests, nor can one ever be entirely satisfied with one's position in the world, unless and until one conquers the East as a whole, a region that lacks a whole from the Western point of

view because those who seek to master it continually and obsessively fail to offer their own definition of its boundaries. As a demonstration of this, the poem puts on display ruler after ruler from greater and lesser Asia, each of whom embarks on quest after quest in the hopes of conquering some region even further to the East, only to end up defeated because, without fail, some part of the East remains just beyond his grasp.

We might expect the poem to be less fixated on the East once the center of world power moves westward to Greece and Rome. Instead, precisely the opposite turns out to be the case. The poem fixes our gaze even more frequently on the Eastern parts of the world as civilization advances, at least according to translatio studii and imperii, toward its inevitable European home. For the third book in "The Four Monarchies" concentrates almost exclusively on Alexander's quest to bring the East under his control.

As if this were not enough to show the outsize focus Bradstreet here gives the desire to conquer the East, we must remember that the obsession with the East during the Grecian monarchy does not end with Alexander.[20] In Bradstreet's retelling of the history of the world during the third monarchy, the desire for the East becomes the defining goal not simply of the period's main character but of all those who follow in his wake. From the moment we are introduced to Alexander until Rome succeeds Greece more than 3,000 lines later, the poem allows us no diversion from its myopic fixation on the East. We are first treated to Alexander's plans for conquering Persia and Asia, then to the details of his military successes and failures as he aims to bring his vision to reality. When Bradstreet tells us of the various places and peoples he subdues while he leads his army in battle, of the treachery Alexander encounters and the cruelty he inflicts, she never fails to specify where on the globe these deeds occur. We hear of his crossing the "River Granic" and the "Black Sea," and, when Alexander draws near Persia, she tells us how his order that his ships sail by the mouth of the Indus flood has the unfortunate result of having those boats get stuck upon the flats and mud (1. 1675; 1691; 2360–75). Alexander's death brings no end to the obsession with all things Eastern. Bradstreet's treatment of how his descendents, disciples, and enemies seek to realize his vision lasts another 800 lines. Whether or not Bradstreet consciously chose to spend so much more time on a section devoted exclusively to the East, the effect is the same as if it were conscious. When we get to the Grecian monarchy, the focus on the East explodes into a downright obsession from which the reader cannot escape.

Bradstreet's engagement with her material grows as the story becomes more focused on the East. Of all the monarchies, the Grecian clearly holds the most interest for Bradstreet.[21] Suddenly, in the section on Alexander

and the attempt to conquer the East, Bradstreet finds her muse. She devotes over 1,700 lines to the Grecian monarchy but only 1,600 lines combined for the Assyrian and Persian. She wrote twice as many lines about the Grecian monarchy, in other words, than she did about any other monarchial period in spite of the fact that the Persian monarchy lasted far longer than the Grecian. Bradstreet thus devotes more verse—1,000—to things of the East in this single section of this monarchy than she does to the various rulers and their travels and concerns in either of the first two monarchies. Indeed, the first two monarchies combined amount to only 1,600 lines. She writes over 1,000 lines about Alexander and the East alone.

Bradstreet's greater focus on the East in the Grecian monarchy derives, at least in part, from the fact that this is the section of the poem in which a figure claimed by the West as its own—Alexander—comes remarkably close to bringing the East under his dominion. Bradstreet focuses so much attention on the East in this part of the poem, that is, because this is the moment when the West seems capable of defusing the threat posed by the East and absorbing its antagonist's cultural legacies into its own traditions. To incorporate the East into the West, though, poses a threat as grave as the one Alexander's political domination of the East wards off: turning Turk. How does one incorporate the cultural legacies of the East into the West without corrupting Western cultural products and practices themselves with Eastern influences? The way to satisfy the desire to incorporate the East into the West, Bradstreet suggests, is to obliterate the distinction between East and West in the first place, and Alexander, according to Bradstreet, does exactly this.

Alexander's very body, the poem suggests, defies geographic boundaries and cannot be contained by geographic space. It is not just, Bradstreet insists, that Alexander wants to extend his dominion beyond his home country. Alexander does more than simply "scorn" being "confin'd" to "Grecia" alone (1. 1621–23). Bradstreet extends Alexander's reach beyond the mere globe by insisting that all of geographic space itself would barely contain Alexander's body parts. The very "universe" itself, Bradstreet informs us, would "scarce bound [Alexander's] vast minde" (1. 1621–22). Bradstreet associates not only his body but also his very identity with geographic space. His "fame," she tells us, will "last whilest there is land" (1. 2577–78). At the very height of his power, when he has brought "All countries, kingdoms, provinces . . . From Hellespont to th' farthest ocean" under his control, Alexander is made to "oft lament" the fact that "no more worlds" remained "to be conquered" (1. 2508–9, 2601–2).

We see this aspect of Alexander's character as well in the way Bradstreet

highlights the Great Conqueror's constant motion over geographic space as once-powerful monarchs fall one by one in the face of his seemingly invincible armies. He moves over so much space so quickly that geographic borders themselves—and distinctions such as East versus West—are called into question. Scanning the lines of poetry on any page from "The Third Monarchy" takes us in a matter of seconds across hundreds of miles of often rugged, mountainous territory. So it is that in fewer than 100 lines Alexander moves from Gaza to Jerusalem to Egypt to Syria then back to Egypt until, finally, he ends up in Phoenicia. Even death fails to halt his body's movements, for Alexander continues his journey even after he dies (1. 2775). His dead body travels for two years before being laid to rest in Macedonia. After so much motion, so much movement over so much space, we are led to ask, how can such a figure be contained within a single geographic region?

Alexander's ability to obliterate geographic boundaries—boundaries that, we must remember, signify at the same time a cultural divide that prioritizes Eastern cultural history over Western cultural history—provides the very means by which the West can triumph over an East of the West's imagination. Let me explain how this paradox works in "The Four Monarchies." We must remember, first, that at the time the poem was written and as the poem itself demonstrates in the people, places, and incidents it describes, only the East could lay claim to a long, uninterrupted history of social, political, and economic dominance. Second, we need to keep in mind that Alexander serves in this poem and elsewhere as a representative of the West. Third, we should recall the paradoxical nature of the Eastern imaginary. It is not that Bradstreet or other early modern writers want simply to adopt the ways of the East so that they can be seen to be just as civilized and refined as those who lived in the communities authorized as truly civilized in world history. After all, the East is both a model for those in the Western world to emulate and a threat to the religious, political, and economic aims of those in the West. Bradstreet wants to use the refinement of the East as a model that can be adapted by those in the colonies so that they can take on the refinement attached to the people and places of the East, but she wants them to take on this refinement while simultaneously retaining their own identities as people of the West. She wants her fellow colonists to use the East so that they can claim to be civilized and English at the same time, all without becoming, through the incorporation of Eastern things, an Easterner herself.

Succumbing to the charms of the East is precisely what trips up Alexander in the end. While he absorbs one group of people after another into

his and the West's political and cultural orbit as he relentlessly defeats one army after another in the space of only a few lines of verse, he ultimately fails to lead the West to what Bradstreet would have considered its rightful place at the head of the civilized world because he succumbs to the lure of the East. Armies pose no obstacle to him. He defeats each one that crosses his path. Instead, Alexander fails to conquer the East, according to Bradstreet and her sources, because he goes native. We see this in his rejection of what Bradstreet casts as distinctively Protestant moral codes. He behaves more like one of the monarchs of the East from the earlier books than like someone who lives by the Christian God's laws. Once he has extended "his empire" not only to "th' farthest ocean" but even more crucially "to the utmost bounds o' the' orient," once the extension of his empire has created an army defined by its "monstrous bulk," not only does his wealth grow "boundless" by the extraordinary breadth of his rule but also, and more importantly, "Him boundless made in vice and cruelty" (1. 1945–46). Freed from abiding by Protestant moral codes once he has obliterated the distinction between East and West by bringing the people and places of the East under his command, Alexander sets fire to whole towns, puts to death former allies for no discernable reason, and pursues power for power's sake alone.

It is one thing for Alexander himself to adopt Eastern ways, but it is even more threatening to the purity of the Western tradition to insist, as Alexander does, that his subordinates follow his lead. This, Bradstreet suggests, is the final straw. This is what ultimately brings about the Great Conqueror's death. Alexander suddenly and without warning, at least according to Bradstreet, adopts the "manners, habit, gestures . . . [and] fashion" of the "conquered and luxurious nation" of Persia (1. 2166–70). Not satisfied with keeping his fashion tastes to himself, Alexander goes so far as to insist that "his nobility" do the same. Lest we miss the implication of his turning Turk, Bradstreet informs us that his "captains" were "grieved" at the transformation these seemingly stylistic changes produce. For Bradstreet claims that his Captains lament the change they see in his very "mind" that these new "manners" bring about (1. 2171–72).[22] It should not surprise us, then, that after an evening of drinking, Alexander's subordinates are able to overtake him. If even so great a leader as Alexander, even so ruthless and successful a military tactician as the Great Conqueror, cannot wrest control of the East without succumbing to the threats posed by its so-called corrupt ways, what hope does the West as a whole have of succeeding where so exemplary a figure has already failed?

In order to answer this question, we must return to an earlier point: that while Bradstreet associates the figure of Alexander with the East, she shows

that his quest for ever more territory to his East ultimately stems from the inability of space to contain Alexander. He conquers because the world cannot contain him, and so he holds open the possibility of space lacking geographic distinction at all. He cannot be contained within the boundaries of the West but seeks to obliterate those boundaries through conquest. Once the world is his, the boundaries that had defined the world—East and West—will be obliterated. In using Alexander as the figure for a space in which geographic divisions no longer apply, though, Bradstreet necessarily claims this philosophical position for the West. The destruction of these boundaries would usher in the continual, never-ending, nevermore threatened triumph of the West over an East that threatens precisely because it has dominated the world for all of human history. We in the West can learn from Alexander's example, Bradstreet's representation of Alexander here seems to suggest, to avoid going native by obliterating such geographic distinctions in the first place. Since it is a figure from the West who embodies this position and potentially brings it to life, though, the West gets to define the world after it has lost its divisions. It is in this way that Bradstreet can suggest that the West can eat its geographic cake and have it too. For once geographic distinctions are obliterated, the world becomes one because it is one as the West imagined it. No one need fear becoming Easternized in such a world, for this world owes its nativity to the West.

This is not, of course, the way history went. Alexander failed to conquer the East, and European Christians continued to perceive the East as a threat to their religious and political systems. The European monarchy had yet to occur when Bradstreet wrote, and the Ottoman Empire continued to pose a potent threat to any hopes the West might have. But in spite of Alexander's failures, the dream lives on in the poem in his descendents. His failure signals not the impossibility of the West's success but its potential to match the East.

"THE FOUR MONARCHIES" makes no explicit connection between the British American colonists and Alexander. None of the few scholars over the years who have analyzed the poem have detected any attempt to use the people, places, and events in Bradstreet's verse history of the world as allegories for any aspect of New England life.[23] To see the connection in Bradstreet's poetry between the colonists, Alexander, and the East we must turn to a much shorter of Bradstreet's writings, "An Elegy Upon that Honourable and Renowned Knight Sir Philip Sidney." As I noted earlier, Bradstreet

wrote two very different versions of this elegy, one published in 1650 in *The Tenth Muse* and the other in 1678 in *Several Poems.* She dramatically shortened the Boston version of the poem, transforming a 150-line poem into one of barely 95. To achieve this newfound brevity about Sidney, Bradstreet not only removed entire sections of the work but also reworked and reordered other parts. Commentators have generally found both versions unsatisfying—hardly surprising given that this appears to be Bradstreet's first attempt to write an elegy—but they have been especially critical of the second version. Rosamond Rosenmeier, for instance, finds the "religious and erotic enthusiasm" at the heart of the first version to be absent entirely from the second.[24]

The changes in the Boston version make Alexander even more central than he was in the London elegy, in spite of the fact that his name appears less often in the revised version of the poem. We see this in the way Bradstreet reduces the number of people to whom she compares Sidney. Since comparisons are one way a poet defines his or her subject, one way, that is, the poet helps us understand the ideals and ideas with which the subject is to be associated, then fewer comparisons means fewer ideals with which to be associated. The narrower range of comparisons thus allows us to see the subject with a sharper focus, and in the process of doing so strengthens the connection between the subject and the person to whom he or she is being compared. We see precisely this sharpening of focus in Bradstreet's Boston elegy. In London, Sidney merges his identity with two figures, Apollo and Alexander. Sidney, the poem contends, has such a "deep share" of Apollo's "Deity" that the two become indistinguishable.[25] On numbers alone, though, Alexander rates above Apollo in *The Tenth Muse* version of the poem, for Sidney not once but twice becomes Alexander. Bradstreet speaks at one point of "Princely *Philip*" and later tells us that "Philip *and* Alexander" lie "*both in one*" in Sidney's grave.[26] In addition to these two instances in which Sidney becomes someone else, Bradstreet analogizes Sidney with several figures in *The Tenth Muse.* He is directly compared to both Mars and Vulcan in *The Tenth Muse.* For the 1678 version of "An Elegie," though, Bradstreet removes all but one of these comparisons. She retains only the image of Alexander and Sidney merging in Philip's grave. He becomes, that is, more like Alexander in Boston if for no other reason than that he is less like anyone else.

Bradstreet's comparison of Sidney with Alexander alone would not warrant our interest. It is the way she uses the occasion of an elegy to Sidney to show how the colonists are part of the same community that includes Alexander that is unique. Before we examine the way she connects Alexan-

der to the colonists in both versions of the poem, before we can appreciate, that is, the remarkable rhetorical feat she accomplishes in using this trope to bring the colonists into the civilized world, we need to understand the level of conventionality that the comparison of Sidney with Alexander had achieved when Bradstreet first began "An Elegie." By the time Bradstreet started her memorial to Sidney, Alexander had been used so often by other Renaissance writers as to have been rendered cliché. "Sidney's earlier elegists," as Raphael Falco points out, "again and again compare the dead hero to Alexander."[27] Bradstreet even co-opts one of the most common themes among those elegists when she claims that both combined qualities of the poet with those of a warrior, or both were, in her words, "*Heire to the* Muses, *the* son of Mars *in truth*."[28] Of course, in elegizing Sidney at all, Bradstreet was choosing a topic that itself had long ago become a cliché. Sidney died in Holland in October of 1586, and the elegies began flooding what would pass for a print market in 1587 only to peter out a few years later. Bradstreet finished the first version of her Sidney poem in 1638.[29] This would mean that Sidney had been dead almost fifty years, and the elegiac tradition that memorialized him almost as long. In short, Bradstreet chooses a defunct subgenre to honor a long-dead poet in terms that only replicate the praise the subject had already received.[30]

But if her comparison was conventional, the relationships she posits between colonial, English, and Greek bodies offers a radically different spatial economy that aims at nothing less than the transformation of conventional notions of identity. In other words, she puts a rather tired comparison in a stale genre to work by using it to sneak a new theory of identity into English discursive systems. To see how she accomplishes this remarkable rhetorical feat, we need first to see how Bradstreet obliterates the bodily distinction between Sidney and Alexander. In the "Epitaph," in the very section of the poem meant to give us the essence of the elegy's subject, when she conjures up for her readers the figure of Sidney's "bones . . . interred in stately Paul's," we read "Philip and Alexander both in one" (1. 92–95). Through Bradstreet's figurative sleight of hand, one dead body becomes indistinguishable from another. English bones become Greek bones.

And not just any bones. Bradstreet frames her elegy on Sidney as a meditation on an ideal English identity set during "her halsion dayes" (1. 1). She casts Sidney not simply as exemplary of this period but as a "patterne" that all who reside on "British land" should follow (1. 6). In calling him a "patterne" she draws on the meaning of the term at the time as, in the words of the OED, "[a]nything fashioned, shaped, or designed to serve as a model from which something is to be made." In this way Bradstreet makes Sidney

a potentially productive figure who serves not only as a representative of an ideal Englishness but also as a force whose very image will re-produce itself and, in the process, continually re-produce the halcyon days in which he lived. The very bones of the pattern of ideal Englishness thus merge their identity with the figure of classical leadership.

Bradstreet does not rest at transforming English identities into Greek ones. If she had, as I noted above, we would simply have another one of the many elegies that compared Sidney to Alexander. Bradstreet, instead, uses the figure of blood to link her own body with the great Alexander and, by extension, the colonists with classical culture. Sidney serves as the pivot point in this link. In order to see how she uses the figure of her own blood to level a figurative attack on the spatial economy that would relegate the colonial English poet to a mere sideshow freak, we must now return to her revision of the "Elegie." The alteration of one phrase in the poem has generated the most critical interest and is the revision most relevant to the issues of this chapter. In the 1650 version, the speaker of the poem asks potential critics not to dismiss her praise of Sidney simply because she shared with the famous poet "the 'self-same blood.'" The 1678 Boston edition of this very same poem substitutes "English" for "self-same." Here are the lines in question:

> In all records, thy Name I ever see,
> Put with an Epithet of dignity;
> Which shewes, thy worth was great, then honour such,
> The love thy Country ought thee, was as much.
> Let then, none dis-allow of these my strains,
> Which have the self-same blood yet in my veines;
> Who honours thee for what was honourable,
> But leaves the rest, as most unprofitable:
> Thy wiser dayes, condemn'd thy witty works,
> Who knows the Spels that in thy Rethorick lurks?
> (*The Tenth Muse,* 1. 23–32)

> In all Records his name I ever see
> Put with an Epithite of dignity,
> Which shews his worth was great, his honour such,
> The love his Country ought him, was as much.
> Then let none disallow of these my straines
> Whilst English blood yet runs within my veins.
> (*Several Poems,* 1. 38–43)

Critics have generally understood Bradstreet's use of the term "self-same" in *The Tenth Muse* as a signal of her relation to Sidney and, therefore, an indication that she was born of noble blood. Some members of the Bradstreet family, in fact, at times claimed to be members of the Dudley line.[31] Critics have further wondered whether these lines were revised in a "bow to decorum" that was also a concession to the "outright criticism" she received after making such a boastful claim. Worried that she might be viewed as arrogant or as trying to trumpet her own status in a community with few if any members of noble rank, Bradstreet, critics speculate, shifted the terms of the link the poem makes between herself and Sidney from blood to nation.[32]

Before we examine whether "self-same" was a subtle way of indicating Bradstreet's membership in the Sidney clan, we should first remember that "self-same" and "English" serve the same purpose in each poem. Whether or not Bradstreet intended her line to be a subtle reminder of the noble blood coursing through her own veins, whether she altered those lines in response to criticism or simply because she felt she had overstepped the bounds of good taste, both "self-same" and "English" obliterate the geographic space that separates the colonists from those they left behind in England in order to include those living in the provinces with people living in England in the same identity category. In obliterating the geographic divide that separates English people living on different parts of the globe, these lines directly address the worry that life in the colonies necessarily and inevitably robbed the colonists of their very Englishness. "Self-same" and "English" do this because each provides a way of connecting the poem's speaker with the "Country" that owes Sidney its love given all the service he has performed on that country's behalf. "Self-same" and "English" each refer to "Country." We know this because each term is part of a clause born out of the very sentence that includes "Country." "Then" in line 27 of *The Tense Muse* and in line 42 of *Several Poems* turns the phrase to follow into a consequence of the previous sentence. Do not, Bradstreet asks all her readers ("let none"), dismiss my praise, because I am born of English blood and, therefore ("then"), like all English people, ought to praise Sidney. What she has to say in honor of Sidney, Bradstreet insists, is true regardless of her national duty.

The fact that both terms refer to "Country" suggests that "self-same" is not intended to function as a subtle nod to Bradstreet's family tree. After all, since "Country" serves as the antecedent of "self-same," it would violate seventeenth-century English notions of national and familial identities. It would, in other words, make no sense to a seventeenth-century reader. To

say Bradstreet shares the same "blood" as Sidney because she belongs to the same family line relies on a biological model of community. Families are made through the literal merging of one body with another, a bodily interaction that produces yet another body out of its very own. Members of a country are not made in the same way. The members of the "English" nation cannot all trace their heritage to the same collection of bodies. They do not share the same family line. Indeed, the purity of the monarch's body depended on families procreating only with those of their own social rank. Members of the nobility, to be sure, had relations with commoners that produced offspring. These offspring were, at least in principle, excluded from the family so as to preserve the pure blood of the nobility as a whole. Bradstreet's use of the phrase "self-same blood" in 1650 to refer to all who are subject to the English monarch makes sense only if blood is understood in a figurative rather than a literal sense. It makes sense, in other words, only if she is referring to a diverse community of peoples whose connection to one another as part of a single political and cultural entity comes to life only through acts of imagination.

Before we see how "self-same" and "English" forge a link between the colonists and Alexander the Great, we must first consider one more puzzling aspect of Bradstreet's revision. Whether we think "self-same" and "English" refer to her family or to her nation, we must ask why she would claim that anyone in her audience in old or New England might "disallow" her praise of Sidney in the first place. When had either of these audiences demonstrated the slightest inclination to dismiss praise by anyone, for any reason, of its national heroes? The impulse to defend her praise of Sidney when no such defense is necessary, and to do so for two completely different audiences, suggests the lines serve a purpose other than to deflect a critical response that is virtually impossible to imagine. Both poems defend themselves against criticisms that will never be made in order to help bring the colonists into the imagined body politic of Britain. *The Tenth Muse* and *Several Poems* have very different reasons, though, for staging such rhetorical confirmations of national identity. In the case of *The Tenth Muse,* it's not so much that Bradstreet is worried that her criticism of Sidney will be dismissed because she is English. No. What worries Bradstreet is that her praise of Sidney might be dismissed because she is not truly English. The reference to the poem's speaker as a member of the "self-same" "Country" as readers in 1650 England requires those readers, after all, to confirm Bradstreet's identity in spite of then dominant theories of identity. Those theories held that Bradstreet and her fellow colonists had forfeited their claims to true Englishness by living so long in America's degenerate climate. She

uses literary form to counter such claims. Who would claim that a poem in English memorializing Sidney in a way that closely mirrored earlier elegies by authors whose national identity was beyond reproach was not English simply because it was written by a woman of English descent living in America? The very imitative quality of the poem that has drawn so much fire from Bradstreet's critics over the years serves, in fact, as a testament to her nationality and helps convince her English readers to accept rather than dismiss her praise of Sidney in spite of an Englishness they might not have acknowledged prior to reading the poem.

If "self-same" encouraged readers in 1650 England to reconsider the basis for inclusion in the imagined English body politic, "English" in 1678 called on readers in New England to proclaim their right to be included in the community of English peoples in spite of their living in a foreign environment. Readers in New England who do not cite her national identity as the reason her praise should be dismissed implicitly grant her the very national status that living in America calls into question. Of course, no colonial reader in New England in the 1670s would have challenged Bradstreet's Englishness. To do so would have meant calling into question the Englishness of a recently deceased member of one of the most distinguished families in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Bradstreet's father, Thomas Dudley, served four terms as governor and several more as deputy governor. Elizabeth White describes him as "second only to Winthrop among the leaders of the colony."[33] Bradstreet's husband, Simon, occupied a position of equal esteem, including service as an envoy to the court of Charles II in 1661, where he and others persuaded the king to restore the colony's charter. Colonists might have disagreed with the Bradstreet family on policy matters. They might have scoffed at the Bradstreet clan's claim to noble lineage. But cast aspersions on so vaunted and powerful a family's claims to Englishness? This is simply unimaginable. In using her family's distinction as a shield to defend her own claims to being as much a part of the English community as anyone living in England, Bradstreet helps defend all colonial readers against similar challenges to their own Englishness. In confirming Bradstreet's Englishness, colonial readers simultaneously attest to their own national status. After all, if Bradstreet is English even though she lives thousands of miles away on the other side of the ocean, so, too, are those colonists who are capable of reading these lines praising Sidney. When these readers refuse to dismiss Bradstreet's praise of Sidney because she owes it to him as an English person, they put to rest any doubts they might have had about their own connection to their imagined home across the ocean.

This was a fear that appears to have been more prominent in the colonists' minds in the latter half of the century when *Several Poems* first saw print than when Bradstreet first arrived in New England in the 1630s. The minister whom Perry Miller identifies as "the intellectual leader of the second generation" of New England Puritans, Jonathan Mitchell, for instance, preached in 1668, just ten years prior to the publication of *Several Poems,* that "wee in this Country being farre removed from the more keep up Learning & all Helps of Education among us, lest degeneracy, Barbarism, Ignorance, and irreligion do by degrees breake in upon us."[34] In a sermon delivered just over twenty years after Mitchell's, Cotton Mather, whose father, Increase, was Mitchell's most distinguished student, used his pulpit to warn his parishioners of the threat they faced in "that sort of Criolian degeneracy observed to deprave the children of our most noble and worthy of Europeans when transplanted into America."[35] The specter of Indianization, too, haunts New England readers of 1678 in a way that it certainly did not haunt 1650 London readers. Just one year before the 1678 publication of *Several Poems,* the very same publisher printed Increase Mather's *A relation of the troubles which have hapned in New England; by reason of the Indians there,* and William Hubbard's *A Narrative of the troubles with the Indians in New England.* Only four years later Samuel Green in Cambridge would print Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God.* The almost total annihilation at the hands of the Indians in the recent wars described by Mather and Hubbard would have brought the question of one's relation to one's colleagues across the Atlantic into violent relief. In prompting Bradstreet's audience to call themselves "English," Bradstreet's poem directly addresses their burgeoning fears of degeneration by providing a way for readers to establish their membership in a transatlantic English community through simple affirmation of Sidney's greatness.

As was the case in *The Tenth Muse,* the poem asks its readers to confirm the national identify of its narrator. But who among her colonial readers would think of casting doubt on Bradstreet's English bona fides? In agreeing that Sidney's merits should be praised, the Boston reader confirms his or her own status as a member of the civilized, English community in the very act of affirming the merits of a member of English nobility who died outside Europe a century before fighting a religious war for England's survival as a Protestant nation.

Now we can, at long last, see how Bradstreet stitches colonial bodies together with English ones that are, in turn, fused with classical ones. Both "self-same" and "English" ask readers to imagine the English community as a single body in which a colonial poet, and the colonists she represents,

shares the same blood as a national hero such as Sir Philip Sidney. If the colonists are a part of the same imaginary English body as Sidney, whose body, in turn, becomes indistinguishable from Alexander's when buried at St. Paul's cathedral, then the colonists' bodies are just as much "one" with Alexander's as they are with Sidney's. They, too, can claim figurative kinship with the body buried in that grave. Since Alexander's very identity in both the 1650s and the 1670s was inextricable with the East, through this simple figurative magic Bradstreet connects not only Sidney's heroism with the West's complicated, indeed contradictory, feelings toward the East but also, and more strikingly for our purposes, colonial New England as well. Readers are thus invited to imagine the colonists—and, in 1678, this means that readers are invited to imagine themselves—as fundamentally linked to the West's obsessive struggle to best the East militarily and culturally.

While the differences in the ways Bradstreet's 1650 Sidney elegy and her revision of 1678 ask their very two very different audiences to affirm the national status of English colonists living in America are very important, we should not let those differences blind us to the fact that the link between the colonists and the East through Alexander remains precisely the same in each poem. Much had happened on both sides of the Atlantic in the temporal space that separates *The Tenth Muse* from *Several Poems.* One English king had been beheaded only to have his line restored some nine years later after a period of Puritan rule. London had been essentially destroyed by fire only a few years after yet another plague has devastated the population. The newly restored monarchy had passed a licensing act in 1662 that fundamentally altered the nature of English print culture as it had developed during the Civil War. New England had undergone an only slightly less tumultuous twenty-eight years. The nature of church membership had seen a drastic alteration when the Half-Way Covenant took effect in 1662, John Eliot published the first Indian bible, and thousands of colonists were killed in a war with their greatest local antagonist, the Native Americans, who suffered even greater losses. It is no exaggeration to say that New England was a different place when "An Elegie" was published in 1678 than it had been in 1650, much less 1639, when Bradstreet completed the first draft of the poem.

Yet in spite of so many momentous changes, the link Bradstreet forges between the colonists, England, and the East through Alexander remains unchanged. In each instance, in spite of so much that has transpired in the world around her, Bradstreet turns our attention to the confrontation between East and West as a way of linking the colonists with their supposedly social betters across the Atlantic. This is a confrontation that signals

an attempt to better the West by showing how it can conquer the very model of civilized behavior that is, at the same time, a threat to all things a Christian held dear. It is, in other words, a connection that holds out as much danger as it does promise: danger in what might become of the colonists and England in general if they become too much like the East, promise in what hope it offers British American colonists in their quest to be accepted into the community of civilized peoples. To protect the colonial body threatened by exposure to the corrupting environment of America, Bradstreet reaches backward on the temporal axis while simultaneously stretching our imagination eastward across the globe for a figure who can protect her and her fellow colonists from whatever threat awaits them in the wilderness of America. We in the colonies are English, Bradstreet seems to say in these poems, not because we are not Indian. We are English, the elegies of both 1650 and 1678 insist, because we, like Sidney, are blood relatives of Alexander the Great. The figuration of a civilized, English identity by a colonial writer threatened by the specter of degeneration looks as much to the corrupted yet powerful conqueror of the East, then, for its sense of itself as it does to the supposedly savage lands and peoples immediately imagined to be—perhaps hoped to be—somewhere to its west.