TRANSATLANTIC PRINT CULTURE
AND THE RISE OF NEW ENGLAND LITERATURE 1620-1630

by

Sean Delaney

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History
in the Graduate School of Northeastern University, April 2013
Despite the considerable attention devoted to the founding of puritan colonies in New England, scholars have routinely discounted several printed tracts that describe this episode of history as works of New England literature. This study examines the reasons for this historiographical oversight and, through a close reading of the texts, identifies six works written and printed between 1620 and 1630 as the beginnings of a new type of literature. The production of these tracts supported efforts to establish puritan settlements in New England. Their respective authors wrote, not to record a historical moment for posterity, but to cultivate a particular colonial reality among their contemporaries in England. By infusing puritan discourse into the language of colonization, these writers advanced a colonial agenda independent of commercial, political and religious imperatives in England. As a distinctive response to a complex set of historical circumstances on both sides of the Atlantic, these works collectively represent the rise of New England literature.
This dissertation is dedicated with love to my wife Tara and to my soon-to-be-born daughter Amelia Marie.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract 3  
Dedication 4  
Table of Contents 5  
Introduction 6  

Chapter 1: Plymouth Colony and the Rise of New England Literature 15  
Chapter 2: Early New England Literature in a Transatlantic Context 80  
Chapter 3: A Colonial Text for English Eyes, Part I: *Mourt’s Relation* 139  
Chapter 4: A Colonial Text for English Eyes, Part II: *Good News from New England* 211  
Chapter 5: Kindred Spirits: Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth Colony and the Expansion of New England Literature 292  
Chapter 6: Contested Ground: Early New England Literature and the Denial of Separatism 327  

Conclusion 393  

Bibliography 395
Introduction

During the seventeenth century, English America grew from a handful of villages and outposts planted along the coast of North America to a vast empire that stretched across land and sea for thousands of miles. Each settlement within English America had a unique character shaped by its climate, geography and demographics, as well as by the irregular, uncoordinated and sometimes adversarial pattern of colonization by a number of English organizations. A number of stories have been told about the history of English America, but the settling of a small area along the coast of the North Atlantic by a relatively homogenous group of colonists has garnered the lion’s share of scholarly attention. Puritan New England became the subject of historical inquiry only a few years after English men and women carved their humble abodes out of the howling wilderness. By the mid-seventeenth century, the founding of New England had already become the stuff of legend. Subsequent generations of English colonists, followed by their American posterity, looked back upon this event as having stamped some indelible character on their own society. Mixing fact with fiction, they constructed a narrative that explained what made New England unique, first within the English Atlantic and later in the United States.

The extraordinary efforts of these first generation New Englanders deserve attention, but their historical significance owes a great deal to the number of written accounts they left behind. Historians must work with available sources, and the indefatigable pens of seventeenth-century New England puritans left behind a textual embarrassment of riches. English puritans on both sides of the Atlantic forged a personal relationship with God through a direct and in-depth understanding of Scripture. This made literacy a requirement of the faith. In puritan New England, nearly every member of their community learned to read, and most acquired the ability
to write. Not surprisingly, these puritan colonists established in English America the first public school, the first university and the first printing press. Widespread literacy also enabled them to maintain strong connections to affairs in Europe. New England essentially became a transatlantic extension of the puritan communication network that flourished throughout England and the continent. Its colonists had considerable access to information from England, but they also shaped knowledge of their affairs to English audiences. Much of what we know of early New England history comes from these transatlantic exchanges.

From the very beginning, writing was a crucial component for the puritan colonization project. Colonists put pen to paper the moment they arrived in New England, usually to send word of their experiences back home. A few of these efforts made their way to printing houses in London, not always with the author’s knowledge or permission. Some of the most famous events in the history of colonial New England were originally fodder for the consumption of English audiences. More than just a report of their doings in the New World, these prints were intended to establish a particular colonial reality in the minds of the English public. This study examines six of the earliest published tracts from and about puritan New England. Written and printed between 1620 and 1630, these works reveal not what actually happened in early New England, but what their authors wished to reveal to contemporaries in England. The first two under consideration, *Mourt’s Relation* (1622) and *Good News from New England* (1624), were written by two prominent members of Plymouth colony, William Bradford and Edward Winslow. The other four, *New Englands Plantation, God’s Promise to His Plantation, The Humble Request*, and *The Planters Plea*, were printed by the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1630. Like the Pilgrims, the company issued these tracts to support its colonization efforts in English America.
Collectively, these six works provide an intimate glimpse into the first anxious, uncertain steps in the puritan colonization of New England.

While these tracts have shed considerable light on the history of early New England, the persons responsible for their publication did not think of them as histories. They intended them to make an immediate impact in England. In a general sense, these six prints resembled the literature promoting colonies elsewhere in English America. Their pages conveyed an impression of New England as a land of plenty and promise. Their puritan authors stretched the truth no less than Walter Raleigh, John Smith, or any other advocate of colonization. The New England tracts differed, however, from other promotional works in one crucial respect: they were intended to advance colonial objectives. Tracts promoting the plantation colonies or the fishing settlements in the North Atlantic offered a chance to change one’s fortune, but their authors aligned the interests of the colonies with those of England. They saw their publications as wind for English sails. New England, on the other hand, consisted mostly of puritan exiles living in dissident communities beyond the reach of a hostile Anglican establishment. The founders of these colonies desired to govern themselves with a minimum of interference from England. New England literature emerged in consequence of this objective. Beginning in 1620, advocates of New England borrowed many of the literary conventions found in the existing promotional literature, but they infused their arguments with the language of puritan casuistry. While nearly every publication in early modern England contained religious overtones, New England literature promoted the colonies as the Protestant ideal. Carefully avoiding any overt challenge to the Church of England, authors crafted a narrative designed to establish their respective party as the lawful authority in the colony. They rested the legitimacy of this argument on the righteousness
of English puritanism. The six tracts examined in this study reveal how authors made this argument by infusing puritan discourse into the language of colonization.

Despite the fact that generations of scholars have utilized these six tracts, they consistently underestimate, and in many cases disregard altogether, the historical circumstances of their production. Much of this oversight can be traced to the nineteenth century. Scholars of that era traced the origins of American exceptionalism to its colonial antecedent. They consecrated the founding of New England as a proto-American creation story and bestowed upon the puritan settlers characteristics and motivations that most nineteenth century Americans wished to see in themselves. These scholars cast the founders of puritan New England as champions of religious freedom and democracy. Many used this history to underscore how far the southern slavocracy had strayed from their nation’s original mandate. The partisan impulse behind this interpretation conferred a sense of historical authenticity upon texts written by New England’s founders. Several of these, such as Mourt’s Relation and Governor Bradford’s Of Plymouth Plantation, became national icons, unassailable testaments to the heroic opening chapter of the United States. This patriotic agenda from the nineteenth century effectively blinded scholars of that era to the colonial agenda of writers from the seventeenth century.

Early in the twentieth century, historians began to challenge nationalistic interpretations of early New England. A few, such as Edward Arber and Champlin Burrage, also condemned the widespread assumption that New Englanders recorded the objective truth in their writings. Nevertheless, historians continued to treat them as factual statements written to preserve the history of early New England.¹ Perry Miller, beginning in the 1930s, almost singlehandedly

¹ Edward Arber, in fact, displayed both sides of this coin. In The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, Arber blasted scholars for their uncritical acceptance of the Pilgrim tracts as historical fact. But in the same work, he presented the early history of Plymouth by transcribing word for word from these same texts. See The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers.
reshaped the landscape of New England studies. He characterized New England puritans as avant-garde intellectuals struggling to reconcile the ideals of the Reformation with the realities of their colonial milieu. Miller identified a coherent “New England mind,” the beginnings of which appeared in the 1630s when several writers repudiated separation from the Church of England. This formulation, of course, pushed Plymouth to the margins of New England history. To Miller, the founders of Massachusetts Bay strove to “vindicate the most vigorous ideal of the Reformation” whereas the separatists at Plymouth fled England to save their own skins. 2 Historians, beginning with Edmund S. Morgan, have long recognized the similar experiences and motives between colonists of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. 3 Nevertheless, historians continue to look at Plymouth colony in isolation, or as merely the prelude to the story of Massachusetts Bay. In most cases, historians locate the founding of Massachusetts Bay with the arrival of Winthrop fleet in 1630. As a result, the first few years in Salem frequently join Plymouth colony as peripheral to the history of puritan New England. The historiographical fate of the six tracts featured in this study – which, collectively, describe the founding of Plymouth and Salem – closely mirrors that of the colonies they have helped make famous. While each of these works have been celebrated, to varying degrees, as primordial expressions of an American


idiom, they have also been systematically overlooked as contributors to the literature of puritan New England.

This historiographical blind spot exists in consequence of how scholars have defined both “puritanism” and “New England” in the seventeenth century. These terms, of course, are inextricably linked as the history of early New England is essentially the story of puritanism in English America. A precise definition of puritanism has proven elusive, however, in spite of the staggering collective effort by scholars to do so. It has traditionally been characterized as an internal movement to eradicate the last vestiges of Catholicism from the Church of England. But this general description fails to accurately represent the diversity and mutability of puritanism in the early modern English world. Instead of a narrowly defined, monolithic puritanism in opposition to an increasingly uncompromising Church of England, most scholars now see puritanism as a continuous negotiation between competing, but not diametrically opposed, Protestant visions. This configuration not only qualifies a wide range of beliefs and practices as puritan, but it has also challenges its opposition to the Church of England as puritanism’s defining characteristic.

Scholars of early New England have adopted this model of puritan diversity into their own work. Whereas Miller featured the hegemony of a monolithic orthodoxy, scholars such as Janice Knight, Louise A. Breen, and Michael Winship reveal how New Englanders continually reinvented the meaning of orthodoxy in response to a variety of dissident challenges.

---

4 Puritans made attempts to establish settlements outside of New England, such as Providence Island and Barbadoes, but their efforts did not amount to much. By the mid-seventeenth century, puritanism did not have a significant presence in English America beyond New England. See Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

5 Knight argued that competing orthodoxies vied for power in Massachusetts Bay during the antinomian crisis. Breen followed up on Knight’s work, expanding the scope of her research to include dissenting voices in their negotiation for power and influence throughout the seventeenth century. Winship examined the historical circumstances that determined the negotiations between various factions during the antinomian crisis. Janice Knight,
England puritanism, however, is still conceived as a reform movement within the Church of England.\(^6\) Joseph A. Conforti claimed puritans relocated across the Atlantic seeking “the moral renovation of a troubled nation.” Francis Bremer agrees, describing New England puritanism as “an agenda calling for furthering the perfection of Protestant reform.” In defining puritan New England as the western terminus of a transatlantic reform movement, Conforti and Bremer perpetuate the marginalization of the Plymouth separatists from New England history. The Pilgrim settlement, according to Conforti, merely preceded the puritan colonization of Massachusetts Bay. Bremer argued that the transatlantic dimension of English puritanism was essentially “the world of John Winthrop.”\(^7\) This argument would seem to require evidence that New Englanders, and particularly those in the Bay colony, actively pursued reform of the church they left behind. None exists. During the 1640s, Massachusetts Bay launched a print campaign in England, defending the “New England Way” as a model for England to follow. Scholars tend to connect these statements to Winthrop’s “A Model of Christian Charity” speech, given on board the *Arbella* in 1630, to prove that the Bay colonists intended to improve England by example from the beginning. Their actions, however, failed to live up to their words. They outlawed worship contrary to their own beliefs, including several practices required by the Anglican Church. Massachusetts Bay puritans paid lip service to their goal of reforming the Church of

---

\(^6\) This emphasis on political-based definitions of puritanism belong to what Peter Lake refers to as the extrinsic school. The intrinsic school consists of those who define puritanism on its theological merits. Peter Lake, “The Historiography of Puritanism” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 349.

England just as they did with their state aim to proselytize the Indians. Their true aim they shared with their Plymouth neighbors: to keep interference from England to a minimum.

The written word was a powerful tool for New Englanders in the seventeenth century. It allowed them to cultivate opinion in England by creating a particularly colonial reality. The transatlantic dimension of English print culture has informed numerous studies of early New England. Of course, the truth about what happened across the Atlantic was subject for debate. As Jonathan Field has demonstrated, discontented colonists used print to advance their own interests, often by exposing transgressions committed by the colonial authorities. Most studies of early New England print culture neglect tracts written prior to John Winthrop’s arrival in 1630. In this study, I eschew the politically-driven definitions of puritanism and examine several works written and printed in support of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies between 1620 and 1630. Ultimately, I hope to demonstrate how and why these tracts deserve to be considered as the first examples of New England literature.

In the opening chapter, I survey the historiographical journey of the Pilgrim tracts, *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England*. This discussion is crucial to understanding the reasons these works have not received consideration from scholars of early New England. In chapter two, I consider the transatlantic dimensions involved in the production of each tract and the motives of the authors. I then perform a close reading of each work and demonstrate how changing historical circumstances impacted the production and content of *Mourt’s Relation* and

---


*Good News.* The results of this effort are discussed in chapters three and four. From there, the scene shifts from Plymouth to the founding of Salem by the Massachusetts Bay Company (MBC). In chapter five, I examine the history of these first years at Salem as well as the historiography of this opening chapter of the Massachusetts Bay story. Finally, in chapter six, I perform a close reading of the four tracts printed by the MBC in coordination with the departure of the Winthrop Fleet from Southampton in 1630. In doing so, I trace many of the literary strategies used in these four tracts to those of the Pilgrim authors of *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England.*
Chapter One
Plymouth Colony and the Rise of New England Literature

On 17 February 1622 a small company of weary travelers arrived in London after a rather circuitous voyage across the Atlantic. Among this group was Robert Cushman, an ardent puritan and steadfast supporter of a fledgling colony in New England called Plymouth. A few months earlier, Cushman visited the colony on an urgent mission to secure a contract between the settlers at Plymouth and their investors back in England. When the colonists left for the New World on board the *Mayflower* in 1620, they did so before finalizing the terms of their agreement. This, Cushman knew, put the entire venture at great risk. Previous colonies had failed due to lack of support from England and the investors – commonly known as the Adventurers – refused to send supplies to Plymouth until the colonists agreed to their terms. Desperate to avert disaster, Cushman boarded the next ship for the colony, a small vessel of fifty-five tons called the *Fortune*. He reached Plymouth on 13 November 1621 and quickly convinced the leaders of

---

10 The date is taken from Henry Martyn Dexter, ed., *Mourt’s Relation, or Journal of the Plantation at Plymouth* (Boston: John Kimball Wiggin, 1865), 131n410. Because England abided by the ancient Julian Calendar until 1752 – 170 years after most of Europe had made the switch to the more accurate Gregorian Calendar – dates recorded within this time period are often expressed as a combination of the two systems. Thus Dexter recorded this date as 17/27 February 1621/1622. The Gregorian Calendar skipped ten days and changed the beginning of the new year from March 25 to January 1. To avoid the awkward convention employed by Dexter, I have simplified dates by keeping the days of the month per the Julian Calendar (as contemporary English writers recorded them) while adopting the modern practice of starting each year on the first of January. Dexter provides an extraordinary useful timeline of events – using both styles of dating – in an appendix to his version of *Mourt’s Relation*.  
11 The colony went by several names. Seventeenth-century writers sometimes referred to it as “New” Plymouth but were just as likely to drop the first word. They also used various spellings: Plymouth, Plimmoth, Plimoth being the most common. The colonists occasionally referred to it by the Wampanoag name, Pawtuxet. There was no common standard and writers used these variations interchangeably even within the same source. To avoid confusion, I refer to the colony throughout this study as “Plymouth.”  
12 The *Fortune*, a ship roughly one-fourth the size of the *Mayflower*, was the first English vessel to visit the newly established colony of Plymouth. It reached Plymouth on 13 November 1621 after a tortuous voyage of nearly three months. Thirty five colonists arrived on board the *Fortune*. The ship did not remain long, leaving for England one month later, on December 13. Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, 131-132n410.
the colony to sign the contract. Cushman returned to England with the *Fortune* when that ship departed Plymouth one month later.

As the New World disappeared over the western horizon, Cushman had every reason to believe that better days for the colony lay ahead. In addition to the signed contract, he had with him about £500 worth of furs and clapboard. Cushman knew the Adventurers well. The contract resolved the legal issues, but the saleable goods would truly move the investors to support the colony. Cushman also had with him a journal written by two of the most prominent members of Plymouth colony, William Bradford and Edward Winslow. He hoped to stir up additional interest in the colony by publishing the journal in London. These best laid plans went for naught, however, when in January the *Fortune* was captured by a French man-of-war and taken, along with its cargo and crew, to the Île d’Yeu off the western coast of France. The governor of the island, the Marquis de Cera, took possession of the ship’s cargo while his servants devoured the victuals intended for the *Fortune*’s passengers and crew. The marquis undoubtedly seized all the papers on board as well, including the contract and the journal. After thirteen days, the governor released his prisoners and sent them home to England.

---

13 Cushman was the primary negotiator for the Leyden group, the congregation in the Netherlands from which the Pilgrims came. He had spent the last several years working on a business deal between them and the Adventurers.

14 There seems to be some confusion as to which isle the ship and crew were taken. In the second edition of his *New England Trials* (1622, the first edition went to print in 1620), John Smith states the location as the Île d’Yeu. See Edward Arber, ed., *The Story of The Pilgrim Fathers, 1606-1623 A.D.* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1897), 506n. However, a complaint registered to the office of the Foreign Secretary in 1630 puts it as the nearby Île de Ré. See W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., “America and West Indies: December 1630-36,” *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 1: 1574-1660* (1860), 124, [http://archive.org/stream/calendarofstatep01ingrea#page/n3/mode/2up](http://archive.org/stream/calendarofstatep01ingrea#page/n3/mode/2up).

15 The complaint registered to the Foreign Secretary (see Footnote 5) placed the value of the goods at £500 as did John Smith in his *New England Trials – 80 vessels* (1622). Smith adds that the Marquis de Cera took the *Fortune*’s supply of food, though given the fare typically “enjoyed” by sailors and passengers on long voyages this could not have been considered of much value.

16 England and France were not at war when the *Fortune* was captured; however, both nations regularly seized pirates – or ships committing acts of piracy – and others suspected of aiding their enemies. Two months earlier, several vessels under the command of the Huguenots of La Rochelle had defeated the royal fleet and continued to
Robert Cushman cared little for his own misfortunes. He would have gladly suffered the indignities of a French prison had he also been able to deliver the cargo of pelts and wood to the Adventurers in England. But when he stepped off the docks in London on that cold day in February, Cushman had precious little to show for his extraordinary efforts. The Adventurers registered a complaint to the English government against the unlawful seizure of their valuables by the Marquis de Cera, but no record survives to suggest that restitution was ever made. The shipment of furs and clapboard failed to reach England, but Cushman did manage to secure the copy of Bradford and Winslow’s journal. How he accomplished this remains a mystery.

Historian Champlin Burrage speculated that the manuscript copy was returned to Cushman as a result of the complaint mentioned above, but there exists no evidence to support this claim. In any event, Cushman came into possession of the journal within a few months of his return to England. Afterwards, he met with George Morton, a fellow puritan and someone familiar with London’s burgeoning print trade. With the additional help of John Bellamy, a bookseller looking for printed works that would attract customers to his new shop in Cornhill, Cushman and Morton converted the original manuscripts into a tract fit for publication. On 29 June 1622, the pamphlet that would eventually become known as Mourt’s Relation was entered in the Stationers’ Register under the title, Newes from newe England.

---

17 Champlin Burrage, “The Earliest Minor Accounts Of Plymouth Plantation,” The Harvard Theological Review 13 (1920): 318-320. Burrage refuted Edward Arber’s argument that the manuscript copies had been lost forever when the Marquis de Cera confiscated the journal. Arber speculated that the published version of Mourt’s Relation was in fact “a makeshift private narrative, sent to press by Cushman, Morton, Shirley and others in the absence of the official one stolen.” Arber, The Pilgrim Fathers, 507.

Despite the inestimable value scholars have placed upon *Mourt’s Relation*, the story of its publication has received scant attention. It is therefore not surprising that Robert Cushman’s role in bringing this account to light has likewise gone relatively unnoticed. In the many histories written about the pilgrim exodus to New England, Cushman’s contributions have been confined to his role as liaison between the exiled English puritans in the Netherlands and the Adventurers in England. But without Cushman’s efforts to publish the journals of William Bradford and Edward Winslow, virtually everything we know of those first few years of colonization in New England would have been lost forever. Rendered as a peripheral figure in the story of the pilgrim migration, Robert Cushman nevertheless played a crucial role in preserving the legacy of Plymouth colony.

My primary objective however is not to reassess Robert Cushman’s place in the history of the Pilgrim migration so much as it is to use historical interpretations of Cushman to reveal how two of the most important sources of early seventeenth-century New England have somehow been situated beyond the pale of transatlantic English print culture. Those two sources, *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England*, provide us with a detailed glimpse into the early years of Plymouth colony. Every history of Plymouth, including William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*, owes a tremendous debt to those works. Though both have long been appreciated as products of colonial America neither tract appeared in published form on this side of the Atlantic until the mid-nineteenth century. The primary authors, William Bradford and Edward Winslow, wrote their manuscripts while in English America but fully intended them for readers across the Atlantic. Indeed, it is a virtual certainty that part of the process of converting the manuscript copies into a public print occurred during the voyage from new to old England.
This by definition makes them quintessentially transatlantic, yet surprisingly these tracts have never been fully considered in this light.

In this chapter, I discuss the reasons *Mourt* and *Good News* have escaped the attention of Atlanticists as well as scholars of seventeenth century New England literature. Later, I situate these tracts in their proper transatlantic context. Before doing so, however, it is vital to understand the history of these publications and the ways nineteenth century scholars put them to use. The intellectual climate in the young republic demanded a history commensurate with the belief that the United States represented that first great step toward a new era of human civilization. Scholars of the period, particularly those from the northern states, offered Plymouth colony as the earliest manifestation of an American idiom. Naturally, there arose great interest in the history of this colony and therefore the narratives that described it. *Mourt* and *Good News* became among the most celebrated chronicles of early American history, especially after 1841, when Alexander Young published authentic reproductions of the original prints.19 Despite the fact that the pilgrim authors clearly meant to address their seventeenth-century contemporaries in England, nineteenth-century historians appropriated *Mourt* and *Good News* to serve as the early chapters of an American epic. Undoubtedly, nationalism continues to exert a powerful influence in academia, but historians in the nineteenth century deliberately used the past to leverage claims that the United States belonged among the fraternity of great nations. Under this rubric, the Pilgrims became Founding Fathers while *Mourt* and *Good News* were transformed into the twin codices of a uniquely American creation story. Subsequent generations of scholars have either accepted this characterization prima facie or, for a variety of reasons, have ignored the tracts.

19 Alexander Young, *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841), http://archive.org/stream/chroniclesofpilg00youn#page/n9/mode/2up. Young’s *Chronicles* has been reprinted many times, most recently in 2005 by Cosimo Press in New York.
altogether. Though universally recognized as indispensable accounts of early Plymouth colony, *Mourt* and *Good News* have received surprisingly little attention as cultural artifacts. To understand why, we must first examine the history of these tracts after their original publication in London during the 1620s.

Little is known about the editions which sold from John Bellamy’s bookshop except that a few copies eventually found their way to several libraries in England and the United States. Seventeenth-century English readers learned about Plymouth colony from these tracts or from two other sources, John Smith’s *Generall Historie* (1624) and Samuel Purchas’ *Hakluytus Posthumas* (1625).²⁰ Smith and Purchas included in their respective books passages gleaned from Bradford and Winslow’s journal though they did not concern themselves with an accurate or complete transcription. In New England, the manuscript copy of Bradford and Winslow’s journal, the main source for *Mourt’s Relation*, survived for a number of years as part of Governor Bradford’s private library. Bradford consulted this manuscript while writing his now famous history of the colony, *Of Plymouth Plantation*. Another resident of Plymouth, Nathaniel Morton, had access to Bradford’s manuscript collection and with it produced *New England’s Memorial*, a history of the colony published at Cambridge (Massachusetts Bay) in 1669.²¹

---

²⁰ John Smith’s *Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624) provides a thorough survey of English North America and Bermuda. Smith drew upon his own experiences in the region as well as the accounts of others. The book proved an immediate success and several reprints appeared over the next few years. *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625) was a four-volume survey of English voyages around the world. As the title indicates, Samuel Purchas saw his work as a continuation of Richard Hakluyt’s famous work, *The Principle Nauigations, Voigages, Traffiques and Discoueries of the English Nation* (1600). Unlike Smith, Purchase never travelled abroad, relying upon the writings of others – such as our Pilgrim authors – to compile his survey of English discoveries. Throughout the early modern period, authors frequently accepted the descriptions of others as fact, especially when it came from persons of high rank. Similarly, many books contained a dedication to an esteemed patron who either provided funding for the project or agreed to vouchsafe for the content of the work.

²¹ Nathaniel Morton was a prominent resident of Plymouth. The nephew of Governor Bradford, he came to the colony with his parents at the age of eleven just three years after its founding. In 1645 he was elected clerk of the Colony Court and held that position until his death forty years later. Morton transcribed a great deal from his uncle’s
Thomas Prince, the celebrated clergyman and scholar of the early eighteenth century, consulted Bradford’s manuscripts in writing *A Chronological History of New England in the form of Annals*, published in 1736. Like Smith and Purchas before them, Morton and Prince failed to accurately transcribe their source material into their own chronicles. The manuscript copy of Bradford and Winslow’s journal disappeared sometime in the eighteenth century and, unlike the original of Bradford’s history, has unfortunately never resurfaced. By the end of the eighteenth century, the only original copies of *Mourt* and *Good News* were collecting dust in England, leaving only the imperfect second-hand reproductions as the source material for the early years at Plymouth.

In 1802, the Massachusetts Historical Society reprinted the abridged sections of *Mourt* from Purchas’ *Hakluytus Posthumus*. Twenty years later, the Society offered the sections of *Mourt* omitted by Purchas; however, the transcriber made numerous errors and omissions of his own leaving only an awkwardly disjointed account filled with inaccuracies. The first complete reprint of *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England* appeared in Alexander Young’s *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, published in 1841. Young put a premium on “historical accuracy,” and included in his book precise reproductions of several chronicles written by the founders of Plymouth colony. His copious and detailed annotations are invaluable and explain why scholars still refer to this work so many years later. Young first identified William Bradford writings, especially *Of Plymouth Plantation*. Samuel Eliot Morison, ed. *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647* by William Bradford (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), xxviii.

22 This work, often referred to as *Prince’s Annals*, documents the history of Western Civilization beginning with the Creation. Prince surveys several epochs of the ancient world before relating in great detail the discovery of the Americas and the history of New England. Prince wrote several books in addition to his *Annals* and collected a significant amount of manuscripts and letters of a historical nature. His collection now resides in the Boston Public Library. Thomas Prince, *A Chronological History of New England in the Form of Annals* (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company, 1826), http://archive.org/stream/achronologicalh00pringoog#page/n6/mode/2up.

23 Sometime before 1841, Harvard University acquired original publications of *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England*. See Young, *Chronicles*, ix.

24 Young, *Chronicles*, viii-ix.
and Edward Winslow as the primary authors of *Mourt’s Relation*, “a circumstance which gives to it new value and interest, and confers on it the highest authority.” Bradford or Winslow “went on almost every expedition” recorded in *Mourt’s Relation*, “and were therefore cognizant of the facts as eye-witnesses.” Since nobody else among the Pilgrims left any writings to posterity, Young deduced these two were the only colonists “accustomed to writing.” He rejected several other prominent colonists from consideration. Miles Standish, he argued, “was more expert with the sword than the pen.” William Brewster was prevented by his office (Elder) and his age (56 years old) from going on the explorations in and around Cape Cod which, Young reasoned, left him incapable of describing them in sufficient detail. Young’s own commitment to textual accuracy led him to assume authenticity as a product of visual experience.²⁵

The ascendency of the written word as superior to oral communication had just begun in the early seventeenth century.²⁶ Even Puritans, who placed a premium on literal translations of the bible, did not entirely trust the written word. Europeans generally considered the validity of oral communication based upon the social standing of the source. If someone of high standing among the Pilgrims, such as Bradford or Winslow, related their observations via word-of-mouth, someone like William Brewster would have considered them as fact. As for John Carver, the first governor of Plymouth, Young saw the “weight of government” as an impediment to authorship, though this apparently did not prevent William Bradford from writing once he assumed the same office. Young admitted the possibility that Isaac Allerton, Samuel Fuller, and Stephen Hopkins may have furnished “rough sketches” of certain events, but no hard evidence exists to support

²⁵ Young, *Chronicles*, xi, 115n.
this. Finally, Young cited the style of *Mourt’s Relation*, “in its plainness and directness” as akin to that of Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*.27

Before the nineteenth century, faithful transcriptions of any original document proved difficult to come by. Young’s book was part of a general effort toward accurate reproductions of early America’s most important written sources. Until then, the available editions of *Mourt* and *Good News* came from seventeenth-century transcribers primarily concerned with the profitability of their efforts. Abridged copies of the original publication saved paper and thus made these second-hand accounts that much cheaper. Despite efforts by the state to regulate printing in early modern England, the only real professional standards that existed were those designed to generate profits. Writers from that era placed little importance in making exact replicas of original manuscripts. Young therefore saw a need to provide a version of *Mourt* and *Good News* (as well as other relations) more responsive to the imperatives of nineteenth-century America.

Historians of that era generally saw the study of the past as a patriotic endeavor. Americans derived from European descent viewed the United States as a new chapter in the annals of human civilization. Such a nation deserved, even needed, a rich and vibrant history that explained the origins of this remarkable achievement. Timothy Dwight, the famed traveler, writer, and longtime president of Yale University, was among the first to call for a concerted effort to enshrine the United States’ colonial past as a means to strengthen the young nation’s pretensions to greatness. In particular, Dwight saw New England as the beating heart of the country’s

27 Young, *Chronicles*, 115n.
unprecedented commitment to civil and religious liberty. Consequently, he venerated the founders of Plymouth colony as the progenitors of a uniquely American ethos.

[The Pilgrims] loved the truth of the Gospel; embraced it in its purity; and obeyed it with an exact excellence of life, which added a new wreath to the character of man, and will be remembered, so long as New England shall be peopled with inhabitants, who cherish liberty, and love the religion of the Cross.  

Dwight travelled extensively throughout the northeastern United States and from these peregrinations came his four volume opus *Travels in New England and New York*. America’s continued rise to preeminence, he argued, required each generation to make a connection with its colonial past. Dwight lamented the lack of memorials dedicated to the founders of Plymouth and through his writings sought to rectify this serious oversight. He was also motivated to correct “the misrepresentations, which foreigners, either through error or design, had published of [his] native country.” This ambition greatly resembled that of seventeenth-century colonial writers who published in England in order to refute the slanders made against them and their efforts in the New World. But compared to the founders of New England he so admired, Dwight had few restrictions as to the scope and content of his publications. In his *Travels*, Dwight provided a comprehensive assessment of his subject with a level of detail he felt crucial to a proper understanding of New England’s past and present. Dwight was nothing if not thorough. He recorded his observations “with a minuteness, which in all probability may be disagreeable to a considerable class of readers… [but] without such accounts a correct knowledge of any country is unattainable.”

---

Throughout the early nineteenth century, a host of writers and orators used the colonial past to leverage the prestige of the young republic. Arguably the most famous event occurred during the bicentennial celebration of Plymouth on 22 December 1820. From the pulpit of the First Parish Church in Plymouth, the renowned statesman and orator Daniel Webster delivered an impassioned address on the significance of the Pilgrim achievement. For over three hours, he praised those first New Englanders for bringing to these shores a spirit of freedom and liberty unmatched in the annals of history. The day after his remarkable performance, the Pilgrim Society requested from Webster a copy of his address for publication.\(^{31}\) Webster obliged and for the remainder of the nineteenth century, his oration became standard reading for schoolchildren throughout the United States.\(^{32}\)

The patriotism that suffused Dwight and Webster’s work also inspired Alexander Young to compile in one volume the first-hand accounts of the country’s pilgrim heroes. The result was his now famous work, *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, first published in 1841. As an author, Young saw himself “engaged in erecting another monument to the memory of the Pilgrims.” This demanded an accurate rendition of those important documents as well as extensive explanatory notes so as to give the modern reader a true sense of the founders’ struggles and accomplishments. Young described his *Chronicles* as “the first book of our history,” relating “the whole story of the origin of this earliest of our northern colonies in the very words of the first planters.” He followed Dwight in conflating the origins of the United States with the principles of liberty purportedly established in early New England. Both scholars saw history as


an indispensable tool for the cultivation of patriotism, even as they exemplified the entrenched parochialism of the antebellum period. For both, the essence of this inveterate nationalism was in the details. Like Dwight, Young regarded the “minuteness” of his Chronicles as necessary in order for the reader to fully appreciate the exceptionalism of the United States and its history. To this end, Young offered for the first time an accurate transcription of *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England.*

American readers had to wait over two hundred years to get their first glimpse at *Mourt* and *Good News* as it was originally published in England. They had only to wait seven years to get their second. In 1848, George B. Cheever, a minister and prolific writer, published *The Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, in New England, in 1620.* Cheever included a full transcription of *Mourt’s Relation* as a prefatory introduction to his general history of Plymouth colony. He used Winslow’s *Good News* as a source, but for unknown reasons decided against presenting this tract in its entirety. In privileging *Mourt over Good News,* Cheever was but the first of many to render the latter work as an ancillary document in the annals of early New England. Like Young, Cheever sought to provide an authentic version of Bradford and Winslow’s journal. He kept the original spelling (or rather misspelling) that appeared in the 1622 publication, but maintained the format and typographical conventions of the nineteenth-century. Like so many of his contemporaries, Cheever traced the origins of the United States to Plymouth colony. Although the Pilgrim story originated in England, he characterized their arrival at Plymouth as the point in which the “stream of history divides.” For Cheever, the piety of the Pilgrim Fathers not only secured God’s blessing for themselves, but marked their endeavor as the beginning of a new era.

---

33 Young, *Chronicles,* v-xiii.
Cheever was an ardent abolitionist and used his literary talents to attack the institution of slavery in print. In his history of Plymouth colony, Cheever noted that slavery was unknown to the Pilgrims and everyone, including Governor Bradford, “labored with their hands.” This point he emphasized as a direct condemnation against slaveholders who had since rendered “labor disreputable.” Like Dwight and Young, Cheever saw the principles generally espoused in the antebellum North as reflective of the proper Christian strain of American nationalism, the origins of which began with the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Cheever cast the struggles of the Pilgrim Fathers as greatly resembling those of the abolitionists. Just as Bradford and Winslow used their journal in the seventeenth century to promote their colony to readers in a reprobate England, Cheever reproduced *Mourt’s Relation* in the nineteenth century to show his own sinful nation the genesis of a Christian and free America.

The spirit of American exceptionalism demonstrated by Young and Cheever influenced virtually every historian in the United States during the nineteenth century. What exactly made the country exceptional was subject to debate, but scholars could certainly trace its origins to the founding of the colonies. Prior to the Civil War, historians mobilized the past to legitimize a particular vision of America which generally fell within the scope of the sectional rivalry

---

35 Cheever wrote two tracts specifically devoted to this subject: *God Against Slavery: And the Freedom and Duty of the Pulpit to Rebuke It, As a Sin against God* (1857) and *The Guilt of Slavery and the Crime of Slaveholding, Demonstrated from the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures* (1860). Cheever was not the first to use the example of the Pilgrims to attack slavery. Daniel Webster made similar overtures during his bicentennial address in 1820. See Webster, *Discourse at Plymouth*, 68-69.
between the North and the South. They saw the colonies of New England or the Chesapeake – but not both – as establishing a precedent which eventually imposed a particular character on the United States. The apotheosis of the Pilgrims at Plymouth as the founders of the United States was the catalyst for northern historians like Young and Cheever to revive interest in the writings of William Bradford and Edward Winslow. With the country on the brink of coming apart at the seams, the wisdom of the Plymouth Fathers became more important than ever. The desire to reproduce accurate renditions of their writings was in effect an attempt to recapture the essence of what they thought America was supposed to be. Similarly, the distorted transcriptions of their original texts paralleled the pernicious influence of the slavocracy which had since corrupted the purity of the genuine article.

At the conclusion of the Civil War, Henry Martyn Dexter took up the quest for authenticity, publishing in 1865 an edition of *Mourt’s Relation* “made to follow exactly the first copies, in style of type, paging, and identity of embellishment.” 37 Whereas previous scholars included *Mourt* as part of a general history of Plymouth colony, Dexter presented the tract on its own. Cheever had accurately reproduced the spelling of the original, but he took liberties in form, modifying paragraphs and punctuation. Dexter, on the other hand, provided a facsimile of the 1622 publication, an effort he thought “worthy of the confidence and favor of connoisseurs.” 38 Dexter’s predilection for authenticity necessitated that he reproduce the “load of errors” committed in the printing office of John Bellamy two-and-a-half centuries earlier. 39 His

---

37 Dexter, ed., *Mourt’s Relation*, xiii.
38 Dexter did not intend his work for the general public as evidenced by the limited number of editions printed. By “connoisseurs,” he meant amateur historians who did not necessarily earn a living by writing and teaching history. The professionalization of history would have to wait until the turn of the century. See Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 47-60.
39 Such errors were commonplace in the seventeenth century. Standardizations in spelling and punctuation did not exist and transcribers routinely made errors in copying from original documents. Printers also made mistakes or
determination to reproduce an exact replica of the original publication of *Mourt’s Relation* prompted Dexter to address the issue of how that document came into being. He was the first to introduce Robert Cushman as the individual who carried the journals to England. Dexter also suggested that Bradford and/or Winslow gave to Cushman the original manuscript of the journals with the expectation that they would circulate among their friends in England in that form. As proof of this, he cites a passage in *Good News from New England* in which Edward Winslow claims that his journal “came to the press against my will and knowledge.” Dexter further contended that Cushman, upon the request of the merchant Adventurers, persuaded George Morton to publish the journals in an attempt to promote the colony to prospective emigrants. My disagreements with Dexter in this regard appear below, yet he nonetheless deserves credit as the first scholar to address the publication of *Mourt’s Relation* as a topic of consideration. But like Alexander Young, Dexter was more concerned with issues of authenticity and the true identity of the authors than their motives for writing and publishing.

Dexter’s version of *Mourt’s Relation* marks the final step toward a more accurate reprint of the original 1622 publication. Though more authentic than the editions offered by Young and Cheever, it may have suffered for it. It was certainly more difficult to read and apparently held little appeal to a general audience as only 285 copies were ever made. Cheever’s book on the other hand enjoyed several reprints prior to the Civil War including editions printed in Great

---

deliberately altered texts for a variety of reasons. Dexter wryly noted that “John Bellamie’s printing-office appears to have run very low in punctuation-marks as the compositors approached the end of *Mourt’s Relation*, so that Italic colons, and old English colons and periods, were not unfrequently made to do unwonted duty in plain Roman company.” Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, xiv.
40 Young, *Chronicles*, 355.
42 Dexter devotes about a dozen pages in his Introduction to reinforce Young’s argument that the eponymous “Mourt” was indeed George Morton. Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, xviii-xxx.

---

29
Britain. Yet neither Dexter nor Cheever succeeded in usurping Alexander Young as the object of veneration by future generations. Near the end of the nineteenth century, John A. Goodwin offered a brief panegyric to Young, writing that his “loving labors are entitled to grateful recollection, and his Chronicles to rank as a *vade-mecum* with every student of New England history.” Judging by the frequency in which more recent scholars have used Young’s version of *Mourt* and *Good News* in their own work, Goodwin’s statement strikes a chord which resonates to this day. Young’s commitment to the authenticity of the printed text, faithfully adopted by later scholars, imparted upon *Mourt* and *Good News* an aura of truthfulness in terms of its content. Every history of Plymouth colony accepts to a significant degree that what appears in the pages of these tracts is essentially the unvarnished truth. Historians have relied heavily upon the observations of Bradford and Winslow, often transcribing passages from *Mourt* and *Good News* directly into their own work. Goodwin exemplifies the latter group in describing how he used these sources: “*Mourt’s Relation* and Winslow’s Relation have been transferred to these pages almost bodily, though the constant addition of matter from other sources prevents extensive quotations.”

English historian Edward Arber was among the few scholars who questioned the blind acceptance of *Mourt* and *Good News* as factual accounts. “Hitherto these Writers have either not been read at all: or they have been read, as if they were so much Gospel: and that no other

---

opinions varying from them were possible.”46 He called for a more scientific approach to historical interpretation, one that considered the writings of Bradford and Winslow as “ex parte statements” which must be “partly checked, and partly added to, from the outside.”47 Yet Arber, in his *Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1606-1623*, relied exclusively upon the complete transcriptions of *Mourt* and *Good News* to tell the history of those first three years in New England. His explanatory notes for these tracts falls well short of what Young or Dexter provided and there is little evidence to suggest that he “checked” or “added” to this part of the Pilgrim story at all.

Thus far, we have seen how nineteenth-century historians used *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England* to support their particular vision of American nationalism. Literary scholars of this time period mobilized these and other colonial writings for a similar purpose. But whereas historians identified their nationalist agenda as within the boundaries of the regional struggle between the North and the South, literary scholars were compelled to prove the existence of a nationalist agenda. In the early nineteenth century, when Timothy Dwight made his appeal to memorialize New England’s early history, nobody questioned whether or not their colonial past deserved such honorifics. After all, most believed that what set the United States apart from the nations of Europe could be traced to the pioneering spirit of that first generation of colonists. Thus, the young nation could still claim as its own a history that predated its formal inception by nearly two centuries. American literature, however, stood on less solid ground. Because the United States did not have a distinct language of its own, its literature was fated to comparisons with that produced in Great Britain. By any measure, the literary output of the

United States or its colonial antecedent fell well short of that produced in its parent country. Throughout the nineteenth century, American scholars sought desperately to prove that their nation’s men of letters made worthy contributions to English literature writ large. So while American historians saw their discipline as contested ground defined by the ideological causes of the Civil War, American literary scholars continued the fight against Great Britain in a war for independence that continued well into the twentieth century.

Among the first attempts to enoble American authors came in 1829 in the form of Samuel Lorenzo Knapp’s *Lectures on American Literature*. The literati on both sides of the Atlantic had called into question the very notion of an American literature. Knapp maintained that the young nation indeed had a literature and that it sprung from a distinctive blend of American ingenuity and English tradition. Understandably, Knapp struggled to synthesize these two components. He opened his first Lecture (i.e. chapter) with an obligatory bow to American exceptionalism. “Almost every thing the people of the United States now possess has grown from their own sagacity, industry, and perseverance.” Their sole inheritance, language, they received from their “progenitors” and have since “kept it unpolluted and unchanged.” Americans of the nineteenth century saw their nation as the vanguard of a new age, yet they were compelled to express this fact in a borrowed language. Even the most chauvinistic American could not deny that their country had produced little that could compare with the literature of Great Britain. As Knapp freely acknowledged, “the literature of a nation… affords the best criterion by which may be judged the principles and powers of a people, as well as their rank in the scale of civilization.” The dissonance between America’s supposed greatness and its woeful lack of

---

literary achievement therefore required explanation. Knapp attempted to locate a respectable literary tradition between the interstices of American innovation and British preeminence. Commercial ties with Britain, he argued, enabled American writers to make valuable contributions in the English language without compromising the principles that made the United States unique. “We have wisely followed the public taste of the mother country, nor vainly thought that it would be wisdom to struggle for an independency in letters, as far as they regarded the use of our vernacular.”

Knapp’s attempt to find a distinctive American voice while using the language of a country they had politically and culturally renounced compelled him to make some awkward claims on history. Although forced to rely upon the less-than-accurate sources Alexander Young would soon replace, Knapp nevertheless stretched the historical record to the limits of credibility. In order to present America’s forebears in the most heroic light, he categorically denied English imperatives for colonization.

Our ancestors were not, like some colonists, disgorged from the mother country to keep the remaining population sound and pure; there were not a surplus mass thrown off to prevent national apoplexy, or political spasms… nor were they sent by the parent country to extend her commerce, or to gain a footing on, or near, the territories of other nations.

Knapp also repudiated the assertions made in the promotional literature in England, designating the idealistic reports of the New World as an indiscretion committed solely by writers from Spain or France.

---


They did not come to this country as the Spanish and French colonists to the “summer isles,” allured by the golden dreams of avarice, or by the glowing descriptions of the luxuriance of the soil, abounding in perpetual fruits and flowers; an earthly paradise, teeming with all that could satisfy the appetite or regale the senses.  

According to Knapp, the English colonists who were to become the first Americans desired only to establish “a thrifty settlement which would make a good home for themselves and their descendants.” Compelled by “a spirit of enterprise natural to enlightened men,” these intrepid colonists emigrated to the New World and planted there “a love of freedom in thought and speech” which in time became the cornerstone of a new nation.

Knapp’s dubious account of English colonization reflects the need in the early nineteenth century to create a heroic and distinctively American context from which emerge the few prominent examples of literature written in the English language. Curiously, he made only passing references to “Mourt’s Journal” and Good News from New England. Concerning the former tract, Knapp stated only that the mysterious author Mourt was likely one of the “Merchant adventurers.” He offered nothing for Good News except to state that Edward Winslow wrote it. Elsewhere, Knapp referred to Winslow as a “hero-pilgrim” and he also paused a moment to submit his approbation for the Mayflower Compact, the “Magna Charta of American liberties.” While Knapp did not directly address how Mourt and Good News contributed to American literature, his general characterization of the colonial period provided an interpretive blueprint for later scholars who had access to these works via Alexander Young’s Chronicles.

51 Knapp, Lectures, 36-37.
52 Knapp, Lectures, 37.
53 Knapp, Lectures, 44-45.
Samuel Lorenzo Knapp may have pioneered the defense of American literature, but few contributed more to the advancement of American literature as a field of study than Moses Coit Tyler. Active during the latter half of the nineteenth century, Tyler published numerous works on the subject including several volumes documenting the literary output of “Americans” during the nearly two hundred years before the Revolution. In the first volume of *A History of American Literature*, Tyler sought to trace “the rise of American literature at the several isolated colonial centres,” from whence several “literary accents” eventually became a single American voice.\(^{54}\) Like the nineteenth-century historians examined above, he identified colonial Virginia and New England as the cultural and intellectual origins of the United States. But unlike most historians, Tyler was not intent upon proving the innate superiority of either locale and instead characterized both colonial centers as making indispensable contributions to American literature.

Tyler’s lack of regional partisanship did not however blind him to the significant differences between the colonies of Virginia and New England in terms of its literature. Each locale, he argued, produced about a half dozen authors within their first twenty years respectively. But while the residents of New England continued to make contributions to American literature without interruption, these efforts ceased in Virginia until the eighteenth century.\(^{55}\) Tyler explained this deviation as merely the consequence of settlement patterns in each region, or in his own words, their differing “value of vicinity among the units of society.” Colonists who went to New England did so in groups, oftentimes as families. Upon arrival, they settled in close-knit neighborhoods and villages which eventually graduated into towns and cities. This milieu

---


\(^{55}\) The one exception in Virginia was the Burwell Papers. Named after the family in King William County who first made these manuscripts public, the papers document the events surrounding Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676. The author of these manuscripts remains a mystery. Tyler speculated that “one Cotton, of Acquia County” was the likely author but offered no evidence to support this claim. Tyler, *American Literature*, 69-80.
resulted in “a constant play of mind upon mind” and a more regulated and communicative society. New Englanders of a literary bent found ample opportunity to broaden their intellectual scope and had numerous likeminded persons within close proximity. Virginia on the other hand was settled mostly by individuals seeking large tracts of land in order to grow crops, mainly tobacco, for sale in the Atlantic marketplace. This ambition encouraged a pattern of settlement in which comparatively fewer colonists were scattered over a wider area, a circumstance that retarded the development of towns and cities. In short, “the social structure of New England was that of concentration [while] the social structure of Virginia was that of dispersion.” Tyler romanticized early Virginia when he likens its “individualized domestic centres” to the baronies of rural England. Nevertheless, his explanation for why successive generations of Virginians failed to keep pace with their cousins in New England when it came to writing works of literature contains little of the regional biases common in histories of the period.56

Like most U.S. scholars, Tyler saw the colonial past through the lens of American exceptionalism. He adopted the interpretative platform exemplified years earlier by Knapp and assumed that every colonial writer became American the moment they set foot in Virginia or New England.57 The transformation was instantaneous. For Tyler, the birth of American literature came in 1607 when John Smith arrived at Jamestown and began recording his experiences in the New World. From these writings came A True Relation of Virginia, published a year later in London. Though Smith clearly intended this tract for readers in England, Tyler identified A True Relation as the first American book. John Smith may have embodied “the full

56 Tyler, American Literature, 83-87.
57 Though colonists outside of Virginia and New England would eventually contribute to the corpus of American literature, Tyler claimed that during the “first epoch” of American literary history, these two regions alone produced anything that could be called literature. Tyler, American Literature, 80.
magnificence of the Elizabethan period” but Tyler claimed the American environment ultimately determined the character of Smith’s writing. Smith’s second American “book,” according to Tyler, was merely a letter written by Smith in response to complaints from members of the Virginia Council. It appeared in print for the first time in Smith’s *Generall Historie* (1624), well after the author had returned to England. Before he departed Virginia in 1609, Smith penned the manuscript for what Tyler described as Smith’s third and last American book, *A Map of Virginia*, published in 1612. Of course, John Smith’s literary efforts did not cease upon returning to England. He continued to write about Virginia and New England – as well as his travels elsewhere – but for Tyler, he apparently gave up his American-ness when he returned to England.58

Years before Frederick Jackson Turner introduced his “frontier thesis,” Tyler argued that the physical environment of Virginia and New England transformed English colonists into American writers.59 American literature, he contended, was not determined by subject matter, readership, or place of publication. Rather, it was defined by a quality that transcended European standards of structure and aesthetics. Early American literature, he argued, epitomized a rugged, manly style of writing that was as innovative as it was irrepressible. Under this rubric, John Smith not only wrote the first American books, but embodied what many late nineteenth-century Americans wished to see in themselves. While Knapp’s campaign to defend American literature suffered from a conspicuous inferiority complex, Tyler turned the tables, stating that the crude writing of American authors was nothing more than a manifestation of that manly spirit which

58 Tyler, *American Literature*, 16-35.
59 Turner presented his famous thesis at the 1893 meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago. In a paper entitled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” Turner argued that the struggle to tame the western frontier forged a unique and rugged identity on the American people. http://archive.org/stream/significanceoffr00turnuoft#page/n1/mode/2up.
set the United States apart from the rest of the world. Tyler offered John Smith as the archetype of American authorship. Smith did not write under the cultured comfort of some manor hall “but under a rotten tent in the wilderness, perhaps by the flickering blaze of a pine knot, in the midst of tree-stumps and the filth and clamor of a pioneer’s camp, and within the fragile palisades which alone shielded the little band of colonists from the ever-hovering peril of an Indian massacre.” Smith “thought little of any rules of literary art as he wrote his book,” rather “the bluff Captain just stabbed his paper with inken words.” His writing, naturally, had many faults. His “composition was extemporaneous” and he displayed a “chronic misunderstanding between the nominatives and their verbs.” Furthermore, Smith’s words, clauses and sentences were frequently “jumbled together in blinding heaps.” From the pillowy standards of formal literature, Smith’s writing barely qualified. Yet Tyler described his writing as “racy, terse, fearless; a style of sentence carved out by a sword; the incisive speech of a man of action; Hotspur rhetoric, jerking with impatience, truculence, and noble wrath.” The rough imperfections in John Smith’s writing therefore made it quintessentially American. Many years after Smith’s “saucy sentences” made English readers gasp and stare, a new generation of Americans sent an even stronger message across the Atlantic and achieved its political independence as a result. From the perspective of the late nineteenth century, Moses Coit Tyler saw no need to blush under the supposed deficiencies of a literary standard which gave short shrift to the irrepressible manliness of American literature.60

While the rough, vigorous prose of John Smith imparted a manly character upon American literature, the introspective spirituality of New England authors gave it its moral and intellectual compass. Tyler described New Englanders as idealists who established “a thinking community.”

---

60 Tyler, American Literature, 26-27.
Instead of directing their energies toward material gain, New England authors devoted their intellectual prowess toward the advancement of religious purity. Though pious and scholarly, these writers were not doughy clerics or pedantic academics. Tyler did not restrict his penchant for romantic hyperbole to John Smith and Virginia. He described New Englanders as men “who carried keen brains and despotic consciences throbbing in bodies toughened by toil.” Their commitment to establishing settlements in New England devoid of the spiritual corruptions of Europe earned for them an honored place in the annals of Christianity. “Perhaps not since the time of the apostles had there been in the world a faith so literal, a zeal so passionate: not even in the time of the apostles was there connected with these an intelligence so keen and so robust.” To Tyler, New Englanders endowed an ethic of religiosity and intellect upon the American spirit which manifested itself in its literature.  

Moses Coit Tyler clearly held New England writers in great esteem. Whereas Virginia’s contribution to American literature in the seventeenth century effectively ceased after the first generation of colonists, New Englanders continued to write and in 1639 established the first printing press in English North America. For nearly two generations, American literature was essentially New England literature. In spite of New England’s obvious importance to American literature, Tyler offered a surprisingly tepid portrayal of the first two books produced in the region: Mourt’s Relation and Good News from New England. Tyler made no comment on the texts except to note the “sincerity” and “effortless grace” of the language. While he devoted page

61 Tyler, American Literature, 93-98.
after page of bombastic hyperbole to John Smith, Tyler offered but a single introductory paragraph to *Mourt* before crudely copying excerpts of the tract directly from Alexander Young’s *Chronicles*. Similar to the historians examined thus far, Tyler used the text of *Mourt* to speak for itself. Whereas Goodwin and Arber simply accept Bradford and Winslow’s journal as historical truth, Tyler presented it as an example of early American literature without so much as a word to how this earliest of New England books contributed to the genre.⁶³

Reading Tyler’s treatment of *Mourt’s Relation*, one gets the sense that he did not know exactly what to make of it. In the preface to his history of colonial American literature, Tyler listed each American writer in one of five general categories.⁶⁴ Although he characterized New England authors in general as cut from a theological cloth, the nature of the works written by William Bradford and Edward Winslow compelled Tyler to place them outside the “Theological and Religious Writers” category. He recognized that both Bradford and Winslow contributed to *Mourt’s Relation*, yet for unknown reasons Tyler allowed the tract to define only Edward Winslow as an author. Tyler drew a direct parallel between *Mourt* and the “class of writings produced by the early men of Virginia,” and placed Edward Winslow among a group of authors identified as “Writers of Narration and Description.” Like John Smith, Winslow evinced a “sensitiveness to the vast, picturesque, and novel aspects of nature” which he dutifully recorded in his manuscripts. Of course, *Mourt’s Relation* does so much more than offer a descriptive narrative of the New England environment. For someone like Moses Coit Tyler, eager to glorify

---

⁶³ Tyler, *American Literature*, 159-163.
⁶⁴ The five categories are as follows: Writers of Narration and Description (including American Apologetics), Historical Writers, Theological and Religious Writers, Miscellaneous Prose Writers, and Writers of Verse. Tyler, *American Literature*, 3.
the literary efforts of early American writers, his prosaic treatment of one of the most recognized works of seventeenth-century English America is glaring.\textsuperscript{65}

*Mourt*’s sequel, *Good News from New England*, receives an equally halfhearted examination by Tyler. He summarized the tract as follows:

> It is a story of the griefs and perils and escapes of the young settlement, of their various encounters, in amity and in enmity, with mean red men and meaner white ones; of the interior administration of the little commonwealth, and of its steady advancement through all obstructions into solid security; above all else, it is a description of the country, with reference to its desirableness as the seat of a new English community.\textsuperscript{66}

As this description indicates, *Good News* performed various functions, yet Tyler focused exclusively on the final point to define the book and its author. Again, we see his determination to reduce Edward Winslow’s contribution to American literature to merely a recorder of the physical environment. Tyler offered a single passage from *Good News* taken from the end of the tract in which Winslow admonishes his English readers not to embark upon “the grim business” of colonization “without sufficient consideration of its inevitable tasks and pains.” This warning, written in “racy and vigorous” language, is a rare digression from Tyler in which he acknowledged that seventeenth-century authors wrote for contemporary English readers instead of future Americans. Unfortunately, he simply lifted a page’s worth of text from Winslow before moving on to other considerations, failing to provide any insight on this or any other aspect of *Good News*. The influence of late eighteenth-century jingoism – so clear in Tyler’s work – began to fade when American literature became a subject of academic interest at the university level. A growing ethic of professional detachment may have obliged the next generation of scholars to

\textsuperscript{65} Tyler, *American Literature*, 163-166.  
\textsuperscript{66} Tyler, *American Literature*, 164.
eschew Tyler’s soaring rhetoric, but they continued to describe literature as a fundamental expression of national life.\footnote{Tyler, American Literature, 164-166.}

Not everyone agreed with Tyler that American literature began with John Smith in 1607. Lorenzo Sears selected 1783 as the year in which emerged a truly American literature, though he readily admitted that his and any other date was completely subjective. R.P. Halleck identified Washington Irving as the first American writer, roughly two centuries after John Smith.\footnote{Halleck emphasized the English influences of “initiative, ingenuity, and democracy” on colonial American literature. While he argued that a truly American literature did not emerge until the nineteenth century (with Washington Irving), Halleck classified the colonial period as a transitional phase in which the “growth of new world ideals” ultimately manifested itself into a new literary expression. Reuben Post Halleck, History of American Literature (New York: American Book Company, 1911). http://archive.org/stream/historyamerican00hallgoog#page/n8/mode/2up.}

Beginning around 1920, literary scholars became more inclined to locate the birth of American literature in the nineteenth century. In two different surveys of American literature both Percy H. Boynton and William P. Trent gave short shrift to seventeenth-century writers, believing their works to be an extension of English culture and only tangentially related to the American spirit. Nevertheless, those inclined to see the emergence of American literature as a more recent phenomenon readily acknowledged the contributions of its colonial precursor. They traced the “growth” of this literature from its beginnings in the early seventeenth century as a crude extension of English culture to its inevitable destination as a fully formed and recognizable expression of an American idiom.\footnote{Boynton thought little of colonial literature in the seventeenth century. While the literature of other nations (i.e. Western Europe) emerged from “primitive conditions… interwoven with the growth of the language and the progress of a rude civilization,” he dismissed the literature of seventeenth-century English America as “a transplanted thing.” Percy H. Boynton, A History of American Literature (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1919). http://archive.org/details/historyofamerica00boyn.}

Despite the growing sophistication – and differentiation – in scholarly assessments of seventeenth-century literature produced in English America, Mourt’s Relation and Good News
from New England remained as much of an enigma to twentieth century scholars as it did for Knapp and Tyler. Lorenzo Sears referred to Mourt as “Winslow’s Journal” and seemed unaware that Bradford co-wrote it. Like so many others, he saw Mourt as more of a historical record than a work of literature. Describing it as “a minute and faithful account of the first year in the northern colony,” Sears marveled at Winslow’s use of tempered language in describing momentous events and interpreted these measured tones as an attempt by the author to record the objective truth. “The best commendation of the unadorned record is to say, that it sets down the truth as it appeared to men of strong sense, having spirit and zealous purpose to do well the hard task they had undertaken.”

In a similar vein, William B. Cairns viewed Bradford and Winslow’s journal as having no immediate purpose other than to leave a record of a great moment in time. He claimed that the Pilgrims set out from Europe to found a Commonwealth and “a nation of God.” Such an event obligated them to leave a record for future generations; therefore, they wrote, “not for the London public of the hour, but for the reader of that future when his deeds would be appreciated.” Of course, Cairns failed to explain why the authors sent their manuscript to London if they intended it for the posterity of the godly commonwealth they meant to create in New England. As the argument for an eighteenth-century birthdate for American literature gained momentum, Mourt and Good News became less important. Some, like R.P. Halleck and Percy Boynton, ignored these tracts completely. William P. Trent referred

---

70 Sears saw most New England tracts in this light. He characterized those in Young’s Chronicles as “true and honest, as simple as the social life they record, and sometimes as picturesque as the surroundings they describe.” Lorenzo Sears, American Literature in the Colonial and National Periods (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1902), 27-28, http://archive.org/stream/cu31924022153609#page/n21/mode/2up.

71 Cairns contrasted these efforts with those by Virginians. Most colonists in the Chesapeake region, he argued, were Royalist and Episcopalian and thus had little incentive to publish pamphlets or sermons. And since their interests were always material, the literature they produced were no more than adventure stories designed to cultivate interest in England. In Cairns’ opinion, the lack of “principle” in the writings of Virginians diminished them as works of literature. William B. Cairns, A History of American Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1912), 12-25, http://archive.org/stream/ahistoryamerica00goog#page/n6/mode/2up.
briefly to *Mourt* only long enough to dismiss it and Plymouth colony as largely irrelevant to American literature and history.\(^7^2\)

This brief but telling survey of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century studies of colonial New England history and American literature reveals the extensive role nationalism played in how scholars approached *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England*. Determined to find the origins of American exceptionalism in the nation’s colonial past, scholars embarked upon a quest for authenticity in the literature of that period. In so doing, they imparted upon these tracts an aura of veracity that effectively mythologized the texts and the colonies they describe. The characterization of *Mourt* and *Good News* as unadulterated descriptions of Plymouth colony has endured, even as the importance of the colony itself has come under significant revision. Despite the seismic shifts in the fields of American history and literature over the last half century, interpretations of these tracts have remained virtually unchanged from when Alexander Young popularized them in 1841. Historians continue to treat *Mourt* and *Good News* as factual accounts recorded by Bradford and Winslow for the purpose of enlightening future generations. Literary scholars still wrestle with questions over the tracts’ qualifications as literature, American or otherwise. Since at least the emergence of the Annales School in the late 1920s, historians have challenged the overt nationalism that until that time colored virtually every study of the past.\(^7^3\)

Decades later, literary scholars began to take an increased interest in the historical contexts of the

---

\(^7^2\) Trent gave the Plymouth colonists a mixed review. The Pilgrim writers, he argued, “were not of a stock from which much in the way of literature was to be expected, but they were neither unintellectual nor unimaginative.” As for *Mourt’s Relation*, he stated that “its authors deserve their share of credit for a narrative style that is only slightly quaint and cumbersome, and for infusing into their pages more of human nature than of Puritanism.” William P. Trent, *A History of American Literature, 1607-1865* (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1930), 29-39, http://archive.org/stream/historyofamerico00tren#page/n7/mode/2up.

\(^7^3\) While the Annales School has undergone significant transformations over the years, it can be said to encompass several methodologies of historical interpretation. The rejection of nationalism as a historical framework reflects in part the original vision of the movement’s founders, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre.
written word while also expanding the boundaries of what constituted literature.\textsuperscript{74} However, for a variety of reasons, scholars in both fields have largely failed to incorporate \textit{Mourt} and \textit{Good News} into these new configurations. Most simply rely upon the old formulas or ignore the tracts altogether. Ironically then, these most famous documents of early English America have managed to run the gauntlet of revisionist criticism relatively unscathed.

Earlier, I described how northern scholars during the antebellum period strove to cast the Pilgrim Fathers as the founders of the nation. The Union victory over the Confederacy effectively solidified that sentiment. In 1879, John Abbot Goodwin considered Plymouth colony the cornerstone of the nation. Had Plymouth failed, he argued, “Massachusetts Bay would have remained desolate, and even Virginia would doubtless have been abandoned.”\textsuperscript{75} Goodwin offered no explanation why Virginia depended upon Plymouth colony, yet this sentiment written in the aftermath of the Civil War continued well into the twentieth century. The claim had little basis in fact. Samuel Eliot Morison, Plymouth’s most famous historian, readily admitted that the Pilgrim colony “by any material or quantitative standard was one of the smaller and weaker English colonies in North America.” Nevertheless, Morison claimed that well into the mid-

\textsuperscript{74} The New Historicism emerged in the 1980s in reaction to the formalism that had dominated literary scholarship (i.e. the New Criticism) since the mid-nineteenth century. Its advocates claim that all literature must be considered within the historical context of its production. The theory has also challenged the rigid barriers of what constitutes literature.

\textsuperscript{75} For Goodwin, Plymouth did more than make Massachusetts Bay and Virginia possible. He asserts that the first four years at Plymouth effectively determined whether “posterity should behold an Anglo-Saxon state on the American continent.” Goodwin adds that without the Pilgrim colony, the region would have been dominated by France, Spain or Holland, and Britain itself would not “have felt that reflex influence which has had no small share in imbuing her government with the spirit of liberty, humanity, and continued progress.” Goodwin, \textit{Pilgrim Republic}, xxii.
twentieth century most Americans believed that Plymouth colony predated the English settlements in Virginia.⁷⁶

Plymouth’s supremacy over Virginia in the popular imagination reveals the extent to which the northern version of colonial history had effectively become an American myth. Morison weighed in on the subject in response to a printed debate in the Saturday Evening Post in January 1954. Though not an academic medium, the Post had a circulation of several million and was considered at the time as a cultural icon of Americana. Since the question involved popular perceptions, the Post made for an appropriate forum.⁷⁷ The debate pitted Herbert Ravenal Sass against Bernard DeVoto. Sass, a historian, writer and southern firebrand railed against the common belief that the Pilgrim Fathers founded the nation while the South had been written out of “the grand epic of American achievement.”⁷⁸

“Most of us, including most Southerners, believe that the first settlers in what is now the United States were the Scrooby sectarians known first as Separatists and then as Pilgrims – a kind and gentle though rather dolorous-looking folk who came over in the Mayflower, stepped ashore at Plymouth Rock, each with a Bible in his hand, founded the U.S.A. then and there, and gave us the ideals of liberty and tolerance which have made us – we are happily convinced – the greatest and best nation that has ever existed.”⁷⁹

Sass had no professional interest in colonial America, yet he uses Plymouth colony as the prime example for how northern scholars used history to denigrate the South.⁸⁰ Southerners, Sass

---

⁷⁶ Samuel Eliot Morison, “The Plymouth Colony and Virginia,” The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 26, no. 2 (1954): 147-165. In this article, Morison describes the close relationship between Plymouth and Virginia, and if anything, Plymouth owed its survival to its connections with Virginia.

⁷⁷ The Saturday Evening Post first appeared in 1897 as a weekly magazine, but traced its roots back to Benjamin Franklin’s Pennsylvania Gazette begun in 1728. During the 1930s, it was the country’s most popular magazine and still had a circulation of nearly six million in 1961. The Post’s collapse in 1969 has been generally attributed to the magazine’s inability to adapt to an increasingly urban and “modern” America. Virginia Sammon, “Surviving the Saturday Evening Post,” The Antioch Review 29, no. 1; What’s Happened to Magazines? (1969): 101-108.

⁷⁸ Herbert Ravenal Sass, “They Don’t Tell the Truth about the South!” Saturday Evening Post, January 9, 1954, 25, 67-68.

⁷⁹ Sass, “They Don’t Tell the Truth,” 25.

⁸⁰ Sass specialized in western expansion, the city of Charleston, and ornithology.
argued, made indispensable contributions to the United States beginning with Jamestown, a settlement that predated the Pilgrim colony by thirteen years. 81 A week after printing Sass’ conspiracy theory, the Post published a response by DeVoto. 82 He flatly denied Sass’ indictment against historians. The scholarly community, DeVoto asserted, gave the South – and the Virginia colonies in particular – considerable attention. The reason Plymouth ranked above Jamestown in the minds of the general public, DeVoto stated, was due to the “number of altogether remarkable writers” in the Pilgrim colony. Unlike the colonists in Virginia, the Pilgrims recorded their experiences in print. Their “homely details of Plymouth’s daily life,” DeVoto explained, “created images and symbols which have delighted people ever since.” He identified William Bradford as the best of these writers and Of Plymouth Plantation as “one of the masterpieces of American literature.” Thus, the credit (or blame) for the historical myths concerning the colonies was not a failure of history, but a “triumph of literature.” 83

As the Sass-DeVoto debate in the Saturday Evening Post indicates, the ideological battles of the Civil War era raged well into the twentieth century. After several decades of reconciliation and consensus, the emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1950s revived the sectional rivalry between the North and the South. Historians once again mobilized America’s colonial past to legitimize a particular stance on race relations in the country. Sass’ vitriolic indictment against historical depictions of the South stemmed from the more recent attacks against Jim

81 Neither Sass nor DeVoto in his response address the question as to whether or not the English colonies in the seventeenth century qualify as “American.”
82 DeVoto was the only historian Sass called out by name. He accused DeVoto of writing out Charleston from his study of westward expansion: two subjects Sass held dear. DeVoto answered that his book, The Course of Empire (1952), concerned specifically the search for a route to the Pacific, which naturally had little to do with South Carolina. Bernard DeVoto, “That Southern Inferiority Complex,” Saturday Evening Post, January 16, 1954, vol. 226, no. 29: 112.
Crow and segregation.\(^8^4\) He rejected DeVoto’s explanation and urged “all Southerners to raise the devil” against what he saw as a northern conspiracy to belittle the “great Southern achievement.”\(^8^5\) In a thinly veiled reference to the racial hypocrisy of the North, Sass identified the tendency for histories of the Pilgrims to suppress the atrocities committed by them against the Indians while shining a bright light upon the shamefulness of slavery.\(^8^6\)

Leaving aside the question of a northern conspiracy, the Sass-DeVoto debate reveals how scholars in the twentieth century treated the literature of the Pilgrim colonists in much the same way as their predecessors. Northern scholars, as Sass argued, may have minimized the Pilgrims’ violence against the Indians for socio-political reasons, but they also had powerful precedents for doing so. Bernard DeVoto identified literature as the driving force for shaping popular opinion about the Pilgrims, but it also influenced professional scholars. In citing the literature of the Pilgrims as the governing factor, DeVoto followed the precedent of nineteenth-century scholars in assuming that the colonists wrote for posterity. His response also introduces a crucial dynamic in the relationship between the earliest publications and Bradford’s later history. As mentioned earlier, DeVoto considered *Of Plymouth Plantation* a “masterpiece,” but he also stated that other books “published earlier were more influential.” Considering the importance he places on “the homely details of Plymouth’s daily life,” he must be referring to *Mourt* and *Good News*. However, DeVoto failed to reference these books, or any others, by name. The only title offered by him, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, in fact contains few of these glimpses into the daily life of the colonists and instead recounts the epic struggle of the Pilgrims across two continents. So

\(^8^4\) In his debate with Bernard DeVoto, Sass avoids any direct reference to the civil rights movement, but in subsequent publications, he describes in lurid detail the chaos that would ensue should desegregation prevail. For example, see Herbert Ravenal Sass, “Mixed Schools and Mixed Blood,” *Atlantic Monthly* 198 (1956): 45–49.
\(^8^5\) In DeVoto’s response as an addendum, 114.
\(^8^6\) Ibid.
while DeVoto recognized the value of *Mourt* and *Good News*, he nevertheless subordinated them to Bradford’s history in the hierarchy of Pilgrim (and early American) literature.  

In my earlier discussion of the quest for authentic editions of *Mourt* and *Good News*, I omitted a concurrent event that had an even greater impact in the study of Plymouth colony: the rediscovery of Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*. As with *Mourt* and *Good News*, successive generations of writers used OPP to compile their own chronicles of New England’s early history. In the eighteenth century, the manuscript fell under the care of Thomas Prince who naturally incorporated it in his *Annals* (1736). Sometime before he died in 1758, Prince deposited Bradford’s history in the New England Library located in the tower of the Old South Church.

Sometime during the British occupation of Boston during the Revolutionary War, the manuscript disappeared and was feared lost forever. In 1855, while in the process of writing his own history of Massachusetts, the Reverend John S. Barry, discovered Bradford’s manuscript in the library of the Bishop of London at Fulham. Nobody, including the bishop, knew how it came into his possession. An exact copy was quickly made and published by the Massachusetts Historical Society a year later.

*Of Plymouth Plantation* offered an intimate glimpse into the Pilgrim exodus from England. Whereas *Mourt’s Relation* picked up their story as the *Mayflower* neared Cape Cod, OPP began the tale in 1608 as the religious dissidents from the village of Scrooby left England and settled in

---

88 Barry made the discovery while reading *A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America*, a book written by the Lord Bishop of Oxford and published in 1846. Barry recognized certain passages which greatly resembled the language of Bradford as written Morton’s *New England Memorial* and Prince’s *Annals*. A citation in the Lord Bishop’s history referred to a “MS. History of the Plantation of Plymouth, &c., in the Fulham Library. Antiquarians in London soon confirmed the manuscript as the original, written in the hand of William Bradford. Technically then, the Bishop of Oxford discovered the tract, however, Barry was the first to recognize the book as Bradford’s history. The book was catalogued at Fulham as “The Log of the *Mayflower.*” Charles Deane, ed. *History Of Plymouth Plantation* (Boston, 1856), v-vi, [http://archive.org/stream/historyofplymout00inbrad#page/n3/mode/2up](http://archive.org/stream/historyofplymout00inbrad#page/n3/mode/2up).
the Netherlands. The scene of the action shifts to Plymouth after the Mayflower voyage and Bradford continues the narrative until 1647. Thus, OPP comprises a forty-year, transatlantic saga of the Pilgrims and has been enthroned as a (and for some: the) creation story of the United States. Additionally, Bradford situated the Pilgrim story within the context of the English Reformation which gave their endeavor a nobility that the economically motivated colonization of Virginia lacked. In fact, he prefaced his narrative with a summary of England’s attempt to rid itself from the vestiges of Catholicism. Written by the most prominent man in the colony, a figure at the center of the action with knowledge of Plymouth’s most sacred and inner workings, OPP has understandably become one of the most treasured sources from early America. And unlike Mourt and Good News, OPP was intended by the author as a history and therefore lends itself more readily to the service of scholars.

While the story related within the pages of OPP had a tremendous appeal for scholars, the story of the book’s rediscovery garnered attention from Americans across the board. The facsimile publication appeared in 1856 as tensions between the North and South reached a crescendo. Similar to how some scholars used Mourt and Good News to substantiate their claims that the American republic began with Plymouth, many saw the rediscovery of Bradford’s monumental history on the eve of the Civil War as greatly enhancing this argument. But the political cache from OPP extended well beyond the conflict between the North and the South. Although the Massachusetts Historical Society had published a faithful reproduction of Bradford’s manuscript, many believed that the original rested on the wrong side of the Atlantic. Several subsequent attempts to procure OPP from the Bishop of London failed. Finally, in 1897,
U.S. Senator George F. Hoar spearheaded a successful effort to return the original manuscript of William Bradford’s History to its place of origin.\textsuperscript{90}

On 26 May 1897, Thomas F. Bayard, the Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s, formerly presented the manuscript to Massachusetts Governor Roger Walcott.\textsuperscript{91} To honor the occasion, a great ceremony was held at the Old State House in Boston. Within the walls of this building, constructed in 1798 as a monument to the greatness of the New Republic, the most eminent men of the state gathered to witness the repatriation of that republic’s creation story.\textsuperscript{92} Several personages ascended the podium and spoke to the significance of the book, its celebrated return, and the history chronicled within its pages. They described \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation} as an American heirloom, a relic deserving deep veneration from all who love the republic and constitutional liberty. Senator Hoar said it thusly:

\begin{quote}
I do not think many Americans will gaze upon it without a little trembling of the lips and a little gathering of mist in the eyes, as they think of the story of suffering, of sorrow, of peril, of exile, of death and of lofty triumph which that book tells, -- which the hand of the great leader and founder of America has traced on those pages.\textsuperscript{93}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{90} Senator Hoar made his request on behalf of the people of Massachusetts and at the behest of several historical societies. While visiting England in 1896, the senator called upon the Bishop of London to view the manuscript and request its return to Massachusetts. The bishop, Frederick Temple, was amenable to the request, but felt obliged to clear it first with the Archbishop of Canterbury and Queen Victoria. Concerning the latter, he reportedly said, “We should not do such a thing behind Her Majesty’s back.” Additionally, the bishop claimed that the preceding Americans to have made this request were “commercial people” to whom he felt reluctant to hand over the manuscript. George F. Hoar, “Address of Senator Hoar,” in \textit{Bradford’s History “Of Plimoth Plantation,”} by William Bradford (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1898), xxxix – lxvii.

\textsuperscript{91} Bayard had just completed service as Ambassador to the United Kingdom and was returning home. The U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s, Thomas F. Bayard was instrumental in processing the request through the proper channels. Per order of the Consistory Court of London, the Bishop of London gave custody of the manuscript to Ambassador Bayard who summarily delivered it to the Governor of Massachusetts. Hoar, “Address,” xxxix – lxvii.

\textsuperscript{92} Women, presumably of some worth, filled the galleries above. According to the \textit{Boston Daily Globe}, “the crowd was much larger and more distinguished than on inauguration days.” Since early that morning, a throng pressed into the corridors of the State House hoping to glimpse the historic occasion. Unfortunately, the event was invitation only, disappointing the unconnected citizens of the Commonwealth who showed up that day. \textit{Boston Daily Globe}, May 26, 1897: 1, 6-7.

\textsuperscript{93} Hoar, “Address,” 1v.
Throughout his panegyric to Bradford’s book, Senator Hoar made extraordinary claims on history. He called the founding of Plymouth colony “the most important political transaction that has ever taken place on the face of the earth,” comparable in fact to the story of Bethlehem. He punctuated his address with the patriotic hyperbole of a man convinced his country was on the cusp of greatness. Fittingly, the senator celebrated the manuscript’s return from Great Britain, the undisputed superpower of the day, as a symbol of international goodwill between cousins of the “Saxon” strain. Of Plymouth Plantation therefore was not just an old book describing events from long ago, but the incarnation of an American ideal, the opening chapter of a heroic tale which would inevitably lead to the global supremacy of the United States.

As described earlier in this chapter, Mourt’s Relation and Good News from New England received a great deal of attention, but nothing written in English North America matched the encomiums imparted upon OPP. The speakers in the Old State House may have overstated the case on that day in 1897, but they nevertheless helped complete the apotheosis of Bradford’s history. A combination of factors elevated OPP above all other works from America’s colonial past. The deliberate intention of the author to communicate this history to posterity, the remarkable story of its rediscovery and return to Massachusetts, and the political moments involved – its rediscovery during the antebellum period and its return on the eve of American imperialism – conspired together like a perfect storm and made OPP the preeminent text of early

94 Senator Hoar also claimed that Massachusetts Governor Roger Walcott was the lineal successor to Plymouth Governor William Bradford. Additionally, he informed the state legislature that their institution originated with the Mayflower Compact. Hoar, “Address,” xxxix, lv.
95 The senator cast the people of the United States and Great Britain as cousins, but they were also rivals. He lauded the graciousness of the Bishop of London, and others in England, for returning the manuscript to its rightful owners. Ambassador Bayard however cited an American precedent for such generosity. Years earlier, the American Library Society in Philadelphia returned to the British government certain volumes from the period of James I. Thomas F. Bayard, “Address of the Hon. Thomas F. Bayard,” in Bradford’s History “Of Plimoth Plantation,” by William Bradford (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1898), lxiv-lxv.
America for academics and for the general public. Not surprisingly, the text’s fame buoyed the status of Plymouth colony; so much so that nearly sixty years after Bradford’s manuscript made its triumphant return in Boston, Herbert Ravenal Sass complained bitterly that the Pilgrim story had effectively annihilated the history of early Virginia, even in the South.

The dark shadow cast by Bradford’s history upon seventeenth-century Virginia obscured more than just the history of the Old Dominion. It has also hidden *Mourt* and *Good News* from the attention of many modern scholars. The impact of historical events during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, discussed throughout this chapter, affected these three works in similar ways, but to different degrees. *Of Plymouth Plantation* burns brightest in the night sky, but scholars still plot a course to early Plymouth using lesser stars. However, because *Mourt* and *Good News* inhabit the same constellation as *OPP*, curious eyes seem inevitably drawn to the greater brilliance of Bradford’s history. Generally, scholars assume that *Mourt* and *Good News* provide detailed episodes of an epic Pilgrim story told more comprehensively in *OPP*. Bradford’s authorship of two of these three works certainly lends credence to this idea. In his history, Bradford glossed over the events described in *Mourt* and *Good News*. Ever the humble puritan, he made no reference whatsoever to *Mourt*, the work he co-wrote with Edward Winslow, though published anonymously. *Good News* appears once in *OPP* though not by name. At one point, Bradford alluded to a conflict between the Plymouth colonists and the Narragansett in December of 1621, but offered scant detail. “These things,” Bradford wrote, “I do but mention, because they are more at large already put forth in print by Mr. Winslow.”

---

Bradford’s suggestion, *Mourt* and *Good News* appear as episodic vignettes which can be simply inserted within the grand narrative of *OPP.*\(^{97}\)

The tendency to view *Mourt* and *Good News* as merely parts to *OPP*’s whole ignores many of the characteristics unique to each work, a subject discussed at length in the next chapter. Though certainly related, each of these books has a different story to tell. Like a famous brother who outshines his siblings, Bradford’s history has drawn attention away from the individuality of the earlier texts. While *OPP* eclipsed *Mourt* and *Good News* as the foremost authority on the Pilgrim colony, a similar phenomenon occurred in regard to Plymouth’s contributions to historical assessments of New England. In this chapter, I have examined how the sectional rivalry between the North and the South greatly determined how scholars interpreted the history of Plymouth colony and the early Pilgrim books. Using an interpretative lens that divided the country into two regional subcategories, Plymouth often figures prominently in the constitutive makeup of the United States. The myth that the Pilgrims were the first to establish on these shores a community based on religious tolerance, social equality and free labor encouraged many to view them as the colonial progenitors of a country based upon these principles. But when scholars use a different lens, one that either narrows or widens the scope of historical inquiry, Plymouth colony tends to fade into oblivion. In particular, studies of New England or the Atlantic World consistently pay little regard to Plymouth or the Pilgrims’ literary efforts. Plymouth’s reputation within academia, therefore, seems to depend upon its status as a talisman against a recalcitrant South determined to

---

\(^{97}\) In his edited version of *OPP*, Samuel Eliot Morison corroborates various descriptions made by Bradford by comparing the details with those in *Mourt’s Relation*. Champlin Burrage was among the few to warn against the unchallenged transcendence of *OPP*, calling it “a mistake to suppose that the *History* has superseded the more fragmentary literature.” Burrage, “Earliest Minor Accounts,” 315.
legitimize slavery and segregation as part of the fabric of American society. In the absence of this agenda, Plymouth, as well as its literature, all but disappears from view.

As a category of analysis, New England has garnered considerable attention from the scholarly community. It emerged as a distinctive territory when in 1620 James I granted a charter to the Plymouth Council for New England, a joint-stock company formed to establish settlements in English North America between forty and forty-eight degrees parallel. This area was originally part of Virginia and the two regions soon became competing archetypical expressions of English colonization. The “competition” between New England and Virginia stems from the supposition that the colonies established therein had little in common with one another other than the incipient Englishness of the settlers. Historians have perpetuated this dichotomy based upon the sources left by contemporaries who recorded their observations on paper. Concerning Virginia, most seventeenth-century writers focused on the economic opportunities available in that region. As a result, colonial Virginia is marked by its commercial endeavors. Conversely, most of the literature written in and about seventeenth-century New England pertained to matters of faith; therefore, its legacy centers on the religiosity of the colonists living there.

Of course, these stereotypes greatly obscure the realities in each settlement. Virginia had its full measure of god-fearing residents as well as ministers to guide them. Among the most famous was Alexander Whitaker, “the Apostle to Virginia,” who served as minister in that colony from his arrival in 1611 until his death by drowning six years later. Whitaker earned an M.A. from Cambridge around 1604 and belonged to a family noted for its puritan leanings. Two years after reaching Virginia, he published “Good News from Virginia” in London, a tract intended to drum
up support for the colony.\textsuperscript{98} Regardless, very few have ever heard of Alexander Whitaker and only specialists in early Virginia remember anything of religion in the Old Dominion. It should also be noted that the Leyden Pilgrims originally intended to settle in Virginia. By chance, the stormy Atlantic hurled them northward to Cape Cod while a host of factors prevented them from continuing to their destination. As for studies of seventeenth-century New England, scholars have long appreciated its commercial dimensions, yet they are almost always discussed in relation to religious imperatives. As the story goes, successive generations of New Englanders became more worldly and sacrificed the piety of the founders on the altar of materialism. As a result of this “declension,” New Englanders became Yankees and an American identity was born.\textsuperscript{99}

Despite the considerable amount of work devoted to New England and Virginia, including studies that complicate the crude generalities described above, these regions still exist in the historical imagination as monolithic entities. New England originated as a geographical unit as stipulated in the 1620 charter. Scholars generally assume that the several colonies within this boundary share some commonality that transcends the accidents of geography, namely an overarching religiosity. They certainly shared a fraternal bond and often cooperated with one another, especially when it came to military affairs. In 1643, for example, Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut and New Haven created the United Colonies of New England, an association largely intended to coordinate their efforts against the Indians.\textsuperscript{100} From time to

\textsuperscript{98} Whitaker was rumored to have baptized and married Pocahontas, but no evidence exists to support this. Nevertheless, the rumor itself suggests the esteem he had among Virginians. The Virginia Historical Society, \textit{The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography}, Vol. XI (Richmond: House of the Society, 1904): 147-148.

\textsuperscript{99} The notion of declension and this process of Americanization has many advocates and detractors. Still, the shift away from the austere piety of the first generation toward a more commercial outlook is undeniable.

\textsuperscript{100} The creation of the United Colonies of New England was a response to the growing tensions between the English colonists and the Indians. In 1637, the Niantic Indians on Block Island killed John Oldham of Plymouth and several
time, the colonies of New England banded together against their common enemies, but they also had substantial differences. In fact, several of them (e.g. Providence Plantation, Connecticut, New Haven) were founded by colonists at odds with the ruling party in Massachusetts Bay. Each of the “lesser” colonies made efforts to offset the power of Massachusetts Bay, struggling to keep a measure of independency even while they maintained cordial relations with their wealthier and more powerful neighbor.

From a historiographical perspective, New England resembles a painting whose coherence requires the viewer to look upon it from a certain distance. Stand too close and the variegated localities emerge as little more than a haphazard combination of independent brush strokes. Stand too far away and the whole fails to distinguish itself from the neighboring colonies that canvass New England. The colonies throughout the region, though certainly related, still had differences enough to encourage a more nuanced assessment of New England. Nevertheless, most scholars treat New England as merely Massachusetts Bay writ large. After its founding in 1630, the Bay colony almost immediately became the dominate power in the region. Having the advantages of a large population with access to the Atlantic marketplace via Boston Harbor, Massachusetts Bay exercised considerable influence in the region. Any discussion of colonial

seamen on Block Island. In retaliation, ninety men from Massachusetts, led by John Endecott, killed fourteen Niantic men and also burned houses and fields. The conflict escalated when the Pequot living along the mouth of the Connecticut River attacked the English fort at Saybrook and other settlements nearby. A combined force of men from Massachusetts and Connecticut decimated the Pequot, killing around five hundred and forcing many others into “praying towns.” The conflict demonstrated to the English colonists that war with the Indians could erupt at any moment. When civil war broke out in England in 1642, the colonists realized that they were on their own. Living among potentially hostile Indians and flanked by French and Dutch colonies, the English in New England needed to present a united front. In May 1643, delegates from Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut and New Haven met in Boston and adopted the Articles of Confederation, creating the United Colonies of New England. Rhode Island, a colony fundamentally at odds with Mass Bay, was excluded from the alliance. The confederation proved successful for about ten years until Massachusetts Bay refused to honor the decision to attack New Netherlands during the Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654). The efficacy of the United Colonies was greatly diminished after this event, but remained intact until 1692. Harry M. Ward, *Colonial America, 1607-1763* (Englewood: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1991), 53-55.
New England must feature Massachusetts Bay as its primary constituent. Time and again, however, scholars fail to consider New England as an amalgamation of several colonies and simply extrapolate from Massachusetts Bay.

The tendency to render New England as an extension of the Bay colony figures prominently in scholarly assessments of colonial literature. In the 1930s, Perry Miller almost singlehandedly changed the landscape in the field. Between World War I and the Great Depression, the reverence with which most scholars treated the founders of the United States – a group that included the Pilgrims and other puritans in colonial New England – dissipated amidst a climate of doubt and pessimism about the modern world and America’s role in it. Progressive Historians rejected the patriotic model of history that had dominated the field in favor of social and economic interpretations of the past. Charles Beard took this approach to the extreme, casting the Founding Fathers as self-serving elites more concerned about protecting their own interests than granting rights and liberties to “the people.”101 Under this configuration, the puritans in New England were seen as overzealous bigots determined to impose their religious scruples upon unwilling colonists.102 In two groundbreaking works, Orthodoxy in Massachusetts (1933) and

101 The Progressive movement in historiography emerged on the eve of the First World War. Some of the earliest champions of this movement included Frederick Jackson Turner, James Harvey Robinson, Carl Becker, and Charles Beard. Turner was among the first to expand the scope of historical inquiry beyond political and institutional structures. His student, Carl Becker upped the ante. Becker threw down the gauntlet for the Progressive movement with his History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1909). http://archive.org/stream/historypolitica03beckgoog#page/n6/mode/2up. He cast the American Revolution as two movements: the contest for home-rule and independence from Britain and the contest over who would rule at home. Concerning the latter, Becker argued that economics and class conflict ultimately shaped the political landscape in the colonies. Charles Beard stretched Becker’s economic determinism to its limit. In An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (1913), Beard claimed that the Founding Fathers sought independence in order to preserve their economic and social standing against the encroachments of an increasingly intrusive British administration. For a summary of the Progressive historians contributions to historiography, see Novick, That Noble Dream, 86-108.

102 For Progressives, these religious scruples had a profound influence on American literature. H.L. Mencken saw Puritanism’s moral rectitude as a great impediment to the free exchange of ideas. “The Puritan’s utter lack of aesthetic sense, his distrust of all romantic emotion, his unmatchable intolerance of opposition, his unbreakable belief in his own bleak and narrow views, his savage cruelty of attack, his lust for relentless and barbarous
The New England Mind (1939), Miller depicted New England puritans as avant-garde intellectuals who attempted to create a society based upon contested interpretations of the English Reformation. Miller did not so much negate the thrust of the Progressives’ accusations as he did parry the blow. He isolated New England puritanism as a purely intellectual affair wherein the godly wrestled with the great spiritual questions of the age. Miller cast New England as a “laboratory” wherein puritanism could develop in relative isolation. Free from the pernicious influences in Europe, New England puritanism emerged as “a single intelligence” and a “unified body of thought.”

By the 1940s, Perry Miller was the great champion of intellectual history and his work became the standard by which all other studies of seventeenth-century New England were judged. Even those critical of Miller’s focus on the intellectual elites still had to contend with his findings. Despite the now common practice among scholars of early New England to point out Miller’s shortcomings, the notion that puritans in New England shared a monolithic intellectual culture has endured. Furthermore, Miller’s supposition that the New England mind emerged almost exclusively from the theological works of Massachusetts Bay writers survives as the master blueprint for scholars to follow. He established the rubric that New England writers

persecution – these things have put an almost unbearable burden upon the exchange of ideas in the United States, and particular upon that form of it which involves playing with them for the mere game’s sake.” H.L. Mencken, “Puritanism as a Literary Force,” in A Book of Prefaces (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1917), 201-202, http://archive.org/stream/abookprefaces00mencgoog#page/n6/mode/2up.


104 The major thrust of criticism against Perry Miller came from the Social Historians of the 1960s. Collectively, they took Miller to task for his assumption that rational thought existed independently from time and events. Miller was also accused of ignoring the emotional aspects of religion. In recent years, Miller’s reputation has been somewhat resurrected. Some scholars have pointed out that the Social Historians did not accurately read Miller while others argue that Miller rectified the shortcomings in his earlier works with The New England Mind: From Colony to Province. See Francis T. Butts, “The Myth of Perry Miller,” The American Historical Review 87, no. 3 (1982): 665-694; and Margaret Sobczak, “Hoopes’s Symposium on Perry Miller,” American Quarterly 34, no. 1 (1982): 43-48.
concerned themselves solely with the theological debates on puritanism and the English Reformation. This formula, as rigid and uncompromising as the puritans themselves, left no room for works written by the Pilgrim separatists in Plymouth who had abandoned hope for the reformation in England.

Miller excluded the Plymouth Pilgrims as contributors to New England’s literary tradition largely on the belief that their separatism disqualified them as puritans. While he described the saints of Massachusetts Bay as on an “errand” to save England and the Reformation, Miller argued that the Pilgrims fled England, first to the Netherlands and then to Plymouth, in order to save their own skins.⁹⁵

The Bay Company was not a battered remnant of suffering Separatists thrown up on a rocky shore; it was an organized taskforce of Christians, executing a flank attack on the corruptions of Christendom. These Puritans did not flee America; they went in order to work out that complete reformation which was not yet accomplished in England and Europe, but which would quickly be accomplished if only the saints back there had a working model to guide them.⁹⁶

Miller based this argument on the writings of Massachusetts Bay authors. English critics accused the founders of that colony of abandoning their country and the cause of Reformation. In response, the colonists argued that they had done no such thing; rather, they moved to the New England wilderness to preserve the Reformation from the corruptions of Europe. Decades later, second and third-generation writers from Massachusetts Bay appropriated the “errand” theme for their own purposes. In the midst of what many perceived as a decline of religiosity, writers

---

⁹⁵ Miller claimed that the Pilgrims were “reluctant voyagers” harried out of England in 1608 by the Anglican Church. They could have remained in England, he argues, “had they given up being Separatists,” the implication being that the Anglican Church had yet to make life intolerable for reasonable-minded puritans. Miller further contended that the Pilgrims’ decided to leave the Netherlands for fear of war against Spain and to bolster their economic fortunes. For Miller, the Pilgrims effectively turned their backs on England and cared for nothing but themselves. See “Errand Into the Wilderness,” 4-5.

resurrected the “errand” theme in order to reprimand their fellow colonists for straying away from the intent of the founders.

Miller accepted Bay colony writers at their word, assuming their version of events as a true representation of the founders’ objectives in the New World. The Pilgrims also claimed that they were on a mission to spread the true faith, but Miller rejected this argument as ancillary to their actual aim of self-preservation. In the early 1960s, English historian William Haller argued that the English in the seventeenth-century saw themselves as the champion of the Protestant Reformation. Haller’s thesis buoyed the notion that the English colonists who founded Massachusetts Bay did so as part of a pan-national effort to save the Reformation. As a result, New England literature became defined by the theological tracts produced in – and only in – Massachusetts Bay. Few noticed the contradiction in grounding a proto-American literary genre on the basis of a rhetoric that denied any meaningful separation from the country its writers had essentially abandoned. A few scholars challenged Miller’s “errand” thesis. In his iconic study of John Winthrop, Edmund S. Morgan described how the founders of the Bay colony left England for reasons nearly identical to those of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Others such as Robert Middlekauff, Richard Waterhouse and Theodore Dwight Bozeman contended that Winthrop and company sought refuge from persecution in the New England wilderness. Surprisingly, the rejection of the “errand” thesis did not generate any substantial examination of how Miller’s

---

107 Miller describes William Bradford in Of Plymouth Plantation looking back in his old age and lamenting the Pilgrims’ failure to establish a truly godly community. The sentiment greatly resembles those expressed in the jeremiads of the latter half of the seventeenth century, yet Miller dismisses it as inconsequential. Miller, “Errand Into the Wilderness,” 5-6.
109 Morgan acknowledged that the Bay colonists justified leaving England in order to preserve a remnant of the true church in the New England wilderness, but he cited their desire to avoid persecution and economic opportunity as the primary reason for leaving. Morgan, The Puritan Dilemma.
argument defined New England literature. William Bradford and Edward Winslow wrote and published works before any of Miller’s New England authors, yet they are rarely considered as part of this literary tradition. In addition to their refusal to engage with the theological issues of the day, at least in print, the Pilgrim authors have somehow forfeited their standing as New England puritans. While generations of scholars mobilized Plymouth colony as well as the writings of Bradford and Winslow to represent the primordial incarnation of a Northern and/or American ethos, surprisingly few include them as part of New England.

All too often, scholarly attention of Plymouth colony ends with the arrival of Winthrop’s fleet at Massachusetts Bay in 1630. In the mid-sixties, George D. Langdon argued that the high excitement and drama of the early years at Plymouth mesmerized generations of New England historians into overlooking the more banal occurrences in post-1630 Plymouth. 111 Samuel Eliot Morison made a similar observation a few years earlier: “Historians seem to lose interest in the Pilgrims as soon as they were able to have three square meals daily, and own a cow.” 112 In 1970, John Demos noted that while Plymouth had become part of “our mythic national identity,” formal scholarship on the subject had been surprisingly limited. 113 The most recent studies provide anything but the most cursory glimpse into Plymouth’s relationship with the wider world after 1630. 114 An inveterate parochialism infuses Plymouth studies. Relations beyond New

England are almost always mediated through Massachusetts Bay. In particular, Atlanticists frequently describe New England as an active participant in a burgeoning Atlantic world yet relegate Plymouth – when they consider it at all – as an insignificant satellite of the Bay colony. While the teleological shadow cast by an ascendant Massachusetts Bay has certainly affected how Atlanticists have treated Plymouth, other circumstances have encouraged scholars to turn a blind eye to the colony. As religious separatists, the Pilgrims renounced their affiliation with the Anglican Church and relocated to the New World in order to put as much distance between them and England as possible. Though their dream to live without the corruptions of the Old World proved illusory, their stated ambition has influenced how historians have looked upon the Pilgrims’ interactions beyond New England. Furthermore, the failure of the Adventurers in England to support the colony has also contributed to the perception of Plymouth as an isolated community.

A few more examples help illustrate this point. In his geographical survey of the Atlantic world, D.W. Meinig describes Plymouth colony as beyond the pale of mainstream Puritanism, which he argues connected Massachusetts Bay to England. He characterizes Plymouth as a precursor to New England which officially begins in 1630. The various communities, or “nuclei,” that comprised Plymouth colony after this date were eventually absorbed into a major regional system defined by Massachusetts Bay and labeled “New England.”\(^{115}\) Even when historians of early New England begin their periodization before 1630, they typically address Plymouth colony in a perfunctory way. For example, Francis J. Bremer’s study of transatlantic communication in the Anglo-American community between 1610 and 1692 barely mentions

Like many Atlanticists, Bremer subsumes the meaning of communication by New England puritans with efforts to “transform the English-speaking world.” He assumes Plymouth had nothing to offer in this regard and consequently excludes *Mourt* and *Good News* as a New England product while simultaneously denying their transatlantic dimensions. Under this configuration, scholars generally consider *Mourt* and *Good News* in the same category as the promotional literature for the Chesapeake colonies. Admittedly, the resemblances are undeniable. In several ways, Bradford, and to a lesser extent Winslow, followed the example of the literature promoting the southern plantations. To allay the fears of prospective colonists, they purposefully described the New England environment as nearly identical with that of England. Bradford also carefully mentioned in his journal the commodities New England had to offer, a feature that ran contrary to his general disapproval of worldly ambitions. Nearly every promoter of colonization decided against warning their readers in England about the high death rates in English America. Bradford and Winslow followed suit. They neglected to mention the deaths of half the colonists during their first winter in the colony, an event that any faithful recorder of the historical truth would surely have included.

The example above from Bremer provides another clue as to why scholars have so frequently excluded Plymouth colony as part of New England. Most historians have described seventeenth-century transatlantic communication as a discursive space in which puritans in the old world and the new engaged in spiritual and ideological debate. They cite in particular how the puritan literati of Massachusetts Bay spilled a considerable amount of ink explaining why their physical

---

separation from England did not in any way lessen their commitment to religious and civic reforms in the country they left behind. Additionally, these authors frequently cast their literary efforts as important contributions to the struggle for reform in England. The connection between Massachusetts Bay and England gains further credence in light of the fact that thousands of Bay colonists returned to the country of their birth after James and Anglican Church were deposed in 1640. The Pilgrims at Plymouth on the other hand came to New England as avowed separatists. Although Bradford and Winslow deliberately withheld making any controversial statements regarding their religious orientation, nobody from Plymouth made any published attempt to align themselves with the mainstream puritan movement in England. While the Pilgrims certainly desired to see England pull itself out from the depths of spiritual corruption, they had essentially abandoned hope that this would come to pass.

The Pilgrims sought exile in the New England wilderness; however, they appreciated that they could never fully sever their bonds to England. Each colonist after all was a stock-holding member of the New England Company. As such, they had an obligation to deliver merchantable goods to London. Although the Pilgrims sought spiritual rewards over pecuniary gain, they knew their survival depended upon making money for the company. Not only did the colonists require supplies from England, but they also needed to keep their identities hidden from their enemies back home. The Pilgrims’ religious beliefs made them enemies of the state, but so long as the hope for profits remained, the company was willing to look the other way. William Bradford and Edward Winslow wrote *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England* as part of a campaign to balance the spiritual and economic imperatives of the Pilgrims. They published

---

these tracts in London with an eye toward keeping English wolves at bay. *Mourt* and *Good News*, therefore, had little to do with preserving the experiences of the Pilgrims for posterity and everything to do with preserving their colony from contemporary threats in England.

Not surprisingly, Bradford and Winslow penned highly subjective accounts in order to achieve their short-term goals. While *Mourt* and *Good News* offer invaluable insights into the earliest days of Plymouth colony, their accounts were intended for a specific purpose. As we have seen, several generations of historians appropriated these tracts for a variety of objectives. Beginning in the 1960s, scholars began to question the veracity of narratives such as *Mourt* and *Good News*. Whereas most historians had assumed that Bradford and Winslow published their accounts in order to leave a historical record of their extraordinary venture, many scholars suddenly rejected these sources as hopelessly prejudiced toward a single and often unsubstantiated version of events. From this point of view, the Pilgrim story as told by Bradford and Winslow revealed an incomplete picture of Plymouth. The authors may have been prominent Pilgrims but they omitted anything that failed to promote their particular vision for the colony. Written chronicles in general failed to capture the history of the lower strata of society, many of whom during the time were illiterate. New Social historians like John Demos had a patent mistrust of the “impressionistic” history gleaned from published accounts. Instead of using highly subjective sources like *Mourt*, *Good News*, and *Of Plymouth Plantation*, they employed quantitative methods whenever possible. In his study of family life in Plymouth colony, Demos leaned heavily upon the factual data in the *Plymouth Colony Records* and the *Mayflower Descendent*.\(^{119}\) Despite his averseness to using contemporary publications, Demos nevertheless

\(^{119}\) The *Plymouth Colony Records* comprise the following: Court Orders (1633-1691), Judicial Acts (1636-1692), Miscellaneous Records (1633-1689), Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies of New England (1643-1692).
could not avoid them. He felt compelled to begin his study with an introductory essay using *Of Plymouth Plantation* and secondary sources based upon the same. Demos thought readers would find the essay useful as “context” for the more focused discussion that followed.”

Scholars determined to challenge the preeminence of printed source material invariably find themselves using the words of Bradford and Winslow with little alteration or critical analysis. In 2000, James Deetz (along with his wife Patricia Scott Deetz) published *The Times of their Lives*, an archeological-based survey of early Plymouth. The authors intended to recapture the day-to-day lives of the colonists who did not record their experiences on paper. Nevertheless, they still based their “realistic, factual accounting” on primary sources such as *Mourt*. In an early chapter, Deetz and Deetz describe Plymouth Rock as a myth invented during the late eighteenth century, the era in which Timothy Dwight implored his countrymen to erect monuments celebrating their American heritage. Subsequent generations, they argued, “manufactured” Plymouth Rock into historical legend. The authors proceed to shatter the myth of Plymouth Rock by comparing the “facts” surrounding the legend with written sources like *Mourt’s Relation*. In doing so, the authors use a cultural invention from the seventeenth century (*Mourt*) to expose the myth behind a cultural invention of the eighteenth century (Plymouth Rock). By the time

---


120 Demos did invite readers to “skip ahead to the main section of the text” should they think themselves sufficiently familiar with the traditional narrative. *A Little Commonwealth*, xiv.


122 The legend of Plymouth Rock began in 1769 when a group of men from Plymouth formed the Old Colony Club. They designated December 22 as the date to celebrate the landing of the *Mayflower* passengers and Plymouth Rock
James and Patricia Deetz published their book, the hostility toward written sources had cooled considerably since the late sixties/early seventies. The authors freely cite from Mourt and Good News even as they present a history of Plymouth colony largely obscured by these tracts. While they evince none of the contempt toward these sources that figures so prominently in Demos’ study, the authors fail to consider the books themselves as cultural artifacts, shaped by a set of expectations and ambitions that stretched from one side of the Atlantic to the other.

Most Plymouth scholars view literary sources like Mourt as important tools for reconstructing and interpreting the colony’s past. Even those who prefer to seek their evidence elsewhere seem unable to escape the allure of these celebrated books. Yet studies centered on these literary works invariably succumb to scholarly agendas. In 1963, anthropologist Dwight B. Heath edited and printed an edition of Mourt’s Relation. Heath’s effort marked the first attempt in nearly a century to modernize the tract. In the introduction, Heath discussed several myths which emanated from Mourt’s Relation and acknowledges that the authors did not provide a complete and accurate record of their experiences in New England. In particular, he noted how the book contains nothing about the suffering endured by the colonists during that first year. But Heath simply passed over this omission by the authors and instead focuses on the book’s contributions to ethnography. He acknowledged that Robert Cushman took the manuscript copies with him to England but neglected to discuss the ramifications of a text written in English America and published in England. Heath, like other scholars, seems oblivious to the importance of the author-reader (or editor-reader) relationship and essentially treated the text as a factual relation as the exact spot on which the Pilgrims first set foot in the colony. The date eventually became Forefathers’ Day, a holiday celebrated throughout the country until the late nineteenth century when it was replaced by Thanksgiving. Similarly, Plymouth Rock became a national icon and remains a prominent symbol of early America despite concerted efforts to deny its historical significance. Deetz and Deetz, Times of Their Lives, 15-18. 123 Dwight B. Heath, ed., Mourt’s Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth (Bedford: Applewood Books, 1963), viii, 6.
of the Pilgrims’ experience in New England. *Mourt’s Relation* contains several addendums to the main text written by three different authors: Robert Cushman, George Morton, and John Robinson. Curiously, Heath addressed the motives of these authors while ignoring the objectives of Bradford and Winslow. He characterized Robert Cushman’s sermon-like afterword as “a thinly veiled promotional tract” designed “to justify the plantation and to persuade others to follow.” In the prefatory letter written by the Reverend John Robinson, Heath speculated that “[t]he letter may have been appended to this book especially to serve as a model of morality for those ‘Strangers’ who might hopefully be induced to emigrate and join the party at Plymouth.” This is the closest Heath comes to acknowledging a purpose behind the publication of *Mourt’s Relation*. Like so many other scholars, Heath cannot escape the gravity well of American exceptionalism, simply assuming the authors intended to provide posterity with “a primary source for American history in that critical period when a beach-head of Anglo culture was established in the New World.”\(^{124}\)

Heath published his edition of *Mourt’s Relation* around the time when scholars began to question the validity of nationalist readings of colonial literature. Literary scholars in particular have wrestled with the “problem” of nationalism since the early nineteenth century, but it is only in the last fifty years or so that any serious attempts have been made to expunge “American exceptionalism” from the field. During this time, scholars reevaluated the definition of literature. In the *Literary History of the United States*, published in 1948, literature was defined as works of “excellent expression.”\(^{125}\) Forty years later, the editors of the *Columbia Literary History of the

---

United States revised its meaning to include literary expressions excellent or otherwise. In consequence of expanding the definition of literature beyond the traditional limitations of “belles letters,” scholars no longer track a linear trajectory of U.S. literature from its colonial origins. This does not suppose that works produced in the English-American colonies had no bearing upon the literary efforts in the United States; rather, it simply acknowledged that a great diversity of voices ultimately contributed to this genre. Similar to how the New Social historians expanded our understanding of the past beyond the circumscriptions of the literary elite, the relativists opened up the field of U.S. literature to include works written by previously marginalized groups such as Native Americans, African Americans and women.  

I began this chapter with a brief anecdote about Robert Cushman’s return voyage from Plymouth aboard the Fortune. Cushman stayed only a few days in the colony, yet his contribution to the Pilgrims greatly belies his short time spent at Plymouth. Without Cushman’s efforts, Mourt’s Relation would have never been printed and history would have likely lost an indispensable account of those momentous days in early New England. The primary reason why Robert Cushman and the story of Mourt’s publication receives such little attention stems from William Bradford’s other literary work, Of Plymouth Plantation. In OPP, Bradford gave ample attention to Cushman’s role as liaison between the Pilgrims and investors in England. Circumstances required Cushman to make difficult and unpopular decisions for which he received the ire of the Pilgrims and their brethren in Leiden. Bradford did not portray Cushman as a villain; nevertheless, he blamed Cushman for many of the problems that emerged between the Pilgrims and the Adventurers in England. Significantly, Bradford omitted any reference to

passing the manuscript for *Mourt’s Relation* to Cushman, nor did he mention his part in authoring the text. From *OPP*, we learn the arrival of the *Fortune*, a vessel “unexpected or looked for,” brought to the colony thirty-five largely undesirable settlers and an angry letter from Thomas Weston. Bradford included a part of this letter in his history. Addressed to Governor Carver,¹²⁷ the letter is “full of complaints and expostulations,” and in it Weston threatened the immediate withdrawal of all financial support for the colony unless they agree to the new terms.¹²⁸ To the promise of “speedy supply” were added persuasions from Robert Cushman and nameless members from Leyden (via letters) until finally, the leaders of the colony “yielded to the aforesaid conditions and subscribed them with their hands.” The *Fortune* then departed for England carrying Cushman, goods valued at about £500, and a brusque refutation of Weston’s accusations.¹²⁹

For generations, scholars followed in step with William Bradford, emphasizing the business part of Cushman’s mission to the colony. While nearly every history of Plymouth relates how Bradford reluctantly conceded to the revised terms of their agreement with the Adventurers, Bradford’s passing to Cushman his and Winslow’s manuscript for publication received little attention. The oversight among later scholars is particularly remarkable given the indispensability of *Mourt’s Relation* to every history written about Plymouth colony. Because there remains precious little source material to gainsay Bradford and Winslow, most scholars have largely accepted their accounts as the unvarnished truth. Few in fact ever acknowledge the intent of the authors in recording these events. Fewer still consider how the process of having

¹²⁷ Weston did not know John Carver had died. Governor Bradford naturally assumed ownership of the letter.
¹²⁸ Bradford is also careful to reveal the part in Weston’s letter informing the governor about the new charter, the Peirce Patent which, quoting Morison “may be said to have confirmed the *Mayflower Compact.*” Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 93.
their relations published in England influenced the printed version of their account. Written in North America and published in London, *Mourt and Good News* represent Bradford and Winslow’s attempts to reconcile the conflicting agendas between two different English worlds. Hoping to soon join the authors in Plymouth as a permanent resident, Robert Cushman also had a stake in getting the manuscripts for *Mourt* to print. Their joint literary venture had no nationalist agenda other than to keep the unsavory aspects of England on the European side of the Atlantic.

Previous books about English America were written from a strictly European point of view. In the seventeenth century, authors did not need to have personal experience in the New World in order to pass themselves off as an authority on the subject. But even those such as John Smith who spent a substantial amount of time in the Americas invariably described colonization from a European perspective. Generally characterized as “promotional literature,” these works were intended to persuade readers to support colonization as a benefit to investors, colonists and the country as a whole. Ideally, this support would tie the fortunes of the colony to the mother country to the advantages of both. As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, Bradford and Winslow adopted many of the tropes of this promotional literature; however, they intended their publications to act as a sieve: to filter out the corruptions of England to the benefit of the colony and its residents. Privileging colonial imperatives over those of England mark an

---

130 In 1634, William Wood became one of the first to publically disparage the authenticity of second-hand accounts. Addressing the reader in his *New England’s Prospect*, Wood promises a factual relation based on his personal experience. “Though I will promise thee no such voluptuous discourse as many have made upon a scanty subject (though they have travailed no further than the smoke of their own native chimneys) yet dare I presume to present thee with the true and faithful relation of some few years travels and experience, wherein I would be loath to broach anything which may puzzle thy belief, and so justly draw upon myself that unjust aspersion commonly laid on travelers, of whom many say, ‘They may lie by authority because none can control them.’” William Wood, *New England’s Prospect* (1634), edited by Alden T. Vaughan (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), 19. For a general discussion of how personal experience became a prerequisite for authenticity in print, see Jim Egan, *Authorizing Experience: Refigurations of the Body Politic in Seventeenth-Century New England Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
important shift for colonial authors and one that establishes the beginnings of an English transatlantic print culture.

The debate as to whether books such as Mourt or Good News represent an “American” or English” idiom – or even some amalgamation between the two – ultimately subjects these works to standards far removed from those which existed when the texts first appeared.\(^{131}\) Bradford and Winslow were members of a group determined to live, worship and die separated from the country of their birth. Most English colonists, including a goodly portion of those in Plymouth, came to the New World directly from England and hoped to one day return. The Pilgrims on the other hand had little hope of returning to England. Furthermore, they had lived in exile for years prior to coming to English America and had considerable experience with establishing an English community in a foreign environment. While in Leyden, the Pilgrims learned much about the print trade and brought with them a determination to use the written word in order to achieve their dream of spiritual autonomy. Unable to fulfill this goal in the Netherlands, the Pilgrims held greater hopes for Plymouth. Nevertheless, Bradford and Winslow realized that they would always remain tethered to England to some degree. In an effort to help shape the relationship between Plymouth and England, Bradford and Winslow drew upon their experience while in Leyden and published their manuscripts in London.

**************

In the 1620s, when Mourt’s Relation and Good News from New England appeared in John Bellamy’s bookshop in London, few could have guessed that these tracts would someday be recognized as among the most famous works of the seventeenth century. Even if the authors

never intended to record their experiences for posterity, the notoriety of their literary efforts owes a great deal to future generations. Yet the legacy of Mourt and Good News is rich with paradox. Written by religious separatists who desired nothing more than to live in obscurity, the tracts were made available to the English public in order to promote their endeavor. The authors learned a great deal about European print culture prior to their exodus to New England. Silence, they knew, would only invite speculation and intrusion into their affairs. William Bradford and Edward Winslow therefore made their undertaking known to the wider world in order to keep that world at arm’s length. Centuries later, scholars from the new republic of the United States appropriated Mourt and Good News for their own purposes. They became the seminal texts of a “northern” and “American” ethos, but they have also been relegated to the periphery of New England literature. In general, the tracts have been considered – when they have been considered at all – as promotional literature similar to that produced to advance colonization of Virginia and the other “southern” colonies. Certainly, Bradford and Winslow followed the precedents and strategies featured in this promotional literature, but they also modified them to suit their own needs. In so doing, they initiated an important shift in transatlantic discourse. For the first time, a writer used print to advance the objectives of permanent residents in English America. Though generally not recognized as such, the use of print as a means to promote local agendas would become the defining feature of New England literature. Mourt’s Relation and Good News from New England, therefore, represent the earliest manifestation of this genre. William Bradford and Edward Winslow used their familiarity with English print culture to safeguard their holy experiment in the New England wilderness. How they did this is the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter Two  
Early New England Literature in a Transatlantic Context

The day before he left Plymouth for England, Robert Cushman delivered a farewell sermon to the men and women of the colony.\textsuperscript{132} Though no clergyman, Cushman felt it necessary to warn his listeners against the dangers of “self-love” and charged them to place the good of the community above their private fortunes. Cushman had good reason to expatiate upon themes of charity and self-sacrifice. The contract he had essentially compelled the Pilgrims to sign meant that for a term of seven years, all proceeds from the colony, including improvements to the land, would be divided among stockholders on both sides of the Atlantic. This meant that everyone in Plymouth worked for the company instead of themselves. Cushman knew that the colonists greatly disliked this arrangement – especially the non-Pilgrims among them – but he fervently believed that the long-term success of the colony depended upon support from the Adventurers in England. He therefore exhorted his listeners to join together through the bonds of common labor for the good of their colony, their country, and their immortal souls.\textsuperscript{133}

Although an indefatigable supporter of Plymouth colony, Cushman enjoyed little popularity among the Pilgrims. Charged with the responsibility of negotiating a contract with the unscrupulous investors in London, he had to make several concessions to the Adventurers in

\textsuperscript{132} There is some discrepancy as to when Cushman delivered his sermon. On the front cover of the published tract, the date is listed as December 9, a Sunday. I know of no reason to doubt this date. Morison places the date as 12 December 1621, the day before Cushman left for England on board the \textit{Fortune}. The date of the \textit{Fortune’s} departure (13 December 1622) comes from John Smith’s \textit{New England Trials} (1622).

order to complete the deal. It was a thankless job and Cushman knew that many in the colony thought he had struck a poor bargain. He also had the unfortunate privilege of delivering to Governor Bradford a scathing letter from Thomas Weston, their prime contact among the investing group. In it, Weston accused the colonists of negligence for sending nothing of value back on board the *Mayflower*. Weston also threatened to withhold all material support unless Bradford and company agreed to the revised terms of the deal. The governor took great offense to these accusations and all the colonists resented the contract forced upon them. When Cushman pressured the governor to comply with Weston’s demands, he engendered hard feelings among the Pilgrims. Now, as Cushman stood before them, extolling the virtues of an agreement the colonists fervently opposed, his undoubtedly polite and attentive audience inwardly seethed.

Other than a few carefully chosen words in Bradford’s history, no other record of Cushman’s visit to Plymouth exists save his sermon. Civility likely reigned as he and the pilgrim leaders discussed their contract with the Adventurers; nevertheless, Bradford and company certainly aired their displeasure with the terms of the agreement. In the end, however, they had little choice but to accept the deal. They needed material support from England. More importantly, the company had obtained a patent from the Council of New England that made their settlement at

---

134 William Bradford provides a list of the ten conditions of their agreement in *Of Plymouth Plantation*. The Pilgrims objected to changes on two key points. First, the houses, lands and other improvement were originally designated as the property of the colonists. The Adventurers now insisted that these become part of the common stock. Second, the investors wanted to expunge the provision that permitted each colonist to work two days a week for their private employment. Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 40-41.

135 In *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Bradford included several letters written by members of the Leyden Church that were highly critical of Cushman’s performance as negotiator. Undoubtedly, many of the pilgrims felt along these lines. They left aboard the *Mayflower* without signing the contract. Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 360-366.

136 Significantly, Governor Bradford omitted any mention of the sermon in *Of Plymouth Plantation*.

137 Edward Winslow begins *Good News from New England* with the arrival of the *Fortune* but makes no mention of Cushman having come to the colony. The silence from Bradford and Winslow strongly suggest their feelings on the matter.
Plymouth legal.\textsuperscript{138} Given this situation, Cushman’s sermon seems amazingly uncharitable, almost as if he wished to take a victory lap before he returned to England. Governor Bradford, renowned for his attention to detail, tellingly omitted any mention of Cushman’s sermon in his history of the colony.

But what if Robert Cushman intended to address an audience beyond the one that packed itself into the small common house in Plymouth?\textsuperscript{139} His sermon survives as a printed tract, published in 1622 and sold in John Bellamy’s bookshop on Cornhill. Printed sermons were common in the London book trade, and Cushman certainly felt that one delivered from across the Atlantic would garner some interest. He printed it within months of his return from Plymouth, adding an epistle dedicatory to give it an English context. Scholars generally assume that Cushman conceived the sermon as a printed tract after he delivered it to the colonists. David S. Lovejoy has noted similarities between the sermon and John Winthrop’s message nine years later, the famous “City upon a Hill” address. Like Winthrop, Cushman saw the colony as a beacon for other Englishmen.\textsuperscript{140} But Cushman was doing more than imploring the colonists to set an example. He took decisive steps in spreading that example.

Evidence suggests that the Cushman delivered his sermon in Plymouth in order to print it in England. On his outward voyage from England, he shared the cramped quarters of the \textit{Fortune} with thirty-five colonists mostly recruited by Thomas Weston.\textsuperscript{141} Many of these planters had

\textsuperscript{138} The patent was given by the Council for New England to John Peirce and his “Associates” on 1 June 1621. It was the second patent granted in Peirce’s name. The first, issued by the Virginia Company, entitled the Adventurers to establish a colony in North America between thirty-four and forty-one degrees north latitude. When the \textit{Mayflower} returned to England, the Adventurers learned that the colonists had settled outside this area. They immediately applied for a new patent from the Council of New England. See Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 93n.

\textsuperscript{139} During the eighteenth century, descendants of the first planters at Plymouth identified the location of the sermon as the common house, “erected on the southerly side of the bank, where the town brook meets the harbour.” Alexander Young, \textit{Chronicles}, 255n.


\textsuperscript{141} The \textit{Fortune} was much smaller than the \textit{Mayflower}. Cushman was accompanied only by his son.
little interest in the religious imperatives behind colonization and greatly resembled the Strangers who accompanied the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower* a year earlier. Cushman realized that successive waves of colonists seeking only material gain would soon overwhelm the Pilgrims unless a way could be found to keep these undesirables out of New England. Print offered him a powerful tool in this fight. Cushman revealed his objective in the epistle dedicatory.

And thus much I will say for the satisfaction of such as have any thought of going [to New England]; that for men which have a large heart & looke after great riches, ease pleasure, dainties, and jollitie in this world… I would not advise them to come there... but if there be any who are content to lay out their estates, spend their time, labours and endeavours for the benefit of them that shall come after, and in desire to further the Gospell among those poore Heathens, quietly contenting themselves with such hardship and difficulties, as by God’s providence shall fall upon them… such men I would advise and encourage to goe, for their ends cannot faile them.\(^\text{142}\)

Cushman’s raw honesty about the difficulties of life in New England was specifically designed to dissuade those looking to enrich themselves. The sermon reinforced this sentiment. Before he arrived at Plymouth, Cushman undoubtedly prepared his arguments in favor of the contract with the Adventurers. He knew of the Pilgrims’ antipathy toward the greedy investors and their contract. He also knew that they had suffered greatly that first year for want of supplies.\(^\text{143}\) The material realities of their situation would force their hand, but Cushman prepared a host of spiritual arguments prior to his arrival. These arguments, perhaps with some augmentation fashioned after he reached the colony, made up the principle elements of the sermon. While we can never know for certain when Cushman struck upon the idea of publishing the sermon in England, we do know that the both the motive and means for doing so existed prior to his reaching Plymouth. His sermon then, focused as it was on ideals already embraced by the

\(^{142}\) Cushman, *A Sermon Preached at Plimmoth*, in Epistle Eedicatory.

\(^{143}\) When the *Mayflower* returned to England, Master Christopher Jones and the sailors undoubtedly related much of what they experienced. If Cushman did not hear of these accounts firsthand, then he certainly learned of them from Thomas Weston. Cushman was also familiar with the ordeals endured by previous colonists in English America.
Pilgrims, was not so much given as a response to what Cushman witnessed in Plymouth colony, but a performance used to substantiate arguments he planned to make in print upon his return to England.

As the example of Cushman’s sermon reveals, our understanding of a given tract depends greatly upon the context of its production. His discourse, spoken on one side of the Atlantic but printed on the other, reflects a transatlantic dimension that every writer in early New England had to negotiate. As discussed in the previous chapter, scholars have largely failed to consider *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England* as tracts conceived, written and printed for an English audience. Circumstances on both sides of the Atlantic had a tremendous impact on the content of these tracts. Attempts to situate them within a framework of a nationalist paradigm ultimately ignores the historical moment from which these tracts emerged. The authors, William Bradford and Edward Winslow, considered themselves English but their years in exile, first in the Netherlands and then in New England, provided them with an international perspective that transcended any simplistic definition of Englishness. Furthermore, their time in the Netherlands gave them practical experience in the business of manipulating public opinion. As separatists, they were much maligned back home, even by other puritans. But in order to establish a community of saints in the American wilderness, they needed to cultivate an image of themselves in England amenable to those willing to give their support. *Mourt* and *Good News* represent the Pilgrims’ attempt to do just that. Instead of scrutinizing these works for traces of

---

144 Robert Cushman joined Bradford and Winslow in exile in the Netherlands. Although religion became a prominent part of early modern nationalism in Europe, it was never confined within national borders. Influences from continental Europe continually informed the spirituality of those in England as well as English men and women living abroad.
some national ethos, we should look at them within the context of the Pilgrims’ attempt to establish a colony in the New World. A major contributor to this effort was Robert Cushman.

Robert Cushman was born in 1578 in Rolvenden, a small town in the county of Kent and a well-known bastion of puritanism.¹⁴⁵ He made a living as a grocer before his intransigent religious beliefs rendered him an enemy of the Anglican establishment. In 1609 Cushman fled to the Netherlands where he eventually joined John Robinson’s separatist church in Leyden. He made a modest living combing wool until 1617 when events compelled the Leyden group to give up on the Netherlands as a long-term place of refuge.¹⁴⁶ But where could they go? The drums of war could be heard throughout continental Europe.¹⁴⁷ Returning to England was just as dangerous. During their stay in the Netherlands, the Leyden group enjoyed access to the many printed works published and circulated throughout Europe. They came upon works that described the Americas as a land of thriving colonies and unlimited opportunity. Already resigned to their fate as exiles, Robinson and the other separatist leaders saw the New World as the only viable location where they and their posterity could freely practice as their conscience dictated. They considered Guiana as a possible location, but ultimately rejected it largely because of its close proximity to territories controlled by Catholic Spain.¹⁴⁸ The Virginia Company of

¹⁴⁵ Bunker, Making Haste, 404.
¹⁴⁶ There were several reasons why the Netherlands no longer served the Leyden group. Most of them were farmers in England and had to find a different trade in Holland. Not surprisingly, many of them encountered financial difficulties. They also noted the negative effect of Dutch culture, especially on their children. Ironically, the religious tolerance that allowed them to live in the Netherlands threatened to undo the rigid orthodoxy they hoped to instill in the next generation. Also, the Dutch truce with Spain was about to end and war seemed very likely. The Leyden group, naturally, feared living in what would certainly become a primary theater in the coming conflict. See Morison, “Plymouth Colony and Virginia,” 149. The notion that Cushman made a living as a wool comber comes from Young. He notes that a tract printed in London in 1644, entitled “A Brief Narration of some Church Courses in New England,” references Cushman as “a comber of wool.” Young, Chronicles, 255n.
¹⁴⁷ The conflict in question would become known as the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).
¹⁴⁸ Their information about Guiana may have come from Robert Harcourt’s A Relation of a Voyage to Guiana (1614). Ruth A. McIntyre, Debts Hopeful and Desperate: Financing the Plymouth Colony (Plymouth: Plimoth Plantation, 1963), 13.
London had recently begun granting large tracts of land, up to eighty thousand acres, to parties willing to remove themselves to the coast of North America. As part of the package, colonists would enjoy privileges of local self-government and exclusive access to trade in the region. After some debate, the Leyden group chose Virginia as their destination.\footnote{Morison, \emph{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 28-29. The Virginia Company’s willingness to issue these grants, called “Hundreds,” was the result of financial difficulties. Instead of underwriting the Virginia colony by a single joint stock, small groups of associates received land grants to settle at their own expense. The Leyden group hoped to obtain a land grant from one of these groups within the Virginia Company. See also, McIntyre, \emph{Debts Hopeful and Desperate}, 14; Morison, “Plymouth Colony and Virginia,” 149-150.}

Having cast their hopes upon this part of English America the Leyden group then tapped John Carver and Robert Cushman to solicit a patent from the Virginia Company. Although they were officially enemies of the state, the Leyden group had friends in high places. Puritan sympathizers such as Sir Robert Naunton, who would become Secretary of State to James I in January 1618, interceded on their behalf. Naunton was apparently able to persuade the king not to molest the would-be colonists despite their opposition to the Anglican establishment; however, James refused to grant any public statement of religious tolerance without first consulting the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot.\footnote{Morison, \emph{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 30. It is uncertain if James or anyone else approached the archbishop on this matter. Edward Winslow wrote in \emph{Hypocrisie Unmasked} (1646) an anecdote about this conference between Naunton and King James. As Winslow would have it, Naunton advised the king that Leyden group desired “the advancement of his Majesty’s Dominions and the enlargement of the Gospell by all due meanes.” James approved the endeavor and asked how the would-be colonists hoped to earn a living. By fishing, replied Naunton, to which James supposedly remarked: “So God have my Soule ‘tis an honest Trade, ‘twas the Apostles owne calling.” The exchange is almost certainly apocryphal as James was notoriously hostile to opponents of the Anglican church. http://archive.org/stream/cu31924028851934#page/n19/mode/2up.}

The king’s willingness to look the other way at the Leyden congregation’s lack of religious conformity was about as much as they could realistically hope for. Nevertheless, it underscored the difficulty in their obtaining the support of the state or a patent from the Council of Virginia. Members of the Leyden group had openly challenged the Anglican Church for years. One of its
leaders, William Brewster, had in fact recently printed a tract in Scotland critical of the king which would later compel him to board the Mayflower under an assumed name. Although the Anglican Church had its hands full rooting out opposition in England, it could at any time focus its attention on religious dissidents abroad… and on those in England who supported them. Cognizant of this problem, the Leyden group embarked on its first public relations campaign in England. They issued a document containing seven articles designed to assuage the religious scruples of the Virginia Company. The articles supposedly expressed the beliefs held by the Leyden congregation but they were crafted in such a way so as to avoid any controversy. For a people deeply committed to the expatiation of the written word the ambiguity of these articles represents a deliberate attempt by the Leyden group to obscure their true principles to a hostile audience. The articles therefore mark the first of many attempts made by the Pilgrims and other dissident religious communities in the New World to use print to keep certain wolves in England at bay.\footnote{Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 30-31.}

At first, the plan seemed to have worked. In November 1617, Sir Edwin Sandys addressed a letter to John Robinson and Brewster informing them that the articles had given “select gentlemen of His Majesty’s Council for Virginia… [a] good degree of satisfaction.” Sandys also praised the “good discretion” of their emissaries Carver and Cushman and expressed optimism about the prospect of moving the business forward. Nothing came of it however. Months passed and despite the many efforts Carver and Cushman, support from the Virginia Company remained unforthcoming. In May 1619, Cushman wrote a letter to his “Loving Friends” in Leyden describing the Council was plagued by “dissensions and factions.” This, he complained, left that body “not fit nor ready to intermeddle in any business.” Cushman blamed the problem on the
personal rivalry between two of Council’s officers, Sir Thomas Smith and Sir Edwin Sandys. Apparently Smith grew weary of his labors as Treasurer and Governor of the Virginia Company and asked to step down. The company obliged and selected Sandys to replace him. For some reason – Cushman fails to explain – Smith saw in this a slight to his honor and launched a campaign to disgrace Sandys.152

In addition to the petulant squabbles between Smith and Sandys, the Leyden group encountered an ill wind from the New World. Captain Samuel Argall, former Deputy Governor of Virginia, returned from that colony and informed Cushman of the fate of an earlier attempt to colonize Virginia by a former member of their church, Francis Blackwell.153 In several passages, Cushman describes the destruction of this colony due to circumstances that ominously resemble those under which the Pilgrims would sail one year later aboard the Mayflower: “… Mr. Blackwell’s ship came not there till March, but going towards winter they had still northwest winds which carried them to the southward beyond their course.”154

The Mayflower did not leave until September, also “towards winter,” and it’s tempting to speculate that these same winds induced Captain Christopher Jones of the Mayflower to overcompensate northward in order to avoid a similar fate. Bradford later recounts how they “were encountered many times with cross winds and met with many fierce storms” during their voyage. The storms damaged the Mayflower, and the mariners considered returning to England,

---

152 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 31-32; 355-356.
153 Samuel Argall was Deputy Governor of Virginia and later member of the Council of Virginia. He had returned to England to answer various charges. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 356 n, 358. Francis Blackwell was the head of a congregation in Amsterdam and a friend to those in Leyden. See McIntyre, Debts Hopeful and Desperate, 14-15.
154 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 356.
but Bradford makes no mention of these storms having blown the ship off course.\textsuperscript{155} But Cushman’s report contained events even more ominous than storms at sea.

Mr. Blackwell is dead and Mr. Maggner, the Captain. Yea, there are dead, [Argall] saith, 130 persons, one and other in that ship; it is said there was in all an 180 persons in the ship, so as they were packed together like herrings; they had amongst them the flux, and also want of fresh water, so as it is here rather wondered at that so many are alive, than that so many are dead.\textsuperscript{156}

For the Leyden Pilgrims, the original plan was to carry their compliment aboard two ships, the \textit{Mayflower} and the \textit{Speedwell}. But concerns over the seaworthiness of the later vessel forced a number of its passengers to sail aboard the \textit{Mayflower}, “packed together” until 102 souls at last made their way across the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{157}

The merchants here say it was Mr. Blackwell’s fault to pack so many in the ship; yea, and there were great mutterings and repinings amongst them… As we desire to serve one another in love, so take heed of being enthralled by an imperious person, especially if they be discerned to have an eye to themselves. It doth trouble me to think that in this business we are all to learn and none to teach; but better so than to depend upon such teachers as Mr. Blackwell was.\textsuperscript{158}

In this most prescient of his forebodings, Cushman saw all too well the consequences of placing one’s trust in those who seek nothing but to line their own pockets. He advises the congregation in Leyden to heed the lesson of Mr. Blackwell lest their wisdom come at the cost of their lives. Thomas Weston, the man chiefly responsible for financing the \textit{Mayflower} voyage, would ultimately reveal himself to be the embodiment of the “imperious person” described here by

\textsuperscript{155} Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 58-59. In \textit{New England’s Memorial} (1669), Thomas Morton accused the Dutch of conspiring with Captain Jones to deliver them well north of their intended destination near the Hudson River. The Dutch originally offered to back the Pilgrims’ efforts and had claims to this region. While the motive exists, Morton fails to provide sufficient evidence to prove the conspiracy. My suggestion here that Captain Jones may have overcompensated for the northwest winds is pure speculation. Regardless, the difficulties of a winter crossing of the Atlantic Ocean were certainly appreciated by all.
\textsuperscript{156} Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 356-357.
\textsuperscript{157} The passengers on board the \textit{Mayflower} numbered 102. Nobody knows how many sailors were on board.
\textsuperscript{158} Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 357.
Cushman. Robert Cushman was on board the *Speedwell* on both its aborted attempts to reach the New World. He did not however choose to pack himself into the *Mayflower* with his brethren. Bradford would later write in *OPP* that Cushman’s “heart and courage” had abandoned him, but one cannot help wonder if the circumstances under which the Pilgrims finally set sail aboard the *Mayflower* invited Cushman to recall the ill-fated voyage of Mr. Blackwell and persuaded him not to repeat the tragedy.\(^{159}\)

But all of this was over a year away in the spring of 1619 when Cushman wrote the aforementioned letter. The Leyden group still had to find a means to reach the New World. Although they were far from destitute, the Leyden group had nowhere near enough money to fund their pilgrimage across the Atlantic. The state-sponsored New Netherland Company offered to resettle them near the Hudson River, then under Dutch control. This must have greatly tempted them. However, they proved reluctant to live under Dutch authority for fear that the circumstances which forced them to leave Leyden would eventually find them in Dutch America. Virginia seemed ideal for their purposes but their initial attempts to negotiate with the Virginia Company yielded little results. When their situation seemed most desperate Thomas Weston, a London merchant previously known to some of them, offered to “set them forth” via the creation of a joint-stock company. Weston was on business in Leyden when he met up with the Leyden group. Eager to reap profits in New World ventures Weston saw in them a promising opportunity. At his suggestion, the Leyden group drew up “such articles of agreement” whereby the terms under which the planters and investors would operate were clearly stated. Before

returning to England to set the plan in motion Weston confidently advised the Leyden group to “make ready and neither fear of shipping nor money.”

Once again, the Leyden congregation sent their faithful servants John Carver and Robert Cushman to England to make the final arrangements. Their instructions, according to Bradford, were two-fold: “to receive moneys and make provision both for shipping and other things for the voyage,” and “not to exceed their commission but to proceed according to the former articles;” by which he meant their written agreement with Weston. The second set of instructions is telling. Until now, Carver and Cushman had performed their tasks in England with distinction. No evidence exists to suggest anyone in the Leyden group was displeased with them. The setbacks with the Virginia Council were certainly not of their doing. Why then did they Leyden group specifically charge them not to alter the terms of the deal? The most logical explanation is that Bradford, writing many years after the fact, wished to ensure posterity knew those responsible for their financial troubles which emerged during the summer of 1620.

Robert Cushman found himself at the heart of these troubles. Charged with making the necessary preparations in England for the Pilgrims’ voyage, he quickly learned from Thomas Weston that the investors demanded alterations to the agreement made in Leyden. Specifically, the investors objected to private ownership for any of the colonists. They also took exception to the provision which allowed each colonist to spend two days for their own private employment. In essence, Weston’s investors insisted upon the equal division of all assets between the

---

161 Bradford never reveals why the Leyden group chose Cushman as a business agent. John Carver was a prosperous merchant in London prior to joining the Leyden church around 1610. In June 1620, Cushman wrote an angry letter to his counterpart John Carver, defending himself against Carver’s accusations of negligence, “I marvel why so negligent a man was used in the business.” Cushman here does not question his own capabilities, but takes offense at Carver’s (and in a larger sense Leyden’s) lament in entrusting him in the business. Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 42n2, 45.
members of the joint stock (i.e. planters and investors) and a guarantee that all efforts made by
the colonists would contribute to the same. In short, they wanted the same policies which
governed the first settlements in Virginia.\textsuperscript{163}

When the Leyden group signed the original agreement, they were undoubtedly aware of the
problems encountered in Jamestown. They also knew that the Virginia Company had recognized
the necessity of giving its colonists the incentive of private property. Naturally, the Leyden group
expected to have similar privileges. While the desire to live and worship according to their
particular interpretation of Calvinism was the primary motive for moving to the New World,
they also hoped to better their worldly prospects, even if they would never have explicitly stated
as such. Years prior, when they exiled themselves to the Netherlands, many in their congregation
had to support themselves in any way they could. This often entailed making a living in a new
occupation. The Leyden group may not have openly dreamed of wealth for themselves in the
New World, but they knew that their long-term security depended greatly on their economic
fortunes.

Sometime before July 1620, Weston approached Robert Cushman and gave him two options:
agree to the removal of private property incentives or forget the whole thing. Though doing so
exceeded his authority, Cushman relented and bound the Leyden Pilgrims to the revised terms.
Cushman rightly anticipated the reaction this news would have in Leyden. It seems he
deliberately withheld this information from his brethren across the channel, but not out of any
malice or fear for his reputation. He well knew that many among them had already sold their
estates and were committed to the venture. He also appreciated the continuing divisions among

\textsuperscript{163} Morison notes that these terms resembled those between the Jamestown colonists and the Council of Virginia.
them over their choice in destination. News of the change in terms might have ended the expedition and certainly would have brought ruin upon many of them.164

Unaware of any changes to the original deal, the Leyden group moved the business forward. In Holland, they hired the Speedwell, a pinnace of 60 tons, to transport them across the Atlantic and to remain with them for one year. On 22 July 1621, the entire congregation gathered at Delfthaven where the Speedwell lay ready to depart. It was an emotional scene. Those headed for the New World were about to leave “that goodly and pleasant city which had been their resting place near twelve years.” Those who stayed behind promised to join their brothers and sisters as soon as possible, but everyone knew they were seeing many of their loved ones for the last time.

In OPP, the normally stoic Bradford recalled the heartache many years later:

[That] day (the wind being fair) they went aboard and their friends with them, where truly doleful was the sight of that sad and mournful parting, to see what sighs and sobs and prayers did sound amongst them, what tears did gush from every eye, and pithy speeches pierced each heart; that sundry of the Dutch strangers that stood on the quay as spectators could not refrain from tears.165

The Pilgrims said their final goodbyes and set off to rendezvous with the others waiting in England.166 They soon reached Southampton where they received “a joyful welcome and… other

164 In Of Plymouth Plantation, Bradford relates how members of the Leyden group still quarreled over their destination in the New World. Some remained committed to Virginia while others still preferred Guiana. The subject apparently arose when “sundry Honourable Lords” obtained a grant from the king and formed the New England Company. The company had jurisdiction over lands between 40 and 48 degrees north latitude. Thomas Weston attempted to convince the Leyden group to settle within these boundaries but the Mayflower departed before the Adventurers could secure a charter from the company. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 38-44.
165 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 48. Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts has several paintings from the nineteenth century that portray the raw emotion of the Pilgrims’ departure from Delftshaven, including Departure of the Pilgrims from Delft Haven (c1847) by Charles Lucy and Embarkation of the Pilgrims (1875) by Edgar Parker after Robert Weir.
166 The term “Pilgrim” comes from Bradford’s description of their departure from Delftshaven. “So they left that goodly and pleasant city which had been their resting place near twelve years; but they knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits.” I capitalize the term as a way of distinguishing those members of the Leyden group who went to New England. Bradford identified the pilgrim reference to Hebrews 11:13-16. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 47.
friendly entertainments.” Then, Cushman acquainted the Leyden Pilgrims with the alterations to the contract. The news was not well received. John Carver pleaded ignorance to the whole thing. Cushman argued that “he had done nothing but what he was urged to, partly by the grounds of equity and more especially by necessity.” Thomas Weston arrived from London to confirm the arrangements. The Pilgrims flatly rejected the new terms, informing Weston that Cushman exceeded his authority in approving them. Weston raged. He issued an ultimatum: either accept the deal or go it alone. The Pilgrims chose the latter. Short on money, they sold “some three or four-score firkins of butter” to raise the £100 needed to clear the port.

Before leaving, the Pilgrims wrote a letter to the Adventurers to plead their case. In it, the Pilgrims expressed their disappointment that others among the investors had not come to Southampton; a clear indication that the Pilgrims no longer trusted Weston with the business. They again claimed that Cushman had no authority to approve any changes to the original terms of their contract. The Pilgrims also reminded the Adventurers that they had the original agreement in writing and saw these last minute alterations as a breach of contract. Nevertheless, they extended an olive branch to the Adventurers, offering to extend the duration of their joint venture beyond the original seven years if the colony did not yield sufficient profits. The

---

167 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 48.
168 Bradford provides a contradictory account of what the pilgrims sold and how much money they needed. In the text of his history (referenced above), he states that they raised £100 by selling butter, “a commodity they might best spare.” But in the letter sent to the Adventurers, Bradford puts the figure at £60 with the whole business leaving them without butter, oil and “not a sole to mend a shoe.” They were also without sufficient weapons and armor to defend themselves. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 49-50. A firkin is an old English unit of measurement. Essentially a barrel, the weight of a firkin varied from one commodity to another. For butter, each firkin was the equivalent of fifty-six lbs. Thus, the pilgrims sold 3,360 to 4,720 lbs. of butter at Southampton. See J. James Cousins, “Weights and Measures in England versus the Decimal and Metric Systems,” Science 20 (1892): 298.
169 The letter was dated 3 August 1620, two days before the Mayflower and Speedwell departed from Southampton.
Pilgrims sent the letter but did not wait around for a response. Two days later, on August 6, they boarded the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell* and departed for the New World.\(^{170}\)

Without a firm commitment of support from England, the colonists were taking an enormous risk. But the Pilgrims intended to settle in northern Virginia in close proximity to the other English settlements in that colony. They also expected regular contact with Dutch traders along the Hudson River. Having hired the *Speedwell* to remain with them for one year, the Pilgrims imagined themselves as part of an Atlantic community. Though religious separatists, the Pilgrims never anticipated living in isolation among their fellow saints. In fact, the members of the Leyden group comprised roughly half of the number of colonists on board the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell*. The others came from England, recruited by the Adventurers to augment the number of laborers in the colony. The Leyden group had a great deal of experience living among strangers, both in England and in the Netherlands. They learned with much difficulty that the welfare of their own congregation depended upon amicable relations with their less pious neighbors.

Just before they left Southampton, the Pilgrims gathered together and one of their number read aloud a letter written by their beloved pastor John Robinson. Though he remained behind at Leyden, Robinson knew that the Pilgrims would have to live with men and women who did not share their spiritual rectitude. His letter warned against allowing the differences among the colonists to fester into discord and faction. They must band together, he wrote, in “brotherly forbearance… [so] that with your common emploiments you joyne common affections truly bent upon the generall good.” Like their fellow separatists in Leyden, the Pilgrims could never live in a world entirely of their own making. They rejected an offer by the Dutch to settle along the

Hudson River and chose instead to relocate to Virginia. In order to establish a community of saints in English America, the Pilgrims had to avoid controversy that would attract unwanted attention on either side of the Atlantic. Thus Robinson’s advice to the Pilgrims to live in harmony with their fellow colonists was more than just an espousal of Christian principles, but a directive to ensure their de facto authority in the New World.  

As the Mayflower and Speedwell put Southampton behind them, the Pilgrims had reason for optimism. They failed to come to terms with the investors in England, but with the Speedwell at their service, they could procure the necessary supplies from their neighbors in Virginia and New Netherland. They also expected to govern the colony according to their principles despite the fact that the Strangers comprised roughly half of their number. Their plan however quickly unraveled. A few days into their voyage, the Speedwell began to take on water. Unwilling to brave a transatlantic crossing in a leaky ship, they returned to England to conduct repairs. A few weeks later, they set sail again for the New World, but the Speedwell still proved unseaworthy. Both ships pulled into Dartmouth and the Pilgrims huddled to consider their options. After two aborted attempts to reach English America, the entire venture was in serious jeopardy. The master of the Speedwell refused to risk another attempt, a development that greatly vexed the Pilgrims. For New World colonists, there was safety in numbers. With only the Mayflower at their disposal, many of the passengers had to stay behind in England.  

---

171 Not surprisingly, Robinson’s letter was included in the publication of Mourt’s Relation. It can also be found in Of Plymouth Plantation.

172 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 52-54.

173 Not everyone was disappointed with that development. Bradford remarked in his history that some saw the problems with the Speedwell as an ill omen. He mentioned Cushman by name, stating that he and his family had lost “heart and courage” to continue to the New World. For his own part, Cushman claimed to have become ill and in a letter to Edward Southworth, predicted his death. “What to call it I know not, but it is a bundle of lead, as it were,
On September 6, the *Mayflower* left port with 102 passengers headed for Virginia. The delays with the *Speedwell* meant that they would arrive at their destination well past the planting season. The *Mayflower* had provisions sufficient for a short while but certainly not enough to sustain over one hundred colonists until the spring. To survive, they would have to trade with nearby colonies, an undertaking made more difficult without the *Speedwell* – or with the neighboring Indian population. The colonists desired trade with the Indians but relations with them were fraught with uncertainty and danger. However, these plans took another turn when storms in the Atlantic lengthened the voyage by several weeks and diverted them several hundred miles to the north. They reached the bleak and inhospitable coast of Cape Cod on 9 November 1620. An attempt to reach Virginia failed, forcing the colonists back to the cape. A month later, they established a permanent colony across the bay at Plymouth. In the heart of winter and far away from Virginia or the seasonal encampments along the coast of present-day Maine, the colonists faced the dangers of the New World entirely alone.

They did not see another English vessel until one year later. By the time the *Fortune* sailed into Plymouth harbor in November 1621, roughly half the colonists had perished. Still, against great odds, they built a permanent settlement and managed to negotiate a tenuous peace with the native inhabitants. The dream of a community of saints endured for the Pilgrims, but a number of challenges still awaited them. At some point during his visit at Plymouth, Robert Cushman discussed these challenges with Governor Bradford. Every English colony struggled to survive against the dangers of starvation, the elements, and Indian attack, but the Pilgrims had to

---

174 While the Pilgrims had to sell provisions in England to raise money, they also had fewer colonists to support after the *Speedwell* proved unseaworthy. Whatever they had certainly went with them on board the *Mayflower*. 

92
overcome additional obstacles. The greatest threat to the Pilgrims came from their fellow Englishmen. The Strangers who arrived with them on the *Mayflower*, as well as the more recent arrivals on board the *Fortune*, caused numerous problems for the Pilgrims. However, Bradford and company generally dealt with them from a position of strength during those first few years. Far from the prying eyes of the company, the church, and the crown, the Pilgrims governed Plymouth with a firm hand. The more menacing threat came from strangers in England. Their religious beliefs made the Pilgrims enemies of the state and many in England (and perhaps a few in the colony) saw separation from the church akin to treason. As radical puritans, they had significant experience practicing covert operations. They could rely upon the discretion of their spiritual brothers and sisters, in the colony and in England. Others, however, had powerful motives to undermine them.

Soon after his arrival at Plymouth, Cushman informed Governor Bradford of the state of affairs back home. Many, he told him, opposed colonization of the New World, largely for religious or patriotic reasons.\(^\text{175}\) Others doubted the profitability of the enterprise, including a growing number of the investors who the Pilgrims had crossed a year earlier. Signing the contract, Cushman believed, would solve the problems with the Adventurers. But many others wished them ill, or would do so if they discovered that the radical separatists from Leyden governed the colony. The Pilgrims had to find a way to counter the smears and defamations circulated by their enemies throughout England. They also had the tricky task of building a community based on their particular, and highly illegal, interpretation of scripture without certain parties in England becoming wise to the matter. In some respects, their problem had not changed much from when they worshipped in secret while living in England. Then as now, their refusal to

---

\(^{175}\) Cushman details these reasons in his preface to *Mourt’s Relation*, treated later in this chapter.
compromise on their religious beliefs put them at odds with Anglicans and even many puritans. But with an enormous ocean separating them from England, they had a unique opportunity to cultivate public opinion favorable to their endeavor.

For the general public, news from English America came from three sources: eyewitness accounts, private correspondence, and public prints. Probably the most prevalent source of information about affairs across the Atlantic came from word of mouth. Although we traditionally mark 1620 as the beginning of an English presence in New England, English vessels (as well as those from other European nations) had been plying the north Atlantic coast for decades prior to this date. English mariners had made substantial contact with the native inhabitants and in some cases forged personal relationships with them. During the Pilgrims’ explorations of Cape Cod, they encountered in divers places evidence of Europeans having preceded them: a ship’s kettle “brought out of Europe,” the remnants of a palisade which they “conceived had been made by some Christians,” and a gravesite wherein they discovered a skull with “fine yellow hairs still on it.” Months later, Samoset boldly marched up to them in Plymouth and saluted the Pilgrims in broken English, a language he learned from contact with the English fishermen and traders along the coast of present day Maine. Samoset “knew by name the most of the captains, commanders, and masters that usually come” to those parts. From Samoset, the Pilgrims learned that the hostility of the Nauset, the Indians they first encountered in Cape Cod, stemmed from an incident several months earlier in which Thomas Hunt carried away twenty of their number and sold them as slaves. Certainly then, the Pilgrims who

---

176 Neighbors in England betrayed them to the Church of England, forcing them to flee to the Netherlands.
177 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 21-33.
178 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 83-84.
179 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 90-91.
ultimately settled at Plymouth were not the first Englishmen to visit the region. Over the years, seafarers told their tales about the New World and from London and the other English port towns stories of strange lands and even stranger people circulated throughout the country. These word-of-mouth exchanges of information undoubtedly led to exaggerations, distortions and conflicting accounts. Furthermore, they generally percolated among the lower orders of English society and were thus taken with a grain of salt by the more “respectable” persons interested in these affairs.

But oral reports cannot be wholly classified as idle rumors run amok. Members of the Virginia and New England companies relied heavily on the testimony of mariners and agents who voyaged to the New World. William Bradford provides evidence of this in OPP. In a letter addressed to Governor Carver and sent aboard the Fortune, Thomas Weston expressed shock that the Mayflower had returned to England without any cargo.  

That you sent no lading in the ship is wonderful, and worthily distasted. I know your weakness was the cause of it, and I believe more weakness of judgment than weakness of hands. A quarter of the time you spent in discoursing, arguing and consulting would have done much more; but that is past, etc.  

Weston’s information undoubtedly came from the master of the Mayflower, Christopher Jones. As Bradford makes clear in OPP, Jones had no love for the Leyden Pilgrims and obviously placed the blame for not shipping saleable goods squarely upon the colonists. Not content to rely exclusively upon the crew of the Mayflower, Weston arranged to have paid informants reside with the colonists. William Trevore accompanied the Pilgrims to New England aboard the Mayflower and was one of two seamen hired by Thomas Weston to remain with the colonists for

---

180 The letter was sent aboard the Fortune which arrived at Plymouth in November 1621. Weston was unaware that John Carver had died months earlier. William Bradford naturally assumed ownership of the letter addressed as it was to the governor of the colony.  
181 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 93.
one year.\textsuperscript{182} Trevore returned to England aboard the \textit{Fortune} and upon his arrival immediately held conference with Weston. Robert Cushman, described by William Bradford as “intimate with Mr. Weston,” was aware of this meeting. In a letter to Bradford, dated around March or April 1623, Cushman informed the governor that the men sent by Thomas Weston the previous year intended to settle south of Plymouth, “for William Trevore hath lavishly told but what he know or imagined of Capawack, Mohegan and the Narragansetts.”\textsuperscript{183} It is impossible to tell what value Weston placed upon the information given to him by Trevore. Upon their arrival to New England, Weston’s men explored the region and chose Wessagusset as the location for their settlement, twenty some odd miles \textit{north of} Plymouth. The examples of Christopher Jones and William Trevore mentioned here were but two of the countless instances of personal, word-of-mouth exchanges of information. Jones and Trevore certainly related their experiences to others, and everyone who sailed to and from the New World filled the ears of anyone back home in England willing to listen.

Another substantial mode of communication was the private letter. Throughout the early modern period, virtually every ship that crossed the Atlantic carried letters between Europe and the American colonies. This written correspondence included a wide array of information, but its value and importance was defined by its confidentiality. Letters were written to convey specific information to a private audience. The exclusivity of the letter gave both the writer and reader a privileged form of communication whereby information could be exchanged with precision and relative security. Although letters sent across the Atlantic took many weeks to reach their

\textsuperscript{182} The other sailor is identified by Bradford only as “Ely.” Since neither seaman intended to remain permanently with the pilgrims, they did not sign the Mayflower Compact and it is likely that they were not asked to do so. Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 443.

\textsuperscript{183} Cushman’s letter had been delayed and reached Bradford well after Weston’s men had arrived. Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 107-108.
destination, they remained the most efficient way to convey information. Unlike oral
communication, the letter allowed communicants to share exclusive knowledge with accuracy
and confidentiality. An example of this comes from Emmanuel Altham, an Adventurer who
explored New England for about year beginning in 1623. He wrote to his older brother, Sir
Edward Altham, providing him with information concerning the business opportunities to be had
in the region. Emmanuel advises his brother to keep this his report a secret from the other
investors. “But although at this time I do fully declare to you the estate of this planation, yet I
pray conceal it ‘til others have reported the like.” In effect, he provides his brother exclusive
information intended for the advantage of a select few.

No episode in early New England history better exemplifies the significance of transatlantic
letters than the conflict between the Particulars and the Generals which came to a head in 1624.
When the Pilgrims agreed to the contract with the Adventures, every adult male colonist who
came aboard the Mayflower became a member of the Plymouth Company. As such, virtually
everything they owned, built, grew or received in trade belonged to the company in common
ownership with all the stockholders. However, in 1623, a few planters arrived who had paid for
their own passage and had no affiliation with the Plymouth Company. They worked for their
own profit and were said to be on their own “particular.” The Particulars, however, poorly
anticipated the rigors of life in New England and needed help to survive. Governor Bradford
allowed them to live in Plymouth, but under certain conditions. By 1624, roughly 180 men,

184 Sydney V. James, ed., Three Visitors to Early Plymouth (Plymouth: Plimoth Plantation, 1963), 38.
185 Except the two seamen hired to stay one year at Plymouth.
186 The Particulars quickly realized that living apart from Plymouth carried with it significant risks. Governor
Bradford permitted them to live among them in fortified town under the following conditions. First, they had to
abide by all laws and orders deemed necessary for the public good. Second, they were required to work toward the
common defense of the colony. By necessity, every adult male joined the militia and were required to perform
variety of duties. As we will see, John Oldham showed his contempt for authority by refusing to take his turn at
women and children lived in the colony.187 Most of them comprised the General, the term used to describe the resident stockholders in Plymouth. The Particulars numbered only about thirty persons; nevertheless, they soon made trouble for the Generals and for the Pilgrims.

As William Bradford records it, the rift between the Particulars and the Generals emerged in conjunction with some of the former group becoming aware of “a strong faction that was among the Adventurers in England.” The Particulars’ enmity against Bradford’s government made them the natural allies of those in England hostile to the Leyden Church from which the Pilgrims came. The most obstreperous Particular in the colony was John Oldham, a man described by Bradford as the “chief stickler… among [them], and an intelligencer to those in England.” Oldham and the others grew bold in their association with Bradford’s enemies in England with whom they maintained contact via personal letters. The governor could not afford to make too many enemies and he at first trod carefully in dealing with the Particulars. When a man sent over by the company to make salt proved “an ignorant, foolish, self-willed fellow,” Bradford withheld his censure. The colony, wrote Bradford, “had so many malignant spirits amongst them” that the governor feared the repercussions from “their letters of complaint to the Adventurers.”188

Of course, the Pilgrims had their own friends and contacts among the Adventurers. One of them, James Sherley, sent a letter to Bradford in January 1624 informing the governor of some “turbulent spirits” amongst the investors who “aim more at their own private ends and the 

---

188 Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 141-149.
thwarting and opposing of… the general good.” Sherley included a list of grievances made against Bradford’s government and begged him to address them in writing with all possible speed. The objections primarily concerned two basic issues: religious impropriety and the lack of economic potential. Bradford considered the objections baseless but sent an immediate response to London lest his adversaries misconstrue his silence as an admission of guilt. According to Bradford, these answers had the desired effect. Of the Particulars who had returned to England to spread these falsehoods, Bradford’s letters “did so confound the objectors as some confessed their fault, and others denied what they had said and eat their words.”

Bradford prevailed against this initial challenge by these enemy “spirits,” but the same ship that brought James Sherley’s letter to the colony also brought a man who would escalate the transatlantic war of words to a new level. John Lyford arrived at Plymouth in March 1624. He immediately made a great show of his reverence, humility and thankfulness to God for delivering him unto the colony. John Oldham meanwhile delivered his own performance. During an assembly of the church-members, Oldham claimed to have seen that the “eminent hand of God to be with them.” He further “confessed he had done them wrong both by word and deed, and writing into England.” Oldham asked for forgiveness and vowed that no one in England would “ever use him as an instrument any longer against them in anything.”

---

189 James Sherley was the Treasurer of the Plymouth Company. The letter was dated 25 January 1624 and reached Governor Bradford aboard the Charity in March. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 128n5, 372-373.
190 Bradford defended the religious practices of the colony by situating them within the general observances of English Puritanism. He denied tolerating “diversity about religion… for here was never any controversy or opposition, either public or private… since we came.” He also refuted several charges of negligence: for not enforcing family duties on the Lord’s Day, for not catechizing children nor teaching them to read, and for denying the sacraments. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 140-145.
191 John Lyford purported to be a minister when he arrived at Plymouth. He later served in that capacity in Virginia. Lyford may have falsified his credentials. He lost his living in Ireland after raping a woman in his parish. Lyford was a married man but somehow managed to keep the business from his wife. Desperation likely prompted his voyage to Plymouth.
192 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 149.
Although Oldham and Lyford maintained “a fair face of things,” they soon held “private meetings” whereby they began sowing seeds of discontent. They solicited support from among the colonists, confident in “what they should bring to pass in England by the faction of their friends there.” The Pilgrims were nothing if not observant of their neighbors. Just before the Charity departed the colony, they saw that Lyford wrote numerous letters and sent them aboard the ship bound for England. Appreciative of “what hurt these [letters] might do,” Governor Bradford took a small boat and intercepted the Charity about a league or two outside Plymouth harbor. He seized more than twenty letters written by Lyford, “many of them large and full of slanders and false accusations.” Bradford copied each letter, but did not confiscate them. He allowed the letters to continue to England, keeping only a few originals written in Lyford’s own hand. 193

The Governor did nothing upon his return to Plymouth and instead allowed things to ripen. Confident that their letters were well on their way to England, Oldham and Lyford showed their true colors and openly defied the Pilgrims’ authority. John Oldham flatly refused his turn at watch, and when Captain Miles Standish confronted him, Oldham called him a “beggarly rascal” then “drew his knife at him.” John Lyford did far worse. Without permission, he held a public service on the Lord’s Day separate from the members of the Plymouth church. The Pilgrims risked everything for their religious freedom, but they had no intention of granting it to others. They interpreted Lyford’s actions as a direct challenge to their religious and civic authority. 194

193 Bradford apparently coordinated the rendezvous with the master of the Charity, William Peirce. Bradford states that Peirce “knew well their evil dealing both in England and here” and “afforded him all the assistance he could.” Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 149-151.
194 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 150-151.
With Oldham and Lyford having committed themselves, Governor Bradford now sprung his trap. He called a general court and publicly charged the two “with such things as he they were guilty of.” Bradford declared it “most unjust and pernicious” for either of them to seek the ruin of those who had shown them such generosity. Specifically, he accused them of conspiring with certain investors in London to undermine the Pilgrims and that their recent insubordination emerged in anticipation of that outcome. Oldham and Lyford summarily denied the charges and demanded proof. Bradford gave it to them. He produced the letters discovered aboard the Charity, several written in their own hand, and read them aloud before the entire court. Lyford was struck mute. Oldham raged with fury at having his letters intercepted. He spoke out to his associates in the audience, imploring them to rise up. “My masters, where is your hearts? Now show your courage, you have oft complained to me… Now is the time, if you will do anything, I will stand by you.” Not a man stepped forward.

The conspirators stood alone, guilty of using personal correspondence to fan the flames of insubordination on both sides of the Atlantic. John Lyford’s disgrace, however, did not end there. Among the letters seized by Governor Bradford included one addressed to John Pemberton, an investor and sworn enemy of the Pilgrims. In it, Lyford added copies of two letters belonging to Edward Winslow. Lyford had stolen the letters from Winslow months earlier while the two sailed to Plymouth on board the Charity. He quickly made copies of the purloined epistles and

---

195 Bradford recounts this generosity in his History. John Oldham, like all the Particulars, were received at Plymouth under the governor’s conditions (see Note 6). The Pilgrims also forgave Oldham for his insubordinate behavior prior to Lyford’s arrival. As for Lyford, the Pilgrims bestowed privileges upon him – apparently because he was a minister – when he arrived at the colony. Bradford states that they “gave him the best entertainment they could… and a larger allowance of food out of the store than any other had.” The Governor also invited Lyford into his inner circle (which included Elder Brewster and the Assistants), calling him to counsel whenever they discussed “their weightiest business.” Bradford does not say whether Lyford became part of the church. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 133, 148.

196 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 151-152.

197 The two letters included one written by “a gentleman in England” to William Brewster and another by Edward Winslow to John Robinson, pastor of the Leyden Church in the Netherlands. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 150.
resealed them, leaving Winslow none the wiser. As a final insult, Lyford wrote in the margins “many scurrilous and flouting annotations” before forwarding the copies to Pemberton in London. Everyone in Plymouth now understood the full extent of John Lyford’s treachery. In stealing Winslow’s letters prior to arriving at Plymouth, Lyford exposed himself as a purposeful saboteur and not just a Particular displeased with the conditions of living under Pilgrim rule.198

William Bradford took great pains to orchestrate the entire proceeding for maximum effect. Nobody willingly came forward to stand with Oldham and Lyford. The governor summarily banished them from the colony. Yet, one question remains unanswered. If Oldham and Lyford’s letters contained such inflammatory accusations, why then did Bradford permit them to reach their destination? The governor could have easily confiscated the letters. Instead, he made copies and sent the originals on their way. The question becomes even more confounding given the efficacy imparted upon these troublesome dispatches. The participants on both sides of the conspiracy certainly believed that these letters could influence events in England. Oldham and Lyford in fact put all their eggs in that basket. Indeed, their intransigence shifts from “private meetings and whisperings” to public acts of defiance only when they think their letters safely en route to England. The conspirators may have placed excessive confidence in their writings, but as Bradford’s response suggests, the power of the written word could reach across oceans. This begs the question again: why did Bradford allow these pernicious letters to reach England?

To find an answer, we need only look at an earlier episode involving letters crossing the Atlantic. During the first two years of the colony, the few vessels to drop anchor at Plymouth Harbor brought little in the way of supplies and less in the way of correspondence. The former

disappointed, the latter surprised. The friends the Pilgrims left behind were prodigious letter-writers and they certainly had not forgotten their dear brethren in the New World. In late 1622, Bradford learned that Thomas Weston, an Adventurer and owner of the vessels sent by the company to Plymouth, refused to allow letters to sail aboard his ships. Weston had much to hide. He had been cheating the colonists as well as the Plymouth Company until the other members bought him out. On the last ship he sent to Plymouth, Weston discovered that a passenger had sewn between the soles of his shoe a letter written by two rival investors. Addressed to Bradford and William Brewster, the letter described Weston’s treachery on many levels and his expulsion from the company.\footnote{Bradford included the letter in his History. Written by Edward Pickering and William Greene, they reached Plymouth near the end of June 1622 aboard the Charity, the same ship in which Oldham and Lyford sent there nefarious correspondence in our story. Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 100-106.}

Thomas Weston’s discovery of the secret correspondence resembles aspects of the John Lyford affair. Like Bradford, Weston found toxic letters aboard a ship set to cross the Atlantic. Also like Bradford, he allowed the letters to proceed, and included a response to the charges laid against him. Weston had no scruples save those that lined his pockets. He certainly felt no obligation to transport on his ships letters that would bring his duplicity to light. However, when he found one secreted within a shoe, Weston quickly grasped that the cat was likely out of the bag.\footnote{The sixty colonists Weston sent on this vessel originally intended to steal what they could from Plymouth and set up their own colony somewhere in New England. The letter by Pickering and Greene, and others received by Bradford, informed the governor of this plan. Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 105-106. These colonists proved a great burden to Plymouth. Edward Winslow describes this episode in \textit{Good News from New England} (1624).} Was there a copy of the letter in the shoe of a different passenger? How many ways could a determined communicant send a message in secret? Weston could never know for sure. Two years later, as William Bradford poured over two dozen letters written and sent under his very nose, he undoubtedly asked himself the same questions.
English colonization of the New World occurred during a time when more and more people used the written word to facilitate change. In particular, English puritans established networks of communication that empowered their movement and rendered the Anglican Church helpless to stop it. Efforts by the English state to restrict and censor the written word proved futile. As a member of the radical puritan underground, William Bradford had extensive experience in thwarting the state’s attempts to circumvent lines of communication. In Plymouth, Bradford was the state, but he did not forget the lessons he learned while in Europe. English puritans forced their way into the national debate via a pious heart and an indefatigable pen. Attempts to silence them merely served to advance their cause. Governor Bradford fully appreciated the danger in what Oldham and Lyford wrote, but he also knew that any attempt to gag them would likely backfire. By allowing their letters to reach England, Bradford could effectively shame them in Plymouth and discredit their claims in England.

In England, the Adventurers did indeed act upon the letters received from Plymouth. Edward Winslow and William Peirce returned to England aboard the Charity and revealed Lyford’s perfidy to members of the Adventurers. Lyford’s “friends” among the company took great offence at their accusations.\(^{201}\) So heated did this dispute become that the case was deferred to a full session of the Adventurers. At some point during the debate, witnesses testified that prior to his coming to Plymouth, Lyford had committed an act of sexual impropriety while serving as minister in Ireland.\(^{202}\) Evidence of Lyford’s dubious character ended the proceedings, but some

\(^{201}\) We do not know the exact relationship between John Lyford and his friends among the Adventurers. This faction sent him to provide eyewitness testimony of the “abuses” committed by the Pilgrims. They hoped to use his correspondence to advance their attempt to undermine those friendly to the Pilgrims and the church at Leyden. In defending John Lyford, they were in fact defending the authenticity of his letters.

\(^{202}\) As Bradford tells it, “a godly young man” wished to marry a maid and sought out Reverend Lyford’s advice on the matter. Lyford agreed to advise him, but would first take better knowledge of her and have private conference with her.” At length, he recommended the maid to the man, but after the wedding she revealed to her husband that
of the Adventurers later used his denunciations as a pretense to break up the company.\footnote{They accused them of being Brownists, the term used for adherents to the controversial teachings of Robert Browne (1550–1633). Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 170.} John Lyford did not start the problems among the Adventurers any more than he created the friction between the Particulars and the Generals in New England. Yet through his correspondence, he managed to connect the disputes despite the great physical distances between them.

Although the two incidents described above occurred a few years after the Pilgrims founded Plymouth, the potency of private correspondence did not suddenly manifest itself after 1620. From their years living in exile at Leyden, the Pilgrims learned the importance of communication with England. They also knew that the Strangers living among them as well as any mariners who visited the colony would communicate with acquaintances in England. Both of these groups opposed the sanctimonious authority with which the Pilgrims governed themselves and the colony and neither had any reservations about maligning them to friends in England. Leaving the Adventurers in the lurch only compounded their problems. As later events would reveal, many of the investors suspected the Pilgrims of being Brownists, a reviled sect of radical puritans.\footnote{Named after Robert Browne, a theologian highly critical of the Church of England. Though the Leyden group professed indignation at the comparison, they greatly resembled Brownists on many points. For instance, they both worshipped in separated churches and espoused congregationalism. Additionally, both groups ran afoul of the authorities and fled to the Netherlands. Dwight C. Smith, “Robert Browne, Independent,” \textit{Church History} 6, no. 4 (1937): 289-349.} Only the hope for profits held their tongues. In refusing the adjusted terms of the contract, the Pilgrims simply gave their detractors a motive to betray them. Knowing that parties on both side of the Atlantic resented them, the Pilgrims had to find a way of bolstering their image in England. During their long voyage across the Atlantic, the Pilgrims had ample time to consider their options.

\footnote{Lyford had “overcome her and defiled her body” during these private meetings. As a result, Lyford fled the parish for England and eventually to Plymouth in 1624. Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 168-9.}
The decision to issue a public print was an obvious choice for the Pilgrims. For several decades, English religious dissenters had used print as a means to advance their beliefs and criticize the established church. While in Leyden, the Pilgrims learned a great deal about the print trade. William Brewster operated a press there and Edward Winslow had been a printer in London. They also came to appreciate that living abroad would not fully safeguard them from their adversaries. Print afforded them an opportunity to advance their cause and make their community of saints a reality. Prior to 1620, tracts about English America were scarce and only one writer, John Smith, provided a description of New England. Within this void, the Pilgrims hoped to establish an authoritative record of the colony. In publishing their own account, the Pilgrims provided readers in England a detailed and incontrovertible version of events designed to promote the colony and to refute any spurious accusations made against them. Because they brought with them writing materials – not exactly a necessity for survival in the American wilderness – it seems reasonable to conclude that the Pilgrims anticipated publishing a record of their experiences in the colony prior to their departure from England.

Founding their colony in New England instead of Virginia greatly complicated matters. For much of their first year, the colonists lived on the edge of destruction, braving starvation, disease, and hostile Indians on a daily basis. Yet William Bradford and Edward Winslow maintained a record of their experiences in the midst of these hardships. They knew finding a printer in London sympathetic to their religious views would be relatively easy. Getting their

---

206 In 1618, the crown’s agents went to Leyden to arrest William Brewster for criticizing King James in print. Brewster avoided capture but went into hiding. He eventually returned to England and joined the Pilgrims on the Mayflower.
207 Smith produced two tracts about New England: A Description of New England (1616) and New England’s Trials (1620). Smith revised the latter tract in 1622. He later penned two more books relating affairs from New England: The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles (1624) and Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England, or Anywhere (1631).
manuscript to the printer from the colony was another matter. Ships from England would eventually visit them at Plymouth, but they needed someone returning to England with whom they could entrust their manuscript. In Robert Cushman, the Pilgrims found their man.

Robert Cushman gained possession of the papers that would become *Mourt’s Relation* during his visit to Plymouth colony in November 1621. Bradford makes no reference to having ever written a journal let alone giving a copy of it to Cushman. It seems evident that Bradford, despite appreciating the power of print, had little interest in becoming a known author. Still, it is highly unlikely that Cushman published Bradford and Winslow’s journals without the approval of the authors. Additionally, Cushman could not have copied, nor had copies made for him, without the governor knowing about it. Bradford then could not have possibly been in the dark as to Cushman’s intentions to publish them.²⁰⁸ It is conceivable however that Bradford reluctantly agreed to Cushman’s plan in much the same way he reluctantly agreed to the amended contract with Thomas Weston. Yet this seems unlikely given the details recorded by Bradford and Winslow (discussed in more detail below) as well as their commitment in keeping such a journal amid the incredible hardships they encountered during that first year in New England. Given their exposure to print’s potential while in Leyden, it is reasonable to assume that Bradford and Winslow made their decision to publish an account of their endeavor sometime before they reached the New World. This supposition is further reinforced by the way in which Bradford’s section begins. Unlike *OPP*, which is clearly a retrospective of the past, *Mourt’s Relation* shares

---

²⁰⁸ John Goodwin cites the confusion between Francis and John Billington in *Mourt’s Relation* as evidence that Cushman’s copy of the manuscript was hastily made. On 5 December 1620 a boy identified by Bradford as “one of Francis Billington’s sons” fired a gun inside his father’s cabin, but luckily nobody was hurt. Francis, however, was the boy who discharged the weapon; hence Bradford should have written “one of John Billington’s sons.” Goodwin, *Pilgrim Republic*, 108n; Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, 43n149.
an immediacy to the events it describes. Bradford records events soon after they occur. His account begins with a hurried introduction of their final departure from England and passage across the Atlantic.

Wednesday the sixt of September, The Wind comming East North East, a fine small gale, we loosed from Plimoth, having bee kindly intertained and courteously used by divers friends there dwelling, and after many difficulties in boysterous stormes, at length by Gods providence upon the ninth of November following, by breake of the day we espied land which we deemed to by Cape Cod, and so afterward it proved.209

One gets the sense that Bradford struck upon the idea of keeping a journal only after sighting the coast of New England. He included nothing from the voyage itself and offered only the briefest of descriptions concerning their stay in England. Considering what actually transpired along with what he later deemed worth mentioning in OPP, the omissions are striking. In his history, Bradford provided a significant level of detail in describing affairs in England and the Atlantic crossing. It seems likely then that he did in fact record events prior to raising Cape Cod and that they were deliberately removed from the published version. If so, this raises several issues of authorship and authenticity for this most valuable account of Plymouth colony. In short, we have no way of knowing the extent to which the published version differed from the original manuscript. All printed works went through editorial processes. Printers and booksellers, interested primarily in the profitability of a given publication, frequently made alterations to manuscripts in order to save paper and lower costs. The content of a given manuscript could also be altered in response to local conditions. Various circumstances altered the popularity of certain topics and printers attempted to meet this demand by printing works that were likely to sell.

209 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 1.
Soon after his return to England, Cushman met with George Morton and the two quickly set about turning the manuscript journals written by Bradford and Winslow into a public print. We know little about George Morton. He was a merchant living in York before his religious scruples compelled him to join the congregation in Leyden in 1612. He apparently knew Bradford and Winslow well enough to describe them as his “known and faithful friends,” and Morton’s wife was also the sister of Alice Carpenter, the future second wife of Governor Bradford. Morton and his family eventually emigrated to Plymouth colony aboard the Anne, arriving there in late July 1623. He died a year later, but his son Nathaniel became Secretary of the Colony in 1645 and authored *New England’s Memorial*, a history written in 1669 and largely based upon the private manuscript collection of William Bradford. But George Morton is best known as the shadowy contributor to the invaluable publication which bears his name.

When Cushman met with Morton during the winter of 1622, they scrutinized the manuscript with a critical eye. Cushman had already proven himself willing to make decisions he felt necessary in support of Plymouth colony. He had already incurred the enmity of the Leyden congregation for altering the contract with the Adventurers. It takes no great leap of faith to imagine Cushman altering a manuscript in order to render the printed version more conducive to soliciting public support for the fledgling colony in New England. Ultimately, we will never know how much of *Mourt’s Relation* was Bradford and Winslow or how much was Cushman and Morton, or even another person. Nevertheless, the publication that appeared in John Bellamy’s shop that summer was the product of several individuals living on both sides of the

---

210 Alice Carpenter was previously married as well to Edward Southworth who died in England in 1623.
211 George Morton came to Plymouth with his wife Juliana and five children (Nathaniel, Patience, John, Sarah, and Ephraim), the last of whom was born on the passage over. Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, xxii.
212 For an extensive examination of George Morton’s authorship, see Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, xvii-xxxi.
Atlantic. As such, *Mourt’s Relation* represents the first step towards what would become a substantial English transatlantic print culture.

In late June 1622, there appeared for purchase in John Bellamy’s bookshop in Cornhill a unique account of English colonization in the New World.\footnote{Bunker, *Making Haste*, 311-313.} Although commonly recognized today as *Mourt’s Relation*, the title that actually appeared on the front of the original seventy-two page tract read, in the heavily descriptive yet ponderous convention of the time, *A Relation or Journall of the beginning and proceedings of the English Plantation setled at Plimoth in New England, by certaine English Adventurers both Merchants and others*. Books and colonization were both fashionable topics in 1620s London, the epicenter of England’s growing merchant-middle class. And while books about colonization were not new, various circumstances compelled many in England to take an increasing interest in the establishment of colonies in the New World. John Bellamy hoped to profit by this interest. Those responsible for the tract’s production – authors, editors, the printer and funder – had other objectives. All involved, including Bellamy, held beliefs of varying intensity towards the cause of religious reform collectively, if somewhat inaccurately, called puritanism. And while *Mourt’s Relation* contained little in the way of theology, its purpose was to promote a community rooted in radical puritanism.

*Mourt’s Relation* is truly a composite work. The finished product included contributions from five authors. While there remains some uncertainty as to who wrote what, the following breakdown taken from Henry Martyn Dexter is generally accepted:

Dedication to Mr. John Peirce – written by Robert Cushman
To the Reader – George Morton
Certaine useful Advertisements – John Robinson
A Relation of the Proceedings… at Plymouth in New England – William Bradford
Various journeys to neighboring Indian villages – Edward Winslow
Reasons & considerations touching the lawfullnesse of removing out of England into the parts of America – Robert Cushman

The central narrative relating the events experienced by the pilgrim colonists was written by Bradford and Winslow. Neither authors’ name appeared in the published version. Bradford made no mention of having written the account in OPP and Winslow later claimed not to have expected his journal to reach a general audience. As members of a congregation designated by the state as seditious, it certainly made sense that both authors chose to remain anonymous. Additionally, authorship of any public print carried with it a degree of impropriety, something these living saints sought to avoid. As for the other authors, only the initials for Robert Cushman and John Robinson gave English readers any clue as to who wrote their respective pieces. The only name that appeared anywhere on the entire tract was that of George Morton, given at the end of the “To the Reader” section as “G. Mourt.” The anonymity of the main narrative induced early scholars to give credit to the only name available to them at the time of publication. The appellation “Mourt’s Relation” first appeared in 1732 in Thomas Prince’s A Chronological History of New England, and though we have long since known the identities of the primary authors, scholars still use Mourt’s Relation as the title for the tract. Though some scholars – most notably Champlin Burrage – have objected to the continued usage of this title, 

---

214 The several sections attributed to Edward Winslow consist of journeys to several Indian villages. Dexter provides a different title to each visit but I have condensed them here under a single heading. Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, xvii.
215 Winslow, Hypocrisie Unmasked (1644).
216 The initials “R.G.” at the end of the Dedication to John Peirce is widely considered to be a misprint for “R.C.”
217 Most scholars recognize this as an alternative spelling to George Morton. There were no hard fast spelling rules in the seventeenth century. Words were generally spelled as they were pronounced and variations of a person’s name could appear even from the individual in question.
218 Heath, Mourt’s Relation, xiv.
the collaborative effort toward publishing the tract provides some justification for its perpetuation.\textsuperscript{219}

The considerable effort made to record and publish the Pilgrims’ experience in New England indicates the value the participants placed upon the written word. Bradford’s silence (in \textit{OPP}) and Winslow’s disapprobation (in \textit{Hypocrisie Unmasked}) regarding the \textit{Mourt’s} publication notwithstanding, all involved clearly viewed the tract as vital to the success of Plymouth colony. This assessment does not preclude economic imperatives to the Pilgrims’ survival; rather it suggests the importance of information in soliciting support from England. The Pilgrims from Leyden had firsthand experience in the value of information. While considering destinations in the New World, the future colonists consulted various tracts, including John Smith’s \textit{Description of New England}, first published in London in 1616. Smith desired the job of captain eventually given to Miles Standish, and bristled when the Leyden group passed him over. He later communicated his resentment over their choice in \textit{The True Travels, Adventures and Observations of Captain John Smith} (1630). The Pilgrims, Smith claimed, rejected him, “saying my books and maps were much better cheape to teach them, than my selfe.”\textsuperscript{220}

Countless scholars have canvassed the pages of Bradford and Winslow’s journal but strikingly few examine the ancillary sections of the tract. The importance of these sections become apparent when one considers the reasons behind making the Pilgrims’ account available to the general public in England. \textit{Mourt’s Relation} represents a concerted effort on behalf of the Pilgrims and their friends in England to promote the colony without revealing their radical and


\textsuperscript{220} John Smith, \textit{The True Travels, Adventures and Observations of Captain John Smith} (London: 1630), 46, http://archive.org/stream/Advertisementsfo00smit#page/n7/mode/2up.
illegal religious beliefs. The main text provided a detailed account of their first year in New England, but they desired the reader to see this narrative in a way amenable to their specific interests. Plymouth was a different type of colony. As such, it required a different type of promotional tract. The trick was to advance the goals of the Pilgrim protagonists without alienating readers in England. Cushman and Morton used the ancillary sections of the tract to do just that.

*Mourt’s Relation* begins with a dedication to their “Good Friend” John Peirce, identified only by the initials “I.P.”221 When the Mayflower returned to England in May 1621, the Adventurers learned that the colonists had settled outside the region designated by their patent. This development not only rendered the colony illegal, but threatened to trim the profits expected by the investors. They hurriedly applied for another patent from the newly created Council for New England. The new patent passed the seals in June in the name of John Peirce.222 This second Peirce patent – the first, issued by the Council of Virginia, became useless when the colonists went to New England – made Plymouth colony legitimate in the eyes of the law. It also replaced the Mayflower Compact as the instrument of government in the colony. From the investors’ point of view, the business of squeezing profits out of the colony could now proceed. Robert Cushman, the author of the dedication, had already made extraordinary efforts to solidify the bonds between the Pilgrims and the Adventures. It comes as no surprise that he would dedicate *Mourt’s Relation* to the man who effectively made Plymouth a lawful – and hopefully profitable – colony.

221 Peirce was a well-to-do clothier and member of the Adventurers. This “good friend” later attempted to cheat the colonists and his fellow investors. He was later bought out by the Adventurers. Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, 1; Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 39 n.
222 Cushman brought with him a copy of this patent on his visit to Plymouth.
It is important to remember that at the time Cushman wrote this dedication, a great deal of uncertainty still surrounded Plymouth colony. Cushman and the crew of the *Fortune* had recently returned to England – after a brief respite in a French prison – and happily reported that prospects for the colony seemed bright. Previously, the only information available in England came from the returnees on board the *Mayflower*. That ship left the colony on 5 April 1621, a short time after the Pilgrims signed a treaty with Massasoit. The value of this alliance had yet to materialize. Massasoit’s allies had yet to learn of this treaty and the English had already exchanged hostilities with the Nauset along Cape Cod. The colony also lost roughly half its number that first winter and disease and starvation remained a threat for the survivors. Most importantly, from the investors’ point of view, the colonists did not send back to England any saleable goods on board the *Mayflower*.\(^{223}\) Although they lost the cargo sent on board the *Fortune* to the Marquis de Cera, the shipment proved that profits could be had in the venture. Cushman had also sealed the deal between the investors and the Pilgrims. Additionally, he could inform the Adventurers that the colony enjoyed peaceable relations with the neighboring Indians and the beginnings of a self-sustaining agriculture.\(^{224}\) None of this however had moved the investors enough to send any supplies to the colonists. So while things had improved in the colony over the summer of 1621, the future of Plymouth still hung in the balance.

Cushman hoped to change all that. Dedicating *Mourt’s Relation* to John Peirce, a man who represented a group of investors reluctant to sink more money into the venture, was more than just a fawning tribute to a niggardly benefactor. It established a direct relationship between the colony and the company, legitimizing the venture and giving potential supporters in England

---


\(^{224}\) The mythologized first thanksgiving occurred about a month before the *Fortune* arrived at Plymouth.
more confidence in its future. Cushman began the dedication by describing their deviation to New England as a blessing, as the colonists occupied “the most pleasant, most healthfull, and most fruitfull parts of the world.” Such boasts were standard fodder for all promoters of English America, but Cushman used this trope to veil the consequence of building a colony beyond the limits of their original charter. The greater “blessing,” Cushman described, was that the colony had “obtained the honour to receive allowance and approbation of our free possession” under the authority of Council for New England. In other words, Plymouth was legit. Potential colonists and investors could rest assured. The colony’s legal status was now settled. Cushman essentially used the dedication to pay due respect to proper authority and to establish a link between that authority and the colony.  

Throughout the early modern period, dedications to patrons served to legitimize the subsequent text, allowing the author to speak from authority. In the case of Mourt’s Relation, the dedication also legitimized a colony. The authority behind the main text, however, came not from the king or some rich patron, but came from the piety of the authors. In an oft quoted passage from the dedication, Cushman established their spiritual credentials.

As for this poore Relation, I pray you to accept it, as being writ by the severall Actors themselves, after their plaine and rude manner; therefore doubt nothing of the truth thereof: if it be defective in any thing, it is their ignorance, that are better acquainted with planting than writing.”

---

225 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, xxxv-xxxviii.
226 Rich patrons, the king or queen of England or some other member of the royal family were the norm, and in a few cases, to prominent persons of whom the writer hoped to persuade. Puritan tracts could dedicate a tract to a particular pious individual who epitomized the religious tenets of the piece.
227 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, xxxiv-xxxv.
Puritanism embodied, among other things, a strident anti-intellectualism, despite the fact that many of its most foremost adherents were among the most learned men in England. The Protestant Reformation had sparked a crusade to make God’s holy word available to the masses. More and more Europeans learned to read, encouraged by the increasing availability of books – particularly the bible – printed in the vernacular languages of Europe. Another dimension of this populist mission included a concerted effort to render God’s word in ways comprehensible to the less educated in Europe. English puritans saw the use of Latin, complicated arguments and decorative language as prideful affectations that subsumed Christ’s message within the veneer of sinful pedantry. They sought the unadorned truth, not the pretentious exclusivity of the Catholic tradition. English puritans adopted a mien of humble simplicity and this custom extended to their public prints.

Puritan authors rarely failed to apologize for their lack of literary polish. In making such confessions, writers affirmed their faith and vouched for the content of the text. Thus Cushman mentioned the “plaine and rude manner” so that the reader may “doubt nothing of the truth thereof.” The next section of the tract, entitled “To the Reader,” reinforces the authority of the main text in much the same way as Cushman’s dedication. The author of this section, George Morton, began by apologizing for his “forwardness” in publishing the tract. Throughout this period, English writers performed this act of contrition as a preemptive strike against the unseemliness of publishing a public print. Until the Civil War, appeals to the general public in print carried with it a stigma that many, especially men of the cloth, sought to avoid. A number of authors – including the contributors to Mourt’s Relation – withheld their names for this very

---

228 Some of the most influential puritans received their education at Cambridge University.
reason. Such vigilance prompted Thomas Prince in the early eighteenth century to designate Bradford and Winslow’s journal by the only name listed in the published edition: “G. Mourt.” The identity of “G. Mourt” remained a mystery until 1841, when historian Alexander Young named George Morton as the author of the “To the Reader” section of the tract. Although the author of each section of the tract has been known for generations, most scholars still refer to it by the famous but inaccurate title.

After issuing his apology to the reader, Morton proceeded to another trope found in every tract about colonization and the New World. Europeans, without exception, listed the advancement of Christianity as their primary objective in the Americas. Such declarations helped legitimate territorial claims in the New World while also providing cover for their more worldly ambitions. Morton followed this script, informing the reader of the colonists’ desire to carry “the Gospell of Chri$t into those forraigne parts, amongst those people that as yet have had no knowledge, nor taste of God.” And for their efforts, God rewarded them with a “comfortable habytation” in New England. Morton revealed a general awareness of the troubles that plagued previous English efforts in the New World and attempted to distance Plymouth from them. He specifically referenced the “disasters” encountered by the “Virginia and Bermudas Companies” and how New England avoided a similar fate. Like the other contributors to the relation, Morton failed to mention that half of the colonists in Plymouth perished during that first year. Instead, he presented the journal as a testament to the success of the colony, for both colonists and investors alike.230

---

230 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, xxxix-xl.
For the third and last prefatory section of the relation, Cushman and Morton inserted John Robinson’s letter written to the Pilgrims and read aloud to them prior to their departure from Southampton. As the spiritual founder of the Leyden separatists, Robinson was persona non grata in England. Understandably, the producers of the tract avoided any mention of his name, referring to him instead as “a discreete friend.” The substance of this letter, summarized earlier in this chapter, stressed the necessity of self-sacrifice and unity in the colonial setting. Writers throughout early modern England vilified faction and division as evils which threatened to undermine the country. This comes as no surprise since the struggle over religion – first between Protestants and Catholics, then Anglicans and puritans – had come to define the political and social landscape. By the 1620s, decades of infighting had weakened England, so the argument went, and until the country settled upon a single, universal creed, the nation was at risk. Within this context, Robinson’s letter espoused the concerns of everyone in England, not just a small clan of itinerant radicals. The supporters of the Leyden group in England, however, surely knew its author and its inclusion in Mourt’s Relation served as a silent wink towards these friends and allies.

The three prefatory sections of Mourt’s Relation – Cushman’s dedication to Peirce, Morton’s address to the reader, and Robinson’s letter to the Pilgrims – represent appeals to different groups of people involved in the Plymouth project. Nevertheless, Cushman and Morton directed their literary efforts toward the second group, the general public. John Peirce and the other investors did not need to get information about the colony from a public print. They had more direct means of acquiring news. As for Robinson’s letter, the Pilgrims almost certainly had a copy of it in Plymouth. They also listened to a reading of it prior to leaving England. Obviously,

---

231 They also provide his initials at the end of the letter. Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, xli.
publishing the letter in London would not influence them in any way. Cushman and Morton included these sections in order to advertise the legality, profitability, and religiosity of the colony. But they also use them to contextualize the story readers (and listeners) would find in the main body of the text. The heroic odyssey detailed in the pages of the journal written by the anonymous writers from the colony would not amount to much if readers in England dismissed the venture as a red herring.

In case anybody missed the point, Cushman and Morton added two postscripts to the main text. The first addendum consisted of a letter written to Morton by Edward Winslow. As with John Robinson’s letter, Winslow intended his missive for a small circle of friends. He may have given Cushman permission to publish it as well, though we will never know for sure. Throughout early modern England, letters were often printed as a way to make otherwise privileged information available to the general public. The confidential nature of personal correspondence gave it an air of truthfulness. Letters were also a known commodity, something familiar to most everyone in England. Because books and other publications were deliberate attempts to manipulate public opinion, many looked upon them as subjective and disingenuous. Thus, writers frequently used private letters to leverage their arguments and mitigate the stigma of presenting them in a public format.

Bradford and Winslow’s journal (the subject of the next chapter) describes the tremendous hardships endured by the colonists as they built their colony in New England. While the authors (or their editors) omitted some of the more unsavory details, the story in many ways resembled the epic failures of the first settlements in Virginia. With his letter, Winslow attempted to soften the rough edges of this story. Although he did not receive any communication from Morton via
the *Fortune* – something that apparently surprised and disappointed Winslow – he nevertheless sent a report of the colony’s affairs per a promise he made before he left England. Winslow also referred Morton to “our more large Relations,” a clear indication that he knew that the journals would have a wide audience in England.232 Dated 11 December 1621, the letter was written just before the *Fortune* left the colony for England. Winslow therefore knew when he penned the letter that Cushman had a copy of his and Bradford’s journal as well as his intentions to publish them.233

Although Winslow promised to write “truely and faithfully of all things,” he nevertheless failed to inform George Morton of the number of deaths they suffered during that first year. Cushman or Morton may have redacted this detail for the published version, though without the original we will never know.234 Instead, Winslow waxed poetically about the temperate climate and abundance of food available in New England. “I never in my life remember a more seasonable yeare, then we have here enjoyed.” Amidst this land of plenty, the colonists also enjoyed peaceable relations with the native inhabitants. It pleased God, Winslow declared, to fill the Indians with fear and love of the English. He also boasted that the colonists could safely walk the woods of New England as if it were “the hie-ways in England,” and that they regularly entertained the Indians “familiarly in our houses.” Winslow credited their arrival as a catalyst for reconciling the conflicts among the Indians, “so that there is now great peace amongst [them] which was not formerly, neither would have bin but for us.” Given their national obsession with

---

232 This does not necessarily mean that Winslow knew Cushman and Morton would publish the journals.
234 Winslow drops a couple of hints as to the high mortality rate. He alluded to the existence of seven houses in the colony, a quantity insufficient to properly house the 102 colonists that left England on board the Mayflower. He did mention, however, a plan to construct more dwellings. He also referenced their reduced numbers concerning the goods sent back to England on the Fortune, stating “… and though it be not much, yet it will witnesse for us, that we have not beene idle, considering the smallnesse or our number all this Summer.” Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, 132-141.
unity, the English may have seen this development as the greatest argument in support of colonization.235

As a testament to the relationship between the English and Indians, Winslow related an event that would eventually become among the most mythologized episodes in early New England history: the first thanksgiving. Occurring sometime in late September or early October, the feast resembled the harvest festivals common throughout early modern Europe. The English gathered the crops they planted months earlier, mainly “Indian-Corne” and barley. Governor Bradford also sent four men to fowling “so we might after a more speciall manner rejoyce together, after we had gathered the fruit of our labours.” The huntsmen returned with a great quantity of fowl

… at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Armes, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five Deere, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governour, and upon the Captaine [Miles Standish], and others.236

Winslow allowed that such abundance “be not always so plentifull,” yet he informed his friends in England that they “often wish you partakers of our plentie.” The idyllic portrayal of the colony by Winslow contrasts with the great difficulties recorded in the journal, making the letter seem like the happy finale missing in the main text.237

Ironically, the letter describing this abundance sailed to England on the Fortune, a vessel that dumped thirty-five ill prepared colonists at Plymouth. Winslow expressed surprise with the arrival of the Fortune, stating “we expected not a friend so soone.”238 The new arrivals certainly

235 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 131-142.
236 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 133.
237 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 132-135.
238 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 137. In Of Plymouth Plantation, Bradford makes a similar statement, describing the arrival of the Fortune as “unexpected or looked for.” Neither Winslow nor Bradford explain when they did
bolstered their numbers, but their lack of preparedness imposed a burden on the colony. The Pilgrims needed to nip this in the bud. In his letter, Winslow gave a laundry list of items any prospective colonist should bring. He put in plainly: “Trust not too much on us for Corne at this time, for by reason of this last company that came, depending wholly upon us, we shall have little enough till harvest.” The contrast is striking. Immediately after boasting about their plentiful harvest, Winslow forecasted lean times for the colony. He juxtaposed an efficient, successful colony under Pilgrim leadership against the incursions of inept and unscrupulous additions from England. This dichotomy would come to define the political and social dynamics of early Plymouth colony.

The final ancillary section of Mourt’s Relation was written by Cushman and entitled “Reasons & considerations touching the lawfullnesse of removing out of England into the parts of America.” The piece addresses many of the criticisms then circulating against colonization of the New World. Cushman begins with the following:

For as much as many exceptions are daily made against the going into, and inhabiting of forraine desert places, to the hinderances of plantations abroad, and the increase of distractions at home: It is not amisse that some which have beene eare witnesses of the exceptions made, and are either Agents or Abettors of such removals and plantations, doe seeke to give content to the world, in all things that possibly they can.

This opening line reveals the existence of a substantial element in English society opposed to colonization. Students of English colonization often learn about the arguments made in support of this endeavor, but the case against expansion receives little attention. On the whole, opponents anticipate a vessel from England. Their mutual surprise may have stemmed from initial rumors that the vessel was a Frenchman; or it may reflect their disappointment that the first English vessel delivered nothing in terms of supplies. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 90-91.

Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 141.

Winslow featured this divisive theme in Good News from New England.

Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 143.
cast the efforts to establish colonies as unsanctioned by God, legally or morally suspect, and a waste of resources better spent in England. In response, Cushman characterized these objections as the stuff of ignorance, the uninformed casuistry of “the wilfull and wittie caviller.” The facts, he assured the reader, will give “content and satisfaction” to anyone still uncertain about the wisdom and value of colonization.  

Cushman first established a hierarchy of knowledge, describing the written word as far more trustworthy than word-of-mouth reports. He claimed to be an “eare witness” to these several objections. Instead of refuting written – and presumably informed – criticisms, he instead classified them as mere scuttlebutt. In the course of his extensive dealings with investors and merchants on behalf of the colony, Cushman undoubtedly heard many express their doubts about the venture. Additionally, the mariners returning with him on board the Fortune knew the colonists had endured tremendous hardship and the loss of half their compliment during that first year. Even more alarming, these sailors likely heard complaints from the Strangers in the colony about the separatist leanings of their heavy-handed Pilgrim masters. At least some of the Strangers were Anglicans who bristled under the spiritual authority of these religious outlaws. Fearful that such reports would gain traction in certain circles, Cushman sprang into action. Print offered him a chance to publically address the doubts of the investors and to refute the accounts of recent visitors to the colony. In what he described as “the first attempt that hath been made… to defend those enterprises,” Cushman sought to discredit oral representations of the colony as ill-informed while offering Mourt’s Relation as a written account based on the facts.  

242 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 143-144.  
243 When John Lyford arrived at Plymouth in March 1624, he discovered residents of the colony willing to challenge the anti-Anglicanism of William Bradford and his government. At least some of these came with the Pilgrims on board the Mayflower. More of this sort arrived on subsequent voyages.  
244 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 144.
Cushman discussed several objections to the colony, and colonization in general, and refuted them point by point. Not surprisingly, he began his defense by addressing religious concerns. Throughout the early modern period, Europeans saw religion as a fundamental expression of national identity. In England, the struggle to preserve the ideals of the Reformation against enemies foreign and domestic required the efforts of every man, woman and child. Some in England questioned the appropriateness of leaving for the New World, essentially abandoning England, without receiving a calling from God. Cushman acknowledged that “God of old did call and summon our Fathers by predictions, dreames, visions, and certain illuminations to goe from their countries, places and habitations, to reside and dwell here or there, and to wander up and downe from citie to citie, and Land to Land, according to his will and pleasure.” Cushman argued, however, that God no longer operated in this fashion. Instead, he advised Christians to act upon the “examples and precepts of the Scriptures reasonably and rightly understood and applied.”

About a decade before William Bradford, in his history, described the colonists from Leyden as Pilgrims, Cushman used the term to characterize all Christians. “We are in all places strangers and Pilgrims, travelers and sojourners, most properly, having no dwelling but in this earthen Tabernacle.” Their true home, he argued, awaited them after death “in the heavens.” In what would become a common refrain from New England writers, Cushman espoused a faith independent of physical geography. Still, he acknowledged the “naturall, civill and Religious” bonds that tied men and women to the land of their birth. One needed a good reason to leave.

---

245 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 144.
246 Who we call the “Pilgrims” in Plymouth colony never referred to themselves with that term, except in the most general sense. Bradford used it to describe in Of Plymouth Plantation their leaving the Dutch port of Delftshaven. See footnote 36.
England, especially during a time in which the faith, however defined, faced enormous threats at home and abroad. Cushman united religious devotion with patriotic duty, declaring the measure of one’s usefulness as the essential criterion for deciding whether or not one should leave England for the New World. Christians should live not for themselves but for others, he argued. Some indeed, from necessity must remain in England, “but others… who doe no good” in England should look to fulfill their Christian duty elsewhere. Such persons live “as outcasts” in their own country and simply live for themselves. In some ways, Cushman’s argument resembles the “safety valve” theory offered by Richard Hakluyt many years earlier. Instead of relieving England of burdensome undesirables, however, Cushman saw colonization as an opportunity for Christians to serve God and their country to the full extent of their abilities. Many in England, he complained, “sit here still with their talent in a napkin, having notable endowments both of body and minde, and might doe great good if they were in some places, which here doe none, nor can doe none.” Unlike Hakluyt, Cushman cast England’s growing urban population as an asset, an untapped army of Christians who could spread the true faith to the New World. Whereas the English rank and file could offer little to the advancement of religion at home, they could do a great deal across the Atlantic.247

Cushman made his appeal to an English audience, but his reasoning largely depended upon the Indians of New England. The native inhabitants there lived in complete ignorance of Christ. And since they could not come to England, Cushman argued that English Christians must go to them. This noble objective entitled the English to live in the “heathen’s country.” Like so many other European chroniclers of the Americas, Cushman pronounced the land as “spatious and void.” He then added the obligatory dehumanization of the Indians, stating that those in New

247 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 145-147.
England “are few and doe but run over the grasse, as doe also the Foxes and wilde beasts.” If the apparent contradiction in describing a region as populated enough to justify proselytization, but not enough to recognize it as already occupied occurred to Cushman, he failed to record it. He allayed any other concerns about residing in English America by reminding the audience of the king’s claim to the territory. On top of that, Massasoit – who Cushman styled “Imperial Governor” – had already sworn allegiance to James.248

Promoters of English colonization often styled their efforts as an altruistic endeavor to uplift or “civilize” the native inhabitants. They drew comparisons between the benign Protestant mission carried out by English colonists and the ruthless, exploitative campaign executed by Catholic Spain.249 Cushman adhered to this same formula. He stated that the English in New England earned the Indians’ loyalty, not “by threats and blowes or shaking of sword,” but “by friendly usage, love, peace, honest and just carriage, good counsel, &c.” Winning the hearts and minds of the Indians was of great importance to the Pilgrims. Their spiritual and economic objectives depended upon forging peaceful relations with the Indian neighbors. Cushman carefully tailors these efforts in a way designed to appeal to English readers. The Pilgrims had indeed signed a treaty with Massasoit in the spring of 1621. The pact covered several issues but Cushman crudely – and inaccurately – reduced them to a single stipulation: Massasoit’s consent for the English to take as much land as they want.250 Massasoit made no such concession, but

248 Cushman also noted that Massasoit’s territory spanned further than England and Scotland combined. Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 146-9.
249 Richard Hakluyt made much of this in Principle Navigations (1589). Because Bartolomé de Las Casas characterized Spain’s colonization of the Americas as brutal and often unchristian, his A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies (1552) and many variants thereof were printed in England throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
250 These terms as reported by Bradford and the account of the negotiations are discussed in the next chapter.
Cushman was neither the first nor the last writer to embellish his account of English America in order to promote interest back in England. ²⁵¹

Having refuted the spiritual and legal objections to colonization, Cushman then addressed the risks involved in the endeavor. Many, he observed, were reluctant to trade the “many sweet delights and comforts” of England for the risks and hardships of the American wilderness. Life in New England was certainly fraught with peril, but Cushman reminded his audience that God determined the fate of all, no matter where they called home. He portrayed the relative peace and prosperity in England as an eye in the storm, a temporary reprieve from the dangers that surrounded them. It seemed like only a matter of time before England became involved in the religious wars that were then raging throughout continental Europe. ²⁵² On the domestic front, cities teemed with unemployed tradesmen, landless farmers, shiftless beggars and the like: a legion of disaffected people whose rage simmered just beneath the surface of “proper” English society. Add this to religious tensions ready to boil over and England resembled a powder keg on the verge of explosion. Cushman juxtaposed an England beset by fundamental problems with a colony that had already solved its most pressing issues. The heavy lifting in New England had already been done by the “honest, godly and industrious men” of the colony. Those wishing to escape the corruptions of England and live in a land where “the Gospell hath beene so long and plentifully taught” would do well to join them across the Atlantic. ²⁵³

After his return to England in February 1622, Robert Cushman spent the next few months preparing two manuscripts for publication: his sermon delivered to the colonists at Plymouth and


²⁵² The Thirty Years War lasted from 1618-1648. England never officially entered the war but the conflict greatly influenced events in England that contributed to its Civil War, beginning in 1642.

the journals from two of that colony’s foremost residents. The two tracts which emerged from this effort are a treasure trove for scholars. But as I have discussed in this chapter, these publications are more than just descriptions of a remarkable period in the history of early New England. They are also products of a historical moment, one that forever altered the relationship between England and its colonies in the New World. The Pilgrims sought to build a community at Plymouth in direct opposition to the authorities in England, yet they at no point desired to sever ties with the country of their birth. They wanted a relationship with England that afforded them political and material support, while giving them the freedom to govern their colony as they saw fit. The Pilgrims used print to help define that relationship. On some level, every English colonist used the remoteness of the American wilderness to achieve a sort of independence from England. The New World gave colonists an opportunity to pursue a life unavailable to them in England. Still, some remnant of the world they left behind followed them across the Atlantic. The crown, church and merchant-investors attempted, with varying levels of success, to enforce their will in English America. Naturally, the colonists frequently defied these attempts. But the Pilgrims of New England resisted in a unique way. For the first time, a group of English colonists attempted to establish a connection with the mother country on their terms instead of those of the church-state or the investors.

*************

Throughout this chapter, I discussed both the historical context that informed the production of *Mourt’s Relation*, as well as the efforts Cushman and Morton made to ensure that the tract conveyed the intended message. Bradford and Winslow’s journal presented the gritty details
about the founding of Plymouth colony, but the text and its production cannot be separated from
the Pilgrims’ efforts to establish a community of saints in the American wilderness. More than
just a descriptive account of an important episode in English-American history, *Mourt’s Relation*
was an instrument designed to shape that history. The ancillary sections of the tract situate the
story of Plymouth colony within a framework intelligible to a 1620s English audience. But as the
*Relation* made abundantly clear, Plymouth was demonstrably different from any other colony in
English America. Yet all involved in the production of the text – Bradford, Winslow, Cushman,
Morton, and even John Robinson – had to conceal their true intentions while promoting the
colony in ways familiar and amenable to readers in England. In essence, the Pilgrims used print
in England in an attempt to establish and preserve their authority in the colony. This strategy
represents a significant shift in English literature. Whereas the travel and promotional literature
before 1622 always advanced English imperatives, *Mourt’s Relation* represents the first attempt
to use the printed word to advance a colonial agenda.
Chapter Three

A Colonial Text for English Eyes, Part I: Mourt’s Relation

For generations, scholars have considered Mourt’s Relation and Good News from New England as historical accounts of early Plymouth colony. These tracts are historical in that they provide a fascinating glimpse into the mental worlds of the Pilgrims of early New England, but they are not histories. Bradford and Winslow wrote for their contemporaries in England, not for posterity. Like all the Pilgrims, these authors knew they were making history but they did not put pen to paper in order to preserve that history. They went to the New World to establish a godly community the essence of which would not change with the passage of time. Certainly, they acknowledged the likelihood of expansion, but God’s truth was both complete and inviolate. Any community based upon that truth would never significantly deviate from its original manifestation and thus would not require a history to remind future generations of a world since lost. The Pilgrims’ dream proved short lived however. By 1630, materialism had so thoroughly dashed their hopes of creating a New Israel in America that William Bradford began his history as a monument to a vision that seemed destined to fail. Although Of Plymouth Plantation includes events described in Mourt and Good News, Bradford and Winslow intended these latter works for immediate consumption in England.

Mourt’s Relation and Good News from New England comprise two halves of a single story; nevertheless, they differ in several respects. The differences emerge as the authors responded to changing circumstances on both sides of the Atlantic. During the first year at Plymouth, Bradford and Winslow deemed support from England essential to their survival. Consequently, they filled Mourt with descriptions designed to encourage investors in England and obscure their religious
affiliation. The deliberately left out any reference to the high mortality rate in the colony. They also refrained from making any controversial religious statements. The Pilgrims defined themselves by their faith. They even risked their lives to pursue it in the harsh New England wilderness. For Bradford or Winslow to conceal their spirituality in their journals proves that they did not record their private thoughts and observations. Like all English colonists, the Pilgrims expected to improve their economic fortunes in the New World, but they would never have placed material gain ahead of their spiritual objectives. Yet in Mourt and Good News, we see just that. Clearly, Bradford and Winslow tailored their publication toward a particular audience in England. They saw print as a tool, and like a farmer tilling the soil with a plow, the authors saw their publications as a means to reap a bountiful harvest.

If Mourt’s Relation had any influence in England it failed to manifest itself in the form of material support for the colony. The handful of ships to reach Plymouth during the first few years brought nothing but troublesome and woefully unprepared settlers. In September 1623 Edward Winslow returned to England in order to inform the company as to the state of affairs in the colony and to procure much needed supplies. He brought with him the manuscript for what would become Good News from New England. The tract continued the Pilgrim story begun in Mourt’s Relation; however, the needs of the colony had changed since the publication of Mourt in 1622. Consequently, Winslow adjusted the text of Good News to reflect these changes. He continued to solicit support from England and stifled religious controversy, but he modified the narrative to emphasize the problems precipitated from the influx of undesirables to the colony.

As with all written works, Mourt’s Relation and Good News from New England were products of a particular historical moment. While these tracts have been used for generations to shed light on the history of early Plymouth, surprisingly little attention has been given to how the
history of early Plymouth determined the content of these tracts. Through a close examination of each text, I seek to uncover how circumstances in the colony and in England shaped the Pilgrim story as told by William Bradford and Edward Winslow. This transatlantic context is critical to the understanding of these tracts. Both authors used the printed word to convey a particular reality to readers in England. That reality was determined as much by the perceived expectations of their target readership as it was by a candid assessment of their experiences in New England. As a result, *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England*, two works traditionally viewed as quintessentially “American,” are in actuality texts informed by the transatlantic dimension of early seventeenth century English print culture.

The Pilgrims who founded Plymouth colony were well versed in that culture. While exiled to the Netherlands, they found themselves at the epicenter of Europe’s burgeoning print trade. The Dutch imposed relatively few restrictions on the printed word, thus the English living there had access to numerous texts forbidden in England. William Brewster even started up his own press, printing about two dozen tracts before leaving for the New World. The Netherlands quickly became the primary entrepot from which numerous forbidden texts were smuggled into England. The Pilgrims therefore helped stretch the print culture of England beyond the shores of that country. When they relocated to the New World, they stretched it even further. Their experience in the Netherlands impressed upon them the power of print and an acute awareness of the author-reader relationship. The scarcity of information about New England gave them an opportunity to shape opinions in England via the printed word. They also used these tracts to refute the slanderous charges made against them by their enemies. In short, William Bradford and Edward Winslow described Plymouth colony in a manner conducive to their objectives.
In this chapter, I discuss those objectives and the literary strategies Bradford and Winslow employed to achieve them. Within *Mourt’s Relation*, I have identified three thematic categories: commercialism, unity and authority, and English/Indian relations. Each category represents a cultural point of reference that the authors used to describe their colony to their English readers. For the sake of clarity, I present these themes in the order in which they appear in the tracts though they do not always follow a neat chronology. These references enabled Bradford and Winslow to render their narratives intelligible to readers wholly unfamiliar with the colonial milieu. They also permitted the authors to cultivate an image of New England that aligned Pilgrim rule in Plymouth with certain cultural expectations in England. The colonization of New England coincided with the expansion of print in England. William Bradford and Edward Winslow availed themselves to this growing technology to advance their cause in the New World. In doing so, they established the western terminus of a transatlantic English print culture that would eventually have profound implications toward the development of colonial New England.

**COMMERCIALISM**

Anyone who read *Mourt’s Relation* without prior knowledge of the Pilgrims’ religious beliefs would have been none the wiser from having read the tract. The authors deliberately refrained from making controversial religious statements. In many ways it resembled the promotional literature of the previous few decades, describing a land rich in opportunity and worthy of support. *Mourt* has religious overtones for sure but so did nearly every publication in the seventeenth century. Londoners in the 1620s did not naturally think of New England as a
“puritan colony” any more than they thought of Virginia as particularly mercantile. Most saw New England as they did Virginia, a region full of riches for the lucky few and danger for all. Certainly, the Pilgrims, their brethren in Leyden, and a few friends in England put a premium on the religious objectives, but most saw New England as merely another region to exploit for economic gain. This included a goodly number of the planters in Plymouth colony and every one of the Adventurers who backed it financially. Many of the investors thought the Pilgrims were Brownists, a much-vilified group of radical congregationalists. They willingly looked the other way, however, so long as the expectation of profits remained. Support from the Adventurers was crucial to Plymouth’s survival, especially during the initial stages of colonization. Even before they left England, Bradford and Winslow knew their spiritual fortunes – and possibly their lives – depended upon the colony’s ability to generate profits. Moreover, if the traumatic experiences of that first year made them forget this, Robert Cushman certainly reminded them when he came to Plymouth in November 1621. The colonists proudly returned saleable goods on board the first ship to visit them from England, a remarkable achievement considering their ordeal. Nevertheless, they clearly felt compelled to advertise their economic potential to the public.

*Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England* contain many references to the commercial opportunities in the region as well as examples of the business acumen of the colony’s leaders. This was certainly by design. The Pilgrims believed that as long as the money came in, nobody would really care about their religious practices. In essence, Bradford and Winslow attempted to use the promise of material gain to keep materialistic men from interfering with their spiritual errand. While they failed to insulate the colony from the deleterious effects of worldliness, the Pilgrims managed to keep interference from England to a minimum. These tracts alone did not produce this result; nevertheless, the authors thought them valuable enough to
make the effort. Economic imperatives drove colonization of the New World but the Plymouth Pilgrims used print to keep them from undermining their godly community.

William Bradford dangled the proverbial carrot before his readers’ eyes in the opening pages of *Mourt’s Relation*. Hurled off course during their voyage across the stormy Atlantic, the *Mayflower* reached the New World at Cape Cod, many miles north of its intended destination in Virginia. Over the next few weeks, the English explored the region on land and sea looking for a suitable place to establish their plantation. Bradford dutifully recorded in his journal the natural abundance in and around Cape Harbor. In his later history, Bradford characterized Cape Cod as a “hideous and desolate wilderness,” but in *Mourt* he related how the pilgrims found wood and water aplenty and boasted that “there was the greatest store of fowle that ever we saw.” While the *Mayflower* sailed along the coast in search for a safe harbor, Bradford described nature’s abundance. He saw whales “playing hard by us” every day and noted that had they “instruments & meanes to take them, we might have made a very rich returne.” Others drew the same conclusions. Bradford included the assessment of Christopher Jones, master of the *Mayflower*. Jones estimated that they could have “made three or foure thousand pounds worth of Oyle,” and that he and the first mate “preferred it before Greenland Whale-fishing, & purpose the next winter to fish for Whale here.”

Upon landing at Cape Cod, the Pilgrims set out to explore the region on foot. During one of these missions, a shore party came upon a kettle and several baskets of corn buried in the sand. It had been weeks since any of them had tasted fresh food so this discovery was a welcome sight.

---

The party appreciated the fact that the corn belonged to the local Indians, who a day earlier had made themselves known to the English but had not as of yet made contact with them.255

We were in suspense what to do with it and the kettle, and at length, after much consultation, we concluded to take the kettle and as much of the corn as we could carry away with us; and when our shallop came, if we could find any of the people, and come to parley with them, we would give them the kettle again, and satisfy them for their corn.256

The English essentially steal the corn, but Bradford was careful to include a promise to repay the Indians when given the opportunity. Laden with this pilfered bounty, the explorers returned to the ship. A few days later a second expedition uncovered several graves and a dwelling lately abandoned. The English took all they thought of value, especially the food items. Bradford related how they intended to leave some beads at one of the dwellings as a “sign of peace” and to express their desire to trade with the Indians. The English left nothing, however, due to what Bradford described only as “our hasty coming away from Cape Cod.” Bradford failed to explain why the English rushed back to the ship. Instead, he repeated their determination to recompense the Indians for the things they took, promising to “give them full satisfaction” as soon as “we can meet conveniently with them.”257

The English reached Cape Cod at the onset of winter. Snow had already blanketed the region and with supplies short, few could blame the English for taking the food buried by the Indians. Yet Bradford never used their predicament as an excuse for stealing from the Indians. In fact, Bradford barely acknowledged that a predicament even exists. This marks the first of many instances in which Bradford willfully elided any overt statement to the trials and tribulations

255 While exploring Cape Cod, the English became immediately aware that Indians had marked them. Except for a brief skirmish with the Nauset in early December, the English had no contact with any Indians until Samoset walked into Plymouth colony the following March.

256 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 22.

257 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 22-38.
endured by the colonists in New England. Writing to attract support from England, he felt compelled to present the colony in the best light. Though he lacked John Smith’s literary swagger, Bradford nonetheless stretched the truth in his chronicle to produce the desired effect. The tangled web Bradford wove, however, created a problem. If the English found themselves amidst a land of plenty, why then did they steal from the Indians? Bradford solved this public relations problem by emphasizing their commitment to repay the Indians. Did they keep a running tally of the goods taken from the Indians? What did they intend to give the Indians in exchange? Bradford did not say. He was more concerned with presenting the colonists’ actions as lawful and just to his English audience.

In robbing the graves and homes of the native inhabitants, the English certainly appeared less than noble in their conduct. Bradford was anxious to distance the actions of the Pilgrims from that of rogue traders who visited the region from time to time. The most infamous of these traders was Thomas Hunt. In 1614, while under the pretense of trading with the Indians at Cape Cod, Hunt kidnapped several of them and sold them into slavery in Spain. His name appears in several publications concerning the New World and he became the embodiment of unscrupulous greed. Hunt’s actions soured relations between the Indians and English and made colonization an even more uncertain business. Profits depended upon trade and peaceful relations with the Indians. The Mayflower colonists risked conflict with the Nauset, the Indians in Cape Cod, when they stole their corn, but they also risked disaffecting investors in England. Poor relations with the Indians meant fewer returns on their investment. For all their rhetoric about converting the Indians to Christianity, what the English really wanted was to convert them into trading partners.

Another potential discouragement to investors was the uncertainty surrounding the colony’s legal status. Before any of them had set foot on Cape Cod, Bradford and the others realized they

137
had no legal right to establish a colony in the region. Their patent gave them permission to establish a settlement in Virginia, below forty-one degrees north latitude. New England lay well to the north of this boundary. Technically, they had no more right to be there than the nefarious interlopers like Thomas Hunt. Though Bradford did not explicitly say as much, it seemed the Pilgrims anticipated receiving a patent in short order. After all, the Adventurers would find it difficult to profit from an unlawful colony, thus it was in everyone’s best interest to legitimize the settlement in New England. Indeed, when the *Fortune* arrived in November 1621, Robert Cushman brought with him the Peirce Patent that settled the matter. However, during that first year, their legitimacy remained up in the air. The Pilgrims certainly did not want to give anyone reason to withhold a patent. Thus, Bradford and Winslow consistently described the actions of the Pilgrims as reflecting well upon the merchant investors and the English state. Support in England depended upon the colonists’ ability to turn a profit, therefore Bradford and Winslow featured the Pilgrims’ mercantile integrity in dealing with the Indians. In his part of the narrative, Winslow describes how the English dealt honorably with the “Savages” even as they feared and despised them. During a visit to Massasoit at Pokanoket during the summer of 1621, Edward Winslow asked him to relay a message to the Nauset that the colonists wished to repay them for what they took during those first few weeks in Cape Cod. Months had passed but the Pilgrims had not forgotten their obligation. The return trip back to Plymouth afforded Winslow another opportunity to put the Pilgrims’ integrity on display. While exchanging gifts with some Indians at Nemasket, an individual who had followed them from Pokanoket offered the English some tobacco. They refused, claiming the Indian had stolen the tobacco from its rightful owner. Winslow wrote: “For we would not receive that which was stolen upon any terms; if we did, our

---

258 The English had yet to establish any relationship with the Nauset and hoped to use Massasoit as an intermediary on their behalf. Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, 100.
God would be angry with us, and destroy us.” Winslow cast the Pilgrims as incontrovertibly honest and trustworthy. His message was clear: if the Indians could rely upon their integrity so too could investors in England.

As we have seen, Bradford and Winslow took pains to express the pilgrims’ ability to take advantage of the commercial opportunities in New England. Unlike the infamous Thomas Hunt, the Plymouth colonists conducted themselves with honor. More importantly, they directed the profits of their affairs to parties in England sanctioned by the state. Thomas Hunt kidnapped several Indians in Cape Cod and sold them into slavery, but his real crime was to derail the economic prospects of the Virginia Company, and by extension, the crown. Both institutions printed condemnations against “interlopers” who sought their private gain at the expense of the public good. Public censure, however, did little to dissuade the Thomas Hunts of the world to change their ways. Enforcing the will of the company and king typically fell upon the colonists residing in the New World. An orderly colony governed by a proper authority was a prerequisite for a profitable venture. Bradford and Winslow used this to their advantage. Each of them presented the Pilgrims as the unquestioned authority in the region. In Mourt, they deliberately left out any mention of the problems they had with the non-pilgrim members of the colony. In Good News, they described themselves as the only lawful source of authority in the region. The authors used both tracts to convince readers in England that they – and they alone – offered the best hope for an orderly society in New England. This required some creativity as the Pilgrims were essentially outcasts, dissenters who had fled England to pursue a life they could not have at

---

259 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 111.
260 In 1622, the Council for New England published a Description of New England, a general survey of the several explorations to the region. It described Thomas Hunt as “a worthlesse fellow of our Nation set out by certaine Merchants for love of gaine.” That same year, King James issued a proclamation prohibiting “interlopers” from visiting those coasts. Of course, the king had no real way of enforcing this policy.
home. Bradford and Winslow prove equal to the task; however, playing upon the social anxieties of their readers in order to achieve their ends.

AUTHORITY & UNITY

Although historians typically view early modern England as an advancement from its archaic medieval past, contemporaries almost universally lamented the chaos wrought by this transition. Everywhere they looked, people in England saw a society hopelessly divided and set against itself. Even those primarily responsible for some of the major changes in England (e.g. puritans, Parliamentarians) decried their nation’s lack of solidarity. The virtues of a pluralistic society would have to wait until the eighteenth century. Before then, and certainly during the 1620s, virtually everyone in England fervently believed that a society divided against itself could not stand. Not surprisingly, they blamed many of England’s ills on those who would undermine the mythical uniformity that they had supposedly enjoyed in the past. As religious separatists, the Pilgrims were the very essence of divisiveness. Whereas most puritans strove to reform the Church of England from within, the Pilgrims rejected Anglicanism as hopelessly corrupt. Their radical views forced them into exile to the Netherlands, but even there they could not completely escape the reach of their enemies in England. New England afforded them a greater measure of security against further persecution, but their long-term survival depended upon obscuring their religious orientation from prying eyes back home. In their published writings, Bradford and Winslow omit references to their spirituality, but they also described Plymouth as a unified community devoid of the internal divisions that plagued England. This fiction became more
difficult to maintain once additional colonists arrived; nevertheless, both authors continued to use the anxieties of their English readers to their advantage.

Bradford and Winslow devoted considerable space to the social fabric of their settlement. In particular, they emphasized the ideal of orthodoxy deemed by virtually everyone in Europe in the 1620s as a fundamental component of Christian society. At a basic level, the term orthodoxy refers to the belief that a single ideology must govern all aspects of society. Under this formula, diversity and faction undermine proper authority and weaken the state. Throughout the seventeenth century, England groaned under the relentless tension between the forces of orthodoxy and pluralism. While the Pilgrims sought religious freedom for themselves, they embraced orthodoxy with a fervor few in England could match. Their determination to live in exile stemmed as much from their rejection of the corruptions in England as much as it did from the persecution of the Anglican Church. While they remained at odds with the Anglican establishment, the Pilgrims nonetheless shared its commitment to stamp out opposition.  

Mourt’s Relation therefore was not a tract designed to champion liberty and tolerance, but rather an appeal to the principle of orthodoxy that still prevailed in England. Bradford and Winslow tapped into the commonly held belief that the many crises in English society stemmed from a single root problem: fundamental divisions among its populace. These divisions manifested themselves in many ways, but the most volatile schism occurred between the Anglican Church and the various reform movements collectively known as Puritanism. Years before writers from Massachusetts Bay presented their colony as a model of orthodoxy for England to follow, Bradford and Winslow used print to cultivate an image of Plymouth as untroubled by the social ills which plagued England.

---

261 The Pilgrims “persecuted” dissenters in Plymouth colony largely by disenfranchising them. The Strangers who joined them in Plymouth were tolerated only because the Pilgrims lacked the ability to do otherwise.
This last point marks a new development in the promotional literature of the early seventeenth century. Prior to *Mourt*, writers such as John Smith described English America as a place ripe for exploitation. While they took great pains to present the physical environment as similar to that in England, they never offered a colonial milieu as a social template for England to admire or follow. Colonization provided solutions to some of England’s problems, such as the shortage of land and overcrowding of cities, while also providing a venue wherein the ambitious could find wealth and glory. However, promotional writers did not cast the settlements in Virginia in the mold of English communities and certainly never presented them as superior to what their intended audience enjoyed. For writers like Smith, the colonies were outposts carved out of a savage wilderness and surrounded by savage people. Though settlers transferred English culture to the region, the colonies bore little resemblance to the civilization they left behind. Furthermore, most of the colonists who went to Virginia planned to remain there only long enough to make their fortune and return to England. Not surprisingly, only one promotional writer, Alexander Whitaker, actually lived in English America on a permanent basis prior to the Pilgrims’ arrival at New England in 1620.²⁶²

Plymouth colony was fundamentally different from any English colony previously established in the New World. Economic opportunities fueled the desires of investors and colonists alike, but for the first time a group of settlers relocated to English America with the expressed intent to build a community superior (i.e. more godly) to anything in England. While Bradford and Winslow reprised the economic enticements found in the previous literature, they also depicted Plymouth as a type of English Eden. Certainly, the colonists struggled to survive during these early years, but they also enjoyed a social unity for which those in England could only dream. To

²⁶² See reference in Chapter One, page 45, footnote 87.
be sure, Plymouth had its share of internal divisions but Bradford and Winslow wrote much of them out of the pamphlets they published in London. Similar to how previous writers stretched the truth about the commercial prospects in English America, so too did Bradford and Winslow when they described Plymouth as an orthodox ideal. Unlike Virginia, Plymouth was not a place to dump England’s undesirables nor was it a launching pad for transitory settlers looking to return home as soon as possible. The Pilgrims strove to recreate what had proved so difficult to achieve in England: a stable community united under a single authority. Certainly, they hoped English readers would see the enormous potential for such a colony. They also hoped that their publications would entice the “right” kind of settler to join them. This second part is especially prominent in *Good News from New England*, a tract begun after the Pilgrims experienced the deleterious effects of trying to incorporate waves of Virginia-type colonists into their own community.

The differences between Plymouth and the other colonies in English America required a different type of promotional literature. The Pilgrims envisioned their colony as a destination whereas most other colonists hoped to remain only long enough to earn their fortune and return to England. They saw their colony in New England as a spiritual endeavor, but they also recognized that many people in England did not. Every promotional tract featured economic opportunities in the New World, but Bradford and Winslow pioneered the strategy of presenting their colony as, at least in some ways, superior to England. They did not wag their finger at England for following a corrupted spiritual authority – though the Pilgrims certainly believed this – rather, they simply described a homogenous community that readers in England could only envy. Years before writers from Massachusetts Bay claimed to have established an idyllic society in New England, Bradford and Winslow cultivated an image of a colony untroubled by
the social ills that plagued England. As separatists, they did not see their literary efforts as part of a campaign to reform England. Instead, they simply present their colony as worthy of support. To this end, Bradford and Winslow described their settlement in the New World as a unified community held together by the Pilgrims’ unquestioned authority.

Bradford’s narrative in *Mourt’s Relation* begins with a brief reference to their stay in England prior to their voyage. He paused barely a moment to note the “kindly entertainment” and courtesy they received there from “divers friends.” The Mayflower then departed and after “many difficulties in boisterous storms,” arrived at Cape Cod on the ninth of November. Master Jones then changed course “purposing to go to a river ten leagues to the south of the Cape,” but contrary winds forced the ship back to Cape Cod where, on 11 November 1620, the Mayflower dropped anchor in a bay (now called Provincetown Harbor). In his opening paragraph, Bradford provided readers with a succinct preamble to the heroic adventure tale that is to come. However, he deliberately omitted any discussion of affairs prior to their departure from England. He did this in order to avoid mentioning the considerable friction between the Leyden group and the Adventurers, particularly Thomas Weston. The discord between the godly Pilgrims and the investors, described in chapter two and taken largely from *OPP*, was not something Bradford wished to advertise to his English readers. Furthermore, when *Mourt* appeared in 1622, the Pilgrims still expected the investors to provide material support for the colony. Casting their material benefactors as greedy, untrustworthy villains was certainly not conducive to this objective.263

Beginning the Pilgrim story while at sea also allowed Bradford to avoid discussing why they relocated to the New World in the first place. Years earlier, the Leyden church issued a

manifesto of seven articles designed to assuage the scruples of potential investors in England. The articles fooled no one. The exiles drew them up to provide political cover for potential investors leery of the risks of funding enemies of the state. Bradford reprised this strategy in *Mourt*. He deliberately obscured the Pilgrims’ identities and their conflict with the Church of England. Throughout both *Mourt* and *Good News*, Bradford and Winslow discussed religion in the most general terms. They wanted to assure their readers that the colony was grounded in Christian principles, but they had to avoid any reference to their rigid puritan beliefs.

The Leyden Pilgrims risked everything in order to establish a bastion of godliness in the pristine wilderness of North America. The Strangers thrust upon them, however, had no such ambition. They saw the colony as a means to fulfill their dreams of affluence. It did not take long for these conflicting ambitions to create tension among the colonists. The Pilgrims, therefore, had to find a way to minimize threats, both from within their own community and from their adversaries in England. *Mourt* and *Good News* represent part of the Pilgrims’ efforts to establish and preserve a settlement devoid of the corruptions of England. The authors used print to render Plymouth as a peaceful and orderly colony, one which those in England could readily support. To do this, Bradford had little choice but to strike from his account any substantial relation of the Pilgrims’ experiences in Europe.

The Pilgrim story in *Mourt* begins as cross winds and “many fierce storms” battered the *Mayflower* during its westward voyage across the Atlantic. These calamities threatened everyone equally and this shared predicament apparently stifled any significant eruption between the Pilgrims and the Strangers. After such a tumultuous crossing, all were undoubtedly pleased to have reached dry land. However, the Atlantic storms had blown the *Mayflower* off course. Cape Cod lay well to the north of their intended destination of northern Virginia. More importantly,
the patent secured by the Pilgrims before leaving England gave them permission to establish and
govern a settlement within the Plantation of Virginia.\textsuperscript{264} Since Cape Cod – or anywhere in New
England for that matter – lay beyond the geographical boundary stipulated in the patent, any
colony established in this region was technically illegal. This fact was of little consequence to the
Pilgrims at least in terms of their mission to establish a godly community in the New World. The
former members of the Leyden church viewed the patent as a document that defined their
relationship with the outside world. However, for the Strangers among them, the patent became a
fulcrum by which they hoped to leverage their freedom from their obsessively religious
overseers.

Trouble began when the Strangers observed that the \textit{Mayflower} was not proceeding to
Virginia.\textsuperscript{265} In \textit{Mourt}, Bradford simply observed, “some not well affected to unitie and
concord… gave some appearance of faction.”\textsuperscript{266} He was far more explicit in \textit{OPP}. There, he
described how the Strangers made “discontented and mutinous speeches” and threatened to
undermine the authority of the church leadership. The rebels vowed

“…[t]hat when they came ashore they would use their own liberty, for none had power to
command them, the patent they had being for Virginia and not for New England, which
belonged to another government, with which the Virginia Company had nothing to
do.”\textsuperscript{267}

With their community unraveling before they had even set foot in the New World, the Pilgrims
had to act fast. Since the document that had first established their authority (at least to the outside
world) became suspect, they quickly drew up another written agreement designed to nip the

\textsuperscript{264} The was first Peirce patent.
\textsuperscript{265} Upon their arrival at Cape Cod, they made an attempt to sail southward towards their original destination “some
place about Hudson’s River.” In doing so they encountered “dangerous shoals and roaring breakers,” and perceiving
that they were in great danger, opted to return to the relative safety of Cape Harbor. Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth
Plantation}, 59-60.
\textsuperscript{266} Dexter, \textit{Mourt’s Relation}, 5.
\textsuperscript{267} Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 74-77.
simmering dissension in the bud. That document, the celebrated Mayflower Compact, reads as follows:

In the Name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our
dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France, and
Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and
Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern
Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and
one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together in a Civil Body Politic, for our
better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue
hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts,
Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be though most meet and
convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due
submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our n
ames at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King
James, of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth.
Anno Domini 1620.  

The Mayflower Compact resembles a patent insomuch as it establishes the governance of the
colony as an extension of the king’s authority. Additionally, the Virginia Company had given the
pilgrims the right to form a government upon their arrival in northern Virginia. The compact
explicitly states their intended destination, “the Northern Parts of Virginia,” while also revealing
the location where they signed the document, Cape Cod. A copy of the original Peirce patent has
not survived, but the language and terms were likely similar to those expressed in the Mayflower
Compact. The decision to stay in New England left the Pilgrims on uncertain ground. Since
Bradford included the Mayflower Compact in *Mourt’s Relation*, it is highly unlikely that its
terms greatly differed from the original charter. Forty-one of the *Mayflower’s* passengers signed
the document. In most cases, the signatories were heads of households who represented all under

---

their charge. Therefore, the forty-one signatures bound all one-hundred of the permanent colonists to each other under the terms of the compact.\textsuperscript{270}

In \textit{Mourt}, Bradford would have the reader believe that the weight of the Mayflower Compact itself was enough to quell the simmering discontent among the colonists. After providing the full text of the compact, he moved on, relating the details of the shore party that left the ship to explore Cape Cod. Never again in \textit{Mourt} do we see a reference to any divisions among the \textit{Mayflower} colonists, even after they settled at Plymouth. The legitimacy of the Mayflower Compact was dubious at best. It failed to address the fundamental issue of establishing a colony beyond the boundaries of Virginia as stipulated in the Peirce patent. Most importantly, it offered little to mollify the unruly Strangers who chafed under Pilgrim rule. It seems highly unlikely that a document, even one so revered as the Mayflower Compact, could placate the material aspirations of the “strangers” as easily and as thoroughly as Bradford suggests in \textit{Mourt}. In fact, it did not. Once again, Bradford tells a slightly different story in \textit{OPP}. Near the beginning of Book Two, Bradford alluded to the internal divisions when discussing the confirmation of John Carver as governor, an event that occurred after the colonists signed the Mayflower Compact.

In these hard and difficult beginnings they found some discontents and murmurings arise amongst some, and mutinous speeches and carriages in other; but they were soon quelled and overcome by the wisdom, patience, and just and equal carriage of things, by the Governor [John Carver] and better part, which clave faithfully together in the main.\textsuperscript{271}

A protracted factionalism continued among the colonists for several months until the efforts of John Carver eventually bore fruit. Bradford offers no further details in \textit{OPP} and clearly did not wish to belabor the point. Nevertheless, the entry proves the existence of faction well after

\textsuperscript{270}Two seaman, identified by Bradford in his History as “William Trevor and one Ely” were hired to stay in the country for one year. They were not required to sign the Mayflower Compact and both elected to return to England after their term expired. Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 108n1.

\textsuperscript{271}Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 76-77.
November 1620, a state of affairs withheld from the pages of *Mourt’s Relation*. In *Mourt*, the colonists appear to leave their differences on board the *Mayflower*. As Bradford would have the reader believe, the forty-one signatures on the Mayflower Compact bound every settler to the care and authority of the Pilgrim leaders. Considering the significance Bradford imparts upon this written agreement, it may at first seem odd that he did not provide a list of the signatures adhered to the document. However, Bradford had good reason to exclude the names of those who signed the Mayflower Compact. Several of the Pilgrims from Leyden were religious fugitives, thus Bradford needed to conceal their identities. And while colonial leaders had the power to create and enforce laws, the Pilgrims exceeded their authority in issuing the Mayflower Compact, a document that essentially replaced the Peirce patent. Even if Bradford included the names in the original manuscript for *Mourt*, the publisher in England may have redacted it in order to save print space and increase profits.\(^{272}\)

Regardless of why the names do not appear in *Mourt*, Bradford clearly wished to show his English readers that the colonists were an undivided community. The Pilgrims may not have had the authority to ratify the Mayflower Compact, but Bradford uses the agreement as the locus of unity in Plymouth colony. This conspicuous demonstration of harmony had added meaning in faction-plagued England when compared with the reports of the other English colonies. Once again, John Smith typifies the promotional literature of England. In his *Map of Virginia* (1612), Smith relates how the members of the local council in Virginia fought among themselves for power. Smith himself was detained by his rivals as a prisoner upon suspicion that the captain

\(^{272}\)While Bradford had several reasons for omitting the list of signees in *Mourt’s Relation*, he had little motive for doing so in *Of Plymouth Plantation*. Nonetheless, the list of signees does not appear in his *History*. Additionally, *OPP* was not printed until the nineteenth century, thus the whims of the publisher cannot account for its absence either. The original Mayflower Compact has not survived. The list of names comes from Nathaniel Morton who printed it in *New England’s Memorial* (1669). Some scholars contend that Nathaniel Morton invented the list based upon who he thought likely to have signed it. Morison argues that since he had access to Bradford’s papers, he likely had the original document in his possession. Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 441n2.
“intended to usurpe the government, murder the Councell, and make himself king.”

Smith went on to discuss the difficulties wrought on account of these internal struggles. The Pilgrims were certainly familiar with Smith’s writings and hoped to avoid the mistakes made by the Virginians. And if they could not exactly avoid the reality of factions among them, they could at least hide their existence from interested parties across the Atlantic in England.

If, as most believe, Bradford recorded events in his journal soon after they occurred, the above proves that he anticipated early on the need to provide an account in England favorable to the Pilgrims’ interests. Perhaps his experience as an exile in the Netherlands compelled him to refute the disparaging reports he knew would circulate around London. The Leyden group may have kept in contact with sympathizers in England via clandestine letters, but their adversaries could slight them and their beliefs in public with impunity. Furthermore, the Pilgrims had with them numerous individuals who cared little for their holy errand into the wilderness. As we have seen, Bradford had to guard against the ill will of the Strangers who joined them in England. But he also had to repudiate the defamations circulated by the sailors returning to England. The sailors on board the *Mayflower* had little sympathy for the Pilgrims’ cause. Some of them were downright hostile towards their passengers. In *OPP*, Bradford describes the animosity of a particular sailor.

There was a proud and very profane young man, one of the seamen, of a lusty, able body, which made him the more haughty; he would alway [sic] be contemning the poor people in their sickness and cursing them daily with grievous execrations; and did not let to tell them that he hoped to help to cast half of them overboard before they came to their journey’s end, and to make merry with what they had; and if he were gently reproved, he would curse and swear most bitterly.

The seamen on board the *Mayflower* were hired hands, paid by the investors to transport the colonists to the New World and return. Bradford fully appreciated that Thomas Weston, and probably a few other investors, would interrogate Captain Jones upon his return. And if the investors did not solicit reports from the other sailors, the tales from the *Mayflower*’s deckhands would assuredly circulate throughout the major seaports in England. Bradford and the other Leyden Pilgrims had experience enduring insults from their detractors, but the stakes were much higher now. Their deal with the Adventurers hung by a thread. Since the investors had proven themselves unreliable at best, even the wildest allegation could gain traction back in England and undermine the colony. As to their internal divisions, Bradford would have probably preferred to avoid the topic altogether. Then again, he would have probably preferred to avoid discussing any topic in public. But since he could not conceal the existence of factions from the outside world, Bradford used print to show that the colonists left it behind on the *Mayflower*.

Despite Bradford’s efforts to write away the divisions among the *Mayflower* colonists, there in fact existed several factions that continued well after the English landed at Cape Cod. A close reading of *Mourt* reveals Bradford’s anxiety over the potential usurpation of the Pilgrims’ authority. Having apparently silenced the “mutinous speeches” of the strangers among them, the pilgrims could now get down to the business of building their colony. Yet their immediate circumstances had the potential of undermining the religious imperatives of the settlement which in turn could undermine the authority of the Pilgrim leaders. From the moment they set foot on New England soil, the colonists were a people under siege. Even after they made a pact with Massasoit and constructed their defenses, the colonists never felt completely secure from Indian attack. The threat of hostile Indians was even more acute as the English explored Cape Cod in

---

275 The letter from Thomas Weston sent aboard the *Fortune* proves that Weston received a detailed report of events during the *Mayflower*’s stay in New England.
search of a location for their settlement. The imminent threat of conflict with the Indians elevated
the importance of the military contingent among the colonists. All the piety in Christendom
would not matter a fig if the colonists ended up with their throats cut. Furthermore, the military
organization for the colony was modeled on the English militia system, making every able-
bodied man a potential soldier. In a community consisting of only a few dozen fighting men,
surrounded by what they thought were hostile savages, military expediency had the potential of
undermining the Pilgrims’ authority in Plymouth. The commanding officer, Captain Miles
Standish, therefore became a leading figure in the colony by default.

At this point in the story, it is easy to see why the Pilgrims rejected John Smith’s petition to
accompany them to the New World. As his books about Virginia revealed, Smith was not one to
cede authority during a crisis situation, especially to a group of stodgy puritans. Mercenaries like
John Smith were always spoiling for a fight. The Pilgrims saw conflict with the Indians as likely,
but hoped to avoid it if at all possible. On the other hand, mercenaries looking for glory and
plunder, greatly anticipated conflict with the Indians. If the natives proved insufficiently restless,
then there was always the Dutch, French or Spanish who would likely oblige the mercenaries
martial ambitions. As the capture of the Fortune by the French proves, England and its European
rivals remained in a constant state of conflict even if war had not been officially declared. This
was especially true “beyond the line” in the Americas. In the zero-sum game of European power
struggles, an assault against England’s rivals was an act of loyalty and patriotism. The Pilgrims,
though officially separated from the Church of England, still claimed loyalty to the state, but
they had no interest in establishing a military base of operations. Theirs was a colony founded
upon the Word of God. And while violence might prove necessary to preserve their settlement,

(1951): 343.
they had no intention of yielding authority to a military strongman. John Smith’s publications in England helped make him famous, but the Pilgrims had no desire to become the supporting cast in Smith’s next adventure tale.

We know little about Miles Standish before the Pilgrims chose him as their captain. According to Morison, Standish was chosen either by Thomas Weston or the Carver-Cushman committee. He certainly did not come from the ranks of the Leyden congregation. Though a “stranger,” Standish proved to be among the staunchest supporters of Bradford’s government in Plymouth colony. He must have harbored religious beliefs similar to those of the Pilgrims. No doubt Standish hoped to fare well in New England (and he did), but this milieu offered little in the way of riches and glory. Standish must have desired something else then, something that made him agreeable to the Leyden Pilgrims.277

While en route to the New England, Standish was just another passenger. His duties as captain on board the _Mayflower_ were negligible. All that would change once the colonists set foot upon the shores of the New World. And everybody knew it. Though also a “stranger,” it seems certain that Standish opposed those making “mutinous speeches” on board ship. Nevertheless, the drafting the Mayflower Compact before reaching shore allowed the Pilgrims to establish their authority from a position of strength, before the threat of Indians made Miles Standish a man to be reckoned with. As events would clearly show, Standish had no designs on the civic leadership of the colony. But as the _Mayflower_ approached Cape Cod, Standish was still an unknown commodity. With a faction already threatening to undermine their authority, the Pilgrims drew up the Mayflower Compact to quell this uprising, and perhaps prevent certain

277 Morison, _Of Plymouth Plantation_, 64n2.
malcontents from choosing an alternate governor. In *Mourt’s Relation*, we see a tacit anxiety over the potential usurpation of power by Miles Standish.

After giving up hopes of reaching northern Virginia, Captain Jones sailed back to Cape Cod but could not come any closer than three quarters of a mile to shore. With the small shallop on board having been dissembled to save space below decks, a small party of men trudged through bone-chilling water to reach land and begin their exploration of the immediate area. Finding no inhabitants, the passengers made a makeshift camp along the sandy hills of Cape Cod, its relative bleakness of little concern to those eager to liberate themselves from the stifling conditions aboard ship. The party remained on this “small neck of Land” while the ship’s carpenter slowly reassembled the shallop that would allow them to reconnoiter the region in relative safety. Impatient at the delay – it took over two weeks for the carpenter to complete the task – some of the group desired to explore on foot. This made at least some of the Pilgrim leaders uneasy. A reconnaissance mission was essentially a military operation. Nobody knew what to expect, but they had good reason to expect the worst. Without the shallop, the English would have to carry their provisions, and more importantly would have no means of extricating themselves should they find themselves cut off by hostile Indians. Ultimately, a group of sixteen armed men under the command of Miles Standish set off to explore the region.278

Bradford described this episode in both *Mourt* and *OPP* but with a slight discrepancy. In the latter account, Bradford states that he, along with Stephen Hopkins and Edward Tilley, accompanied the expedition. None of the three Pilgrims could hope to offer much should things turn violent, nevertheless they were “adjoined” to Captain Standish “for counsell and advise.” Here, the Pilgrims appear reluctant to give Captain Standish unsupervised command of the

expedition despite it falling squarely within his area of expertise. Bradford dropped a hint of the Pilgrims’ anxiety over the mission when he describes it as something “rather permitted than approved.”\(^{279}\) Years later, Bradford recorded this same episode in his history.

It was conceived there might be some danger in the attempt, yet seeing them resolute, they were permitted to go, being sixteen of them well armed under the conduct of Captain Standish, having such instructions given them as was thought meet.\(^{280}\)

This time, Bradford neglected to add that he, Hopkins and Tilley joined this group. Instead, the Pilgrims simply gave Standish instructions that the captain dutifully carried out.

When Bradford recorded these events in his journal, the jury was still out on Miles Standish. If Bradford and company joined the expedition as recorded in *Mourt*, it indicates the Pilgrims did not completely trust their military officer. The Pilgrims needed good relations with the Indians. Bradford’s journal suggests that the three of them went with Standish to facilitate this objective.

The fact that Bradford wrote himself and the other two out of this expedition in *OPP* deserves some scrutiny. It seems unlikely that Bradford simply overlooked this detail especially since it involved him personally. He also possessed the original copy of his journal which he certainly consulted when he wrote *OPP*. Bradford may have deliberately omitted his role in this episode out of modesty or perhaps he dismissed it as incidental. In any event, by the time Bradford wrote *OPP*, Miles Standish had proven himself loyal to the Pilgrims and was one of Plymouth’s most esteemed citizens. This development could have certainly prompted Bradford to strike from his history any hint of distrust he recorded years earlier in his journal.

The particulars of this expedition are less important than the manner in which Bradford recorded it. Circumstances in 1620 were clearly different than they were after 1630, when Bradford began writing his History. So while *Mourt* and *OPP* tell the same story, they do so in


\(^{280}\) Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 64.
relation to the circumstances surrounding the production of the text in which that story was told. Further comparisons with OPP help situate Mourt and Good News in their historical context and reveal what the authors hoped to achieve in publishing their work. They also help illuminate what Bradford and Winslow hoped to reveal to their English readers, and what they hoped to conceal. In the case of the Mayflower Compact, we see Bradford’s attempt in Mourt to present the colonists as a unified community which he later contradicted in OPP. We also see in Mourt the Pilgrims jealously guarding their authority against the potential usurpation by their military captain, Miles Standish.

Another interesting clue as to the tension, real and imagined, between civic and military authority in Plymouth stems from the lack of military organization prior to their arrival to the New World. In Mourt, Bradford described the lack of military organization among the colonists during the first few weeks. In several skirmishes with the Indians in and around Cape Cod, Bradford noted that the English made decisions via group consensus. Standish was either unwilling or unable to press his claim to command the expeditionary force. On 28 November, the ship’s carpenter finished putting the shallop together and twenty-four armed men went aboard to make further explorations. Bradford stated that Master Christopher Jones was made the leader of the expedition, the Pilgrims thinking “it best herein to gratifie his kindness and forwardness.” As master of the Mayflower and an expert sailor, it made sense for Jones to assume command of the shallop. However, unlike the previous expedition under Captain Standish, Bradford expressed no worries about serving under Jones’ command, nor did he think it necessary to check his power. The Pilgrims may have yielded to Jones for lack of any

---

282 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 27-28. A ship’s captain was usually referred to as “master” whereas a military commander, like Miles Standish” was called a “captain.”
seamanship among them. But Jones also had no intention of remaining in the colony and thus could not pose a long-term threat to the Pilgrims’ authority.

But tension certainly existed between the Pilgrims and Master Jones, and the sailors in general. It is hard to imagine a greater contrast in terms of personality and temperament than that between a puritan and a sailor. Bradford’s anecdote about the “profane” and “lusty” seaman, quoted earlier in the chapter, demonstrates but one example of this cultural clash on board the Mayflower. Other such incidents undoubtedly occurred with unwelcome regularity. Bradford indicated as such in OPP. “If it be said they had a ship to succor them, it is true; but what had they daily from the master and company?”\footnote{Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 62.} If the Strangers cared little for the spiritual ambitions of the Pilgrims, the sailors had even less interest in their holy mission. They desired only to deliver the colonists to their destination and return as soon as possible to England. Circumstances on board the Mayflower only exacerbated the tensions between passengers and crew. When the Speedwell proved unseaworthy, many of its passengers crammed aboard the Mayflower. Space was tight on board any oceangoing vessel, but the Mayflower was particularly overcrowded. To make room, Master Jones ordered the carpenter to dissemble the shallop, which explains why he had to put it back together again upon reaching Cape Cod. To make matters worse, the voyage lasted six weeks due to the storms encountered along the way, about two weeks longer than the expected transit time. These same storms apparently blew the Mayflower off course from the original destination of Virginia. These series of delays – in departing from England, in crossing the Atlantic, and in failing to reach Virginia – resulted in the colonists having to begin construction of their colony during the harsh New England winter. They also raised tensions between the colonists and the sailors eager to return to England.
About a month after first arriving at Cape Cod, the Pilgrims chose to build their permanent settlement at the location of an abandoned Wampanoag village called Patuxet. Over the next few months, the colonists constructed houses and defensive walls without impediment from the Indians. Yet until the Mayflower returned for England the following April, many of the colonists spent their nights on board ship. Some remained on the vessel during the day as well. As master of the ship, Jones then was for all intents and purposes the preeminent authority among the English.

Despite the tension on board ship, Bradford did not directly excoriate the sailors in his journal. Instead, he simply drew upon his experience as a separatist to differentiate between the Pilgrims and the Mayflower’s crew. His journal entry for Christmas Day illustrates this point.

Monday the 25th day, being Christmas day, we began to drink water aboard, but at night the Master caused us to have some Beer, and so on board we had divers times now and then some Beer, but on shore none at all.

Puritans loathed Christmas. The bible makes no mention of Christmas Day as a cause for celebration, thus they dismissed it as heretical, a residual corruption from England’s days under Catholicism. Puritans made it a point to treat Christmas like any other day. In an entry immediately preceding the one above, Bradford described how the colonists worked all day felling timber for building material “so no man rested all that day.” Towards evening, the Indians made some noise which prompted everyone to race for their muskets. Nothing happened, but many returned to the safety of the Mayflower that night. Twenty remained on shore.

Bradford’s dual entries for December 25 in effect describe two English communities separated physically and metaphorically by where they spent Christmas night. On board the

---

284 On several occasions, the colonists heard the Indians in the distance which prompted the English to raise the alarm. They generally kept an armed guard on shore to protect their day’s work from damage.
285 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 67.
286 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 66-67.
Mayflower, Master Jones ruled as did the traditions of what Bradford deemed a corrupted England. There, the Strangers made merry with drink in celebration of the holiday. In Plymouth colony, such as it was, Governor Carver ruled according to the principles of a strict interpretation of Calvinism. There, the Pilgrims celebrated their godliness by suffering through “a sore storm of wind and rain.” Bradford omitted any description of the lodgings available on land, but since they had arrived at Plymouth just days earlier, they undoubtedly afforded little protection from the elements. Bradford’s pithy remarks about how the Strangers celebrated that first Christmas in New England lacks the typical vitriol puritan writers normally reserved for describing the holiday.287

Undoubtedly, the tempered reflections Bradford recorded in print belied his private thoughts on the matter. Yet the Pilgrims needed the ship and its crew, just as they needed the good graces of those back in England. Bradford’s diplomatic language in Mourt reveals an appreciation of his intended audience – persons likely concerned with the economic viability of the colony and/or those who might question its legitimacy. In those early years, the Pilgrims needed allies in England just as they needed the support of Master Jones, his crew, and even the Strangers forced upon them by Thomas Weston in England. A jeremiad against the evils of drink and Christmas, Bradford well knew, would cast their endeavor in an unfavorable light in England. It would also reveal a divided community which no self-respecting orthodox puritan would ever care to advertise. In a revealing use of language, Bradford used the inclusive pronoun “we” – as opposed to “they” – in describing those drinking beer on board ship. As a devout puritan, he would have been scandalized to be associated with such a celebration. But instead of excoriating the

287 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 66-67.
offending members of the crew and colonists, he casually notes the absence of such revelry on shore as the only means to differentiate between the godly Puritans and their sinful compatriots.

Bradford’s rather tepid account of the sailors in *Mourt* borders upon tolerance, but when we consider how he describes these sailors in *OPP*, we get another version altogether. We have already seen Bradford’s relation of the “profane” sailor who tormented the colonists while en route, an anecdote omitted in *Mourt’s Relation*. He also remarked upon in his history the pressure Master Jones put upon the Pilgrims to find a location for their settlement. Throughout the winter, Jones refused to use the *Mayflower* on any reconnoitering mission, forcing the colonists to rely upon the shallop on their exploration of Massachusetts Bay. Jones may have taken command of the shallop in order to expedite the selection process. Before long, the Pilgrims chose their location. The site was certainly preferable to anything they had seen on Cape Cod, but it was far from the best location in the region. Given a little more time, the Pilgrims would have undoubtedly discovered an ideal location just a few miles to the north, the future site of Boston. Time, however, was not on the Pilgrims’ side, thus they opted for the first best location that suited their needs.

In addition to pressuring the Pilgrims to commence building their colony, Jones also pledged to safeguard food “sufficient for themselves and their return” to England. Forced to sell some of their provisions before departing England, the Pilgrims faced an alarming shortage of food.288 As Bradford related:

> Let it also be considered what weak hopes of supply and succor they left behind them, that might beat up their minds in this sad condition and trials they were under; and they could not but be very small.289

---

In reaching New England at the onset of winter and with resupply from England months away, Jones’ pledge essentially left the colonists at the mercy of the Indians. Bradford even suggested that Jones intended to leave the colonists before an appropriate place could be found. “Yea, it was muttered by some that if they got not a place in time, they would turn them and their goods ashore and leave them.”

Clearly then, a considerable amount of animosity existed between the Pilgrims and the crew of the Mayflower. Yet Bradford declined to mention any of this in Mourt’s Relation. Readers of that tract also learned nothing as to why Master Jones failed to make good on any of his threats. While the colonists desperately tried to build houses and defensive fortifications, Master Jones eagerly awaited these projects to advance far enough to allow him to leave. The greatest obstacle was the weather. In OPP, Bradford described the conditions the colonists encountered while exploring the New England coast.

And for the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast.

The harsh New England winter combined with the meager supply of victuals left everyone on board the Mayflower vulnerable to disease. Because the story historians tell focuses upon the Pilgrims, the plight of the sailors receives scant attention. Nevertheless, they suffered as much as the colonists, and since Master Jones proved unwilling to attempt the voyage back to England

---

290 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 62.

291 At what point this would occur is something of a mystery. We know that Thomas Weston commissioned Jones to take the colonists to the New World. Certainly he had additional instructions that necessitated Jones to remain until the colonists were adequately settled, but the criteria for this is unknown. In OPP, Bradford hints that the sickness among the sailors further delayed the Mayflower’s departure from the colony.

292 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 62.
while the crew remained incapacitated, the *Mayflower* stayed at Plymouth until the following April.\(^{293}\)

Disease ravaged the English without discriminating between Saint and Stranger. Roughly half of the colonists perished that first winter, and virtually everyone became ill at some point. Bradford wrote *OPP* in part to remind successive generations of puritan New Englanders of the suffering and sacrifice of those who came before them. Not surprisingly then, Bradford did not mince words when he described their ordeal.

But that which was most sad and lamentable was, that in two or three months’ time half of their company died, especially in January and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting houses and other comforts: being infected with the scurvy and other diseases which this long voyage and their inaccommodate condition had brought upon them.\(^{294}\)

For several months, the English languished under the incessant ravages of disease and the future of the colony itself teetered on the brink of destruction. Yet Bradford made no reference to any of this in *Mourt*, and thus failed to describe the heroism of the Pilgrims in overcoming the nearly insurmountable odds against their survival. He also excluded the stark differences in how the Pilgrims and sailors reacted to seeing their comrades fall ill.

When the great pestilence struck, Bradford related in *OPP* how “six or seven sound persons… spared no pains night nor day, but with abundance of toil and hazard of their own health… did all the homely and necessary offices for them which dainty and queasy stomachs cannot endure to hear name.” The colonists had yet to construct accommodations sufficient to house the sick and dying, thus this agonizing event played out almost exclusively on board the *Mayflower*. With so many forced to languish in the cramped quarters below deck, the sights, sounds and smells must have been overwhelming. Two of the persons who labored unceasingly to help the sick

---


Bradford identified by name: William Brewster, “their reverend Elder,” and Miles Standish. Despite the risk to themselves in tending to their stricken comrades, both continued in good health. Bradford adds that many others performed similar acts of selflessness but became ill in the process. In short, the spirit of Christian charity was such that “they were not wanting to any that had need of them.”

Bradford then contrasted the exemplary deeds of the Pilgrims with those of the sailors. At the first sign of illness among the colonists, the sailors immediately carried them to shore “and made to drink water that the seamen might have the more beer.” Europeans of this time period believed beer to be essential to good health. They distrusted water and with good reason. Many of the sources of water in Europe, particularly in large cities, contained numerous pathogens which made people sick. The process of making beer killed infectious microbes, though nobody knew this at the time. Bradford himself requested “but a small can of beer” while he lay sick, but the sailors replied “that if he were their own father he should have none.” Only when disease decimated the crew, eventually taking half their number, did Master Jones have a change of heart and gave beer to any who had need of it.

Whereas the Pilgrims tended to the sick with little regard to their own safety, the sailors abandoned their ill comrades.

For they that before had been boon companions in drinking and jollity in the time of their health and welfare, began now to desert one another in this calamity, saying they would not hazard their lives for them, they should be infected by coming to help them in their cabins; and so, after they came to lie by it, would do little or nothing for them but, “if they died, let them die.”

During the first few months, the English busied themselves with exploring the region, building a settlement at Plymouth, and languishing from the ravages of disease. All this while, the Indians lurk in the distance, seemingly testing the English but never making direct contact with the colonists. Now and then, the Indians made a noise within earshot of the colonists or appeared before them briefly before disappearing into the woods. Each time, the English raised the alarm and scrambled for their weapons or for shelter. But other than a brief skirmish in early December, while the colonists explored the coast of Cape Cod, the Indians generally stayed out of sight. The English settled at Plymouth and over the next several months contact with the native inhabitants remained limited. The English, of course, failed to differentiate between the Indians on Cape Cod (Nauset) and those around Plymouth (Wampanoag), until much later. Like the Nauset, the Wampanoag periodically made their presence known to the English by making noises and showing themselves briefly before disappearing into the woods.

In Mourt, Bradford marked each of these appearances by the Wampanoag as coinciding with the Pilgrims’ attempt to establish military and civil orders for the colony. The first time occurred on February 17.

…in the morning we called a meeting for the establishing of military Orders amongst ourselves, and we chose Miles Standish our Captiane, and gave him authoritie of command in affayres: and as were in consultation here abouts, two Savages presented themselves upon the top of an hill... and made signs unto us to come unto them.  

298 Captain Standish and Stephen Hopkins approached the Indians. Standish laid down his musket in plain sight as a sign of peace. As they approached, the Indians darted back into the woods. The English heard a great many more of the Indians in the distance which prompted the colonists to set their cannons “in places most convenient.”

298 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 80-81.
The second such encounter occurred on March 16. The Pilgrims again set about to conclude their military orders begun a month earlier, before the appearance of the two Indians interrupted them. Suddenly, a single Indian boldly walked towards their settlement when the colonists bade him to halt. To their amazement, the Indian saluted them in English and bade them welcome. The Indian, of course, was the famous Samoset. He would soon broker the peace agreement between the English and Wampanoag, but for now he simply interrupted another attempt to establish the military orders for the colony.

A week later, after the English sent Samoset away from Plymouth, the Pilgrims again gathered together to establish military orders only to be interrupted a third time by the appearance of the Indians.

That day we had againe a meeting, to conclude of laws and orders for ours selves, and to confirme those Military Orders that were formerly propounded, and twice broken off by the Savages coming, but so we were againe the third time, for after we had beene an houre together… two or three Savages presented themselves [and] made semblance of daring us…

As Captain Standish and three others approached the Indians, they “whetted and rubbed their Arrowes and Strings, and made shew of defiance,” but ran away as the English drew near. The next day, the Pilgrims made yet another attempt to conduct their “publique businesse” as before. But for the fourth time in as many attempts, the Pilgrims were interrupted by the approach of Indians. This time, Samoset brought with him Squanto, a member if the Patuxet tribe who just a few years earlier claimed their land around Plymouth colony as their own.

As Bradford would have it, the Pilgrims attempted to establish military and civil orders on four separate occasions between February 17 and March 22. Parlay with the Indians understandably took precedence over other business; however, Bradford recorded the colonists

299 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 89-90.
spending days in various pursuits (e.g. building houses, planting seeds, establishing a defensive bulwark) between each of these encounters. Yet when – and only when – the Pilgrims attempted to establish civil and military authority, the Indians suddenly appear. This is a remarkable coincidence. Only slightly less remarkable is that Bradford failed to mention any of it in OPP. As for Mourt’s Relation, it seems reasonable to assume that Bradford stretched the truth – perhaps extrapolating from a single occurrence - in order to explain why after four months they had not yet established a military organization. The Pilgrims certainly did not see themselves engaged in conquest; nevertheless, Bradford and Winslow repeatedly described the Pilgrims making a show of strength in order to avoid hostilities with the Indians. Bradford, in blaming their lack of military order on the Indians, may be giving his English readers a show of his own.

Next to finding provisions, the most pressing concern for the colonists when they settled at Plymouth was to defend themselves against Indian attack. As mentioned earlier, many colonists preferred the safety of the Mayflower over the unfinished fortifications then under construction. Throughout Mourt’s Relation, Bradford and Winslow portrayed the colonists digging in, feverishly attempting to finish their defenses at the expense of other objectives, most notably obtaining food. In directing the colonists’ efforts towards constructing defensive bulwarks, Governor Bradford knowingly sacrificed labors that could have otherwise been directed toward agriculture. Although his decision left the English in want of food, the colonists had constructed an impressive fortification that afforded them a great measure of security. In 1623, John Pory, secretary to the governor of Virginia, visited Plymouth on his return voyage to England. Pory marveled at the achievement of the Plymouth colonists and recorded his impressions in writing.

And their industrie as well appeareth by their building, as by a substantiall pallisado about their [settlement?] of 2700 foote in compasse, stronger then I have seene anie in Virginia, and lastlie by a blockhouse which they have erected in the highest place of the
towne to mount their ordinance upon, from whence they may command all the harbour. 300

As this passages indicates, the English attached great importance to their security. This makes it somewhat difficult to understand why the Pilgrims waited months to establish military orders for the colony. Whatever doubts the Pilgrims had about Captain Standish were satisfied soon after they arrived at New England. Standish proved himself a capable leader of men and his labors tending to the sick demonstrated his Christian charity. The Pilgrims may have jealously guarded their authority at first, but the pressing need to safeguard their lives should have obliged them to establish military orders as soon as possible. Why they neglected to do so remains a mystery. Perhaps the devastation wrought by disease interfered. Regardless, the delay would certainly not sit well with interested parties back in England. A colony beset by Indians offered little in the way of profits for investors and even less for prospective colonists. The Pilgrims may have anticipated charges of negligence in response to reports that were certain to be circulated by the crew of the Mayflower. Mourt’s Relation in general served to refute any misrepresentations about the colony, but that does not mean it could not refute accurate ones as well. With this in mind, it is conceivable that Bradford used the Indians as a scapegoat, claiming they interrupted the Pilgrims each time they met to establish military orders.

**English/Indian Relations**

For much of Bradford’s journal, the Indians lurk in the distance, occasionally frightening the English but not engaging them in any significant way. That all changed on 16 March 1621 when

---

Samoset strode purposefully up to the colonists and greeted them in English. Contact between the native peoples in New England and Europeans had been made years earlier, but William Bradford and Edward Winslow provide the most detailed early description of this encounter. Bradford’s journal ends a week after Samoset’s introduction. Winslow continued the Pilgrims’ tale from June 10—about three months from where Bradford leaves off—to September 22, though a letter he writes to George Morton dated 11 December 1621 is included as an addendum. Whereas the Indians appear on the periphery of Bradford’s Pilgrim story, they take center stage in Winslow’s, both in Mourt and its sequel Good News from New England. Each author wrote for an English audience and therefore tailored their descriptions of the Indians and the relationship between them and the colonists with this in mind.

From Bradford’s account, it appears the colonists’ jaws dropped but little when Samoset addressed them in English. Bradford matter-of-factly described the circumstances of what must have appeared at first blush to be a miracle. The greatest impediment to peaceable relations with the Indians—a necessity to those English looking to trade with them—was the language barrier. Samoset told the English he “was not of these parts, but of Morattiggon, off the coast of present day Maine, ‘and one of the Sagamores or Lords thereof.’” Europeans had fished and traded off the coast of his homeland for many years. Samoset learned basic English from them and knew the names of many of the English captains who frequented Monhegan Island.

If the Pilgrims saw the work of providence in an English-speaking Indian from far away suddenly appearing before them, it goes unreported in Mourt’s Relation. Bradford’s banal

---

301 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 83-84. Samoset learned the importance of social rank of the English in addition to their language.

302 Samoset came from Pemaquid (present day Bristol, Maine) and had extensive dealings with European traders who visited the area during the early seventeenth century. A few months before the Mayflower arrived at Cape Cod, Samoset sailed aboard Captain Dermer’s vessel en route to the cape. Squanto, who had spent the last few years in Europe was also on board and returning to his homeland. Both Samoset and Squanto were in the company of Massasoit when the Pilgrims reached the shores of New England. Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 83n295.
description of this minor miracle greatly belied the value of having a translator at their service. Bradford obviously appreciated the utility of communication with the native inhabitants, a fact that becomes quite obvious in his later association with Tisquantum, or Squanto.\textsuperscript{303} He later recorded in OPP that the colonists “marveled” at hearing Samoset first speak the King’s English, but in Mourt he deliberately understated their good fortune.\textsuperscript{304} Instead, he seems more intent on conveying the advantages gained by the English from this meeting with Samoset. After exchanging brief pleasantries with the English, Samoset proceeded to spill his guts. Bradford described him as “a man free in speech,” and one gets the hint that that the dour Puritans thought their guest exceedingly verbose.\textsuperscript{305} Samoset eagerly provided the English with information about their new environment. In particular, he described the country and reports on the size and strength of the local inhabitants. Samoset also told the English how a great plague had recently decimated the Indians in and around Plymouth.\textsuperscript{306}

Given his knowledge of the region and his willingness to share it, Samoset would seem to have been a godsend to the Plymouth colonists. Yet Bradford described the English as extremely uncomfortable with his presence. “All the after-noone we spent in communication with him, we would gladly have beene rid of him at night, but he was not willing to goe this night.”\textsuperscript{307} Despite his obvious value to them, the colonists regard Samoset like a visiting in-law who refused to go home. When the English realized Samoset had no intention of leaving, they struck upon the idea of taking him aboard the Mayflower, essentially as a prisoner. Bradford described Samoset as “well content” with this plan, despite its grave resemblance to a page in Thomas Hunt’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{303} Bradford uses the name “Squant” whereas Winslow, in both Mourt’s Relation and Good News refers to him as “Tisquantum.”
\textsuperscript{304} Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 79.
\textsuperscript{305} Apparently, Samoset had grown accustomed to the loquacious sailors and merchants who visited the coast of Maine.
\textsuperscript{306} Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 84-85.
\textsuperscript{307} Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 85.
\end{footnotesize}
playbook (which Samoset undoubtedly learned from Squanto). A high wind and low tide kept this plan from being executed, however, so the colonists “lodged him that night at Steven Hopkins house, and watched him.”

Bradford’s version of this first encounter with Samoset seems deliberately contrived to understate the colonists’ reliance on the Indians for assistance. Alone in the New England wilderness, the English were quite vulnerable and the unusual circumstances surrounding Samoset’s introduction quite understandably put the colonists on their guard. Yet in this and later dealings with the Indians, Bradford and Winslow time and again depict the English in a position of strength even in the face of continual threats from the Indians. This dynamic, first introduced during the Pilgrims’ attempt to establish civil and military orders, reappears in later encounters with the Indians in New England.

A few days later, Samoset, at the request of the colonists, led several Wampanoag laden with trade goods to the English encampment. That day being Sunday, the Pilgrims refused to conduct business and wished them gone as soon as possible. Samoset, however, became sick and had to remain. Bradford was skeptical of Samoset’s condition, thinking it but a ruse to remain and gather intelligence about the English. The imposition clearly irked the Pilgrims, and they were pleased when Samoset left them the following Wednesday. The next day, Samoset returned and brought with him Squanto, an Indian who had an even greater command of the English language. Squanto of course would soon play a major role in brokering relations between the English and the Wampanoag. Samoset informed the Pilgrims that Massasoit, sachem of the Wampanoag, waited nearby and wished to speak with the governor. Later that day, Massasoit met with

\[308\] Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, 85. Bradford fails to mention if Steven Hopkins and his family stayed that night with their guest.
Governor Carver and, with Samoset and Squanto interpreting, the two leaders hashed out a treaty between their peoples.  

The terms of the treaty, as detailed by Bradford, consisted of six points, all of them quite favorable to the English. Items one and two stated that the Indians would not harm the colonists, and if certain individuals did, the Wampanoag would hand over the guilty person to the English for punishment. Curiously, the treaty failed to address English violence against the Indians. Considering the fact that Thomas Hunt and other Europeans visiting the region had committed hostile acts against the Indians, it seems odd that Massasoit would not demand provisions similar to those granted to the English. The third provision committed both sides to refrain from stealing from each other, an issue prompted by an earlier incident in which Standish and Francis Cook had their tools stolen from them. The remainder of the treaty consisted of a military alliance. Both sides promised to aid the other in the event of war. Massasoit pledged to send word of this treaty with his neighboring allies to avoid any misunderstandings. The treaty made sense for both sides. The English, surrounded by potentially hostile Indians received a measure of security in aligning themselves with the Wampanoag. Massasoit, threatened by several nearby enemies, particularly the Narragansett to the south, saw in this alliance a means to strengthen his position. Yet the actual terms of the pact, if reported accurately, greatly favor the English. Indeed, Bradford reinforces this assessment when he juxtaposed Massasoit and Governor Carver during the negotiations. Despite being “a very lustie man, in his best yeares,” Massasoit nevertheless “trembled for feare” while in the company of the governor.

---

309 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 87-94.
310 The military alliance was limited to warfare involving Indian tribes.
311 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 94.
Bradford would have his English readers believe that Governor Carver intimidated Massasoit and played upon the sachem’s fears to strike a bargain advantageous to the colonists. This of course was merely fodder for English consumption. Throughout the narrative, Bradford describes a colony on edge; everyone scrambling for safety or for his firearm at the slightest provocation by the Indians. Yet once the colonists find themselves face to face with Massasoit and his entourage, they suddenly negotiate a treaty from a position of strength. Though Bradford undoubtedly contrived the image of Massasoit trembling with fear before the governor, the English routinely made a show of strength whenever they encountered Indians, friendly or otherwise. The surest way to invite an Indian attack, they believed, was to exhibit signs of weakness. Therefore, the colonists attempted to disguise their vulnerability by acting otherwise. This first meeting with Massasoit was but the first of many instances in which the English executed this plan. In reality, the colonists were never more vulnerable than at this point. Spring loomed on the horizon, but winter had taken a deadly toll. Those who survived suffered from malnourishment and the governor, who would die weeks later, was unlikely to have physically intimidated anyone, let alone the “lustie” sachem.

The colonists had good reason to make a show of strength in front of the Indians. But Bradford’s characterization of the negotiations and the treaty itself suggests that he felt a need to make a show of strength to his English readers as well. The colonists desperately needed the alliance, or at least friendly relations with the Indians, but Bradford (and Winslow) never depict the colonists as desperate. In general, Bradford more readily exposes in his history the dire straits of the colonists during those early days. But in Mourt, the colonists display an inspiring confidence amid the most trying of circumstances. In describing the treaty with Massasoit as a pact driven by English interests, Bradford gives the Pilgrims’ enemies in England one less reason
to disparage them. Outright opposition from England had yet to manifest itself by the summer of 1621, but the Pilgrims knew that it could do so at any time. Indeed, the writings of Bradford and Winslow were designed to prevent this from happening, or to at least blunt its impact. In repeatedly depicting the Plymouth colonists as a substantial power in the region, the authors hoped to undercut attempts to undermine them from across the Atlantic. The treaty with Massasoit, based upon the terms recorded by Bradford, was an important step towards the long-term survival of the colony. As such, Bradford hoped to demonstrate to potential supporters back in England that Plymouth had a future, especially under Pilgrim leadership. Questions about its legality and religious orientation would become insignificant so long as the prospects of financial gain remained.

The alliance with Massasoit afforded the colonists at Plymouth a sense of security that Bradford and Winslow eagerly shared with their English readers. Armed with this treaty, the authors could tout Plymouth as a power broker in the region. During his initial visit, Samoset had informed the English about the Wampanoag’s conflict with the Narragansett. The colonists saw clearly that Massasoit needed the alliance as much as they did.

We cannot yet conceive, but that [Massasoit] is willing to have peace with us, for they have seen our people sometimes alone two or three in the woods at work and fowling, when as they offered them no harme as they might easily have done, and especially because he hath a potent Adversary the [Narragansett], that are at war with him, against whom he thinks we may be some strength to him, for our peeces are terrible unto them…

The alliance with the Wampanoag was critical for Plymouth colony. The local Indians may have feared the colonists’ “peeces,” but they could have also made life impossible for the English had they chosen to do so. Considering the lack of support from the Adventurers in England, it is

---

312 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 96. Edward Winslow’s account provides several other examples of the animosity between the Wampanoag and Narragansett.
unlikely that the colonists would have survived if not for the treaty with the Wampanoag. Both sides, therefore, recognized the advantages of the alliance.  

Up until that first conference with Massasoit, the Plymouth colonists regarded the Indians as adversaries, a mysterious and hostile “other” who would surely attack them if given the opportunity. The peace made with the Wampanoag lessened their fears of bloodshed, but presented them with a new problem. As friends, the Indians proved nearly as burdensome to the English. The Wampanoag brought to their alliance with the English expectations based upon their relations with other Indian groups. Whereas the English thought peace meant having contact sufficient enough to trade and nothing more, the Indians had other ideas. As allies, Massasoit considered the Plymouth colonists as kin. For the Wampanoag, trade was not an end to itself – as it was for the English – but rather a means to reinforce the bond between them. But for the colonists, trade was the only reason to have contact with the Indians at all.

After concluding the treaty with the Wampanoag, the English simply desired them to leave. They escorted Massasoit and his party to a brook where the king embraced Governor Carver and moved off to join his people who had remained a short distance away. Bradford states that two of Massasoit’s people desired to stay with the English, but the colonists did not allow it. Samoset and Squanto, however, spent the night at Plymouth while the Wampanoag slept in the woods.

313 Of course, when the Pilgrims made the treaty with Massasoit, they had no idea the Adventurers would withhold the supplies they had originally promised. The Pilgrims thought the alliance would encourage investors to support them. When such promises proved hollow, the alliance became even more important as the colonists struggled to survive.

314 Several historians have described how Europeans and Indians brought their own cultural expectations regarding trade. It must be stressed, however, that such expectations differed between Indian peoples just as they did between European powers. We cannot simply extrapolate the experiences that occurred in what place and time to another. However, these encounters make clear that each participant brought particular culture expectations to each of these exchanges and interactions. See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Neal Salisbury, *Maintou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians & English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).
about a half a mile away. Upon leaving Plymouth, the Wampanoag informed the English that they would return “within 8 or 9 dayes” and “would come and set corne on the other side of the Brooke, and dwell there all Summer.” The Wampanoag made good on their promise and brought with them many women and children. As hosts, the English were required to feed and entertain their guests according to Indian custom. The colonists had barely survived the winter of 1620/21 and they could ill afford to share their meager supply of food with their Indian allies. In several places, Bradford and Winslow related how burdensome their Indian allies had become.315

Bradford’s journal ends a day after the English make their deal with the Wampanoag. Edward Winslow picks up the story a few months later. His account begins on 2 July 1621, as he and Stephen Hopkins set out for Pokanoket on a visit to Massasoit.316 The goal of this diplomatic mission was to keep the Indians from burdening the English with their company. When Winslow and Hopkins reached their destination, the emissaries naturally greeted Massasoit in friendship and peace, but they quickly got to the main point.

But whereas his people come very often, and very many together unto us, bringing for the most part their wives and children with them, they were welcome; yet we being but strangers as yet at Patuxet, alias New Plimmoth, and not knowing how our Corne might prosper, we could no longer give them such entertainment as we had done, and as we desired still to doe.317

Winslow added that if Massasoit himself or “any special friend” of his (i.e. a messenger or envoy) wished to visit Plymouth, the English would gladly entertain them as before. But what the English really wanted was trade. Winslow advised “… that such as have skins, should bring

315 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 95-97.
316 The text in Mourt’s Relation puts this date as June 10, a date rejected by most scholars. That date fell on the Sabbath and no devout puritan would ever begin such a journey on a Sunday. Bradford sets the date for July 2 in Of Plymouth Plantation and scholars have since accepted this as fact. See Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 100-102 n; Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 87.
317 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 99.
them to us,” but requested that the king “hinder the multitude from oppressing us with them.”

This must have struck Massasoit as most strange since friends and allies, according to Wampanoag custom, typically shared what they had with one another. But then again, the English were unusual allies.

Despite Winslow’s odd behavior, Massasoit agreed to Winslow’s demands but made a request of his own: “Also he talked of the Frenchmen, bidding us not to suffer them to come to [Narragansett], for it was King James his Country, and he also was King James his man.”

This was a cunning move by Massasoit. The king obviously knew from Samoset and Squanto that the French were England’s mortal enemy. He may also have had a sense of the great animosity between Protestants and Catholics. By reconfiguring his alliance with the English as part of the crusade against the French, Massasoit hoped to further solidify the bond between his people and the newcomers at Plymouth. The plan worked. Promoters of colonization in England had repeatedly cast the enterprise as a contest against the Catholic powers France and Spain. The Pilgrims, of course, were in no position to stop anyone from contacting the Narragansett; however, Winslow took the opportunity to describe their friendship with the Wampanoag as a check to France’s ambitions in North America.

Though the alliance with the Wampanoag proved useful in terms of the message the Pilgrims wished to convey in England, Bradford and Winslow walked a fine line. The overwhelming sentiment among virtually everyone from England was that exposure to Indian culture – and even the Indians themselves – had a corrupting influence. Like all English colonists, the settlers

---

320 Squanto spent time in both Spain and England prior to his return to his homeland. He certainly knew of the religious conflict in Europe, even if his understanding was limited. It is also likely he passed on his information to Massasoit prior to his rendezvous with the English.
at Plymouth wanted as little to do with the Indians as possible. They desired peace and trade with the Indians, but rarely their company. Whereas the Wampanoag looked upon the treaty as a first step towards establishing a relationship with the English, the English looked upon the treaty as a cultural prophylactic, a mechanism designed to limit the deleterious effect of living among “savages.” Though the Pilgrims were ostensibly charged with converting the Indians to Christianity, the orthodox ideal embraced by nearly everyone in (and from) England demanded the colonists keep the Indians and their culture at arm’s length. Winslow used the colonists’ meager supply of food as the reason for asking Massasoit to keep his people away from Plymouth. Though certainly valid, this amounted to a convenient excuse to justify the colonists’ unwillingness to coexist in any meaningful way with their Indian neighbors. Long after English settlers in the region put the threat of starvation behind them, they still looked upon living among the Indians with abhorrence. Throughout the seventeenth century, English critics consistently railed against the colonists’ conspicuous neglect at proselytizing the native inhabitants. In short, the English desired to live next to the Indians, not with them.

Bradford and Winslow brought with them this attitude from Europe, and the dynamic of a small English settlement surrounded by Indians allowed both authors to typecast the conflict in monolithic terms. They liberally used the common appellation “savage” to describe the Indians while referring to themselves as “English.” The language of colonization employs such terms to differentiate between what Europeans considered distinct examples of humanity. While this language reveals their racist attitudes and anxieties, it also reflects European ignorance about or indifference to the cultural diversity among native peoples. It justified Europeans treating the Indians differently from fellow Europeans/Christians (e.g. enslaving them). Writers used the term “English” as an attempt to combat the assumption that the colonists’ Englishness was
somehow corrupted, generally due to striking differences in climate and social milieu. In each case, we allege that these authors manipulated the account – deliberately and/or subconsciously – in order to render a different colonial reality to their metropolitan reader.

Writers frequently used terms such as “savage” and “English” because they had prescribed meanings for readers in England, but also because they were subject to interpretation and thus applicable to a variety of circumstances. The use of such generic language often stemmed from the pervasive ignorance of the writer, many of whom, to quote William Wood, “travailed no further than the smoke of their owne native chimnies.”322 Those who lived in close proximity to the Indians generally appreciated the differences between the various tribes. Relatively few of these colonists wrote back to England by the 1620s and of those who did, fewer still were interested in expatiating upon these distinctions. Even from their limited experience in New England, Bradford and Winslow realized substantial differences existed between the Wampanoag and other nearby tribes such as the Nauset, Massachusetts, and Narragansett. Winslow, who picked up the Pilgrim story after the treaty with Massasoit, regularly makes distinctions among the various tribes and even features several Indians as individuals. Yet at times, Winslow eschewed these distinctions in favor of the term “savage.” Winslow, like all Europeans, harbored racist attitudes about the Indians and he certainly used the term “savage” to differentiate between the Indians and the “civilized” English.

Winslow, however, did not restrict the use of generalizations to the Indians. For a writer looking to obscure the internal divisions among the colonists as well as the profound distinctions between the Pilgrims’ religious orientation and the Anglican establishment, the ability to align their endeavor within a preexisting framework which pitted “English” versus “savage,” proved

322 Vaughan, New England’s Prospect, 19.
especially useful. Throughout both *Mourt* and *Good News*, Winslow described a generic English community heroically building a colony in a New England wilderness teeming with “savages.” This juxtaposition allowed him to deny the Indians their humanity, but it also enabled him to present the English as a single, undivided community. Until the thirty-five colonists sent by Thomas Weston arrive aboard the *Fortune* in November 1621, Winslow referred to the English using plural pronouns “we” or “us.” Bradford did this as well. Europeans used crude generalizations to describe the people they encountered in the Americas, but they could be equally crude when characterizing their own. As Bradford and Winslow demonstrated, a little ambiguity allowed the authors to hide the divisions within their own community.

Bradford and Winslow were equally vague when discussing the leadership of the colony. In addition to the haziness surrounding the establishment of military orders, the authors also danced around the identity of the governor. Neither Bradford nor Winslow ever mention the former as having succeeded John Carver as governor. Throughout *Mourt* and *Good News*, Winslow frequently referred to “the governor” but never identified him by name. Some of this can be attributed to puritan humility. Yet they also had a motive for obscuring the governor’s identity. Like many of the Leyden Pilgrims, William Bradford was suspected of Brownism back in England. During the summer of 1621, nobody outside of Plymouth knew he had become governor and Winslow clearly saw little value in advertising the fact.

---

323 See the discussion of Bradford’s dual entries in his journal for Christmas Day cited earlier in this chapter.
324 The “savage”/English binary became more difficult to maintain after Weston’s group arrives at Plymouth. Edward Winslow adjusts for this development in *Good News*, discussed in the next chapter.
325 The *Mayflower* left just before John Carver died. Weston’s letters sent on board the *Fortune* were addressed to Governor John Carver who had been dead for six months when that vessel arrived at Plymouth.
the *Fortune* returned to England and informed the Adventurers of Carver’s death and Bradford’s election, Winslow still refrained from publicizing the state of affairs to a general audience.\(^{326}\)

Thus far, I have discussed Bradford and Winslow as promotional writers heavily influenced by concepts of unity and homogeneity. We have seen how the authors minimized the factions emerging within their own colony. We have also seen how they used the Indian “other” to divert attention away from the differences between the Pilgrims and the “strangers” among them at Plymouth. Again, the problems England faced at home were frequently attributed to internal conflict between rival factions, thus it comes as no surprise that Bradford and Winslow utilized these themes to their advantage. In *Mourt’s Relation*, Winslow chronicled events from July 2 – beginning with his and Stephen Hopkins’ journey to Pokanoket – until September 22, when a separate delegation of colonists returned from a visit to the Massachusett. Winslow was Plymouth colony’s chief ambassador to the Indians. He made numerous visits to various Indian territories under the governor’s orders and as a representative of the colony. Much of what he wrote in *Mourt* and *Good News* are essentially firsthand accounts of these experiences.

In *Mourt*, Winslow provided a detailed glimpse into the immediate aftermath of Plymouth’s alliance with the Wampanoag. The English had well understood the hostility between the Narragansett and Wampanoag, using it to their advantage during negotiations with Massasoit. Near the end of July, a search party of ten men left Plymouth looking for a boy named John Billington who had become lost in the woods.\(^{327}\) Billington had stumbled about twenty miles southward until he reached the Indian village of Manomet. From there, he was taken further south

\(^{326}\) In *Good News from New England*, published two years later in 1624.

\(^{327}\) This is another example of the inaccuracies in dating, possibly the result of mistakes made while transcribing from the original manuscript. In *Mourt’s Relation*, the expedition leaves Plymouth on June 11. Prince believes this is in error based upon “several hints in the foregoing and following stories.” See Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, 112n365. Bradford, in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, places this event at the end of July. Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 87-88.
to the Nauset, the same tribe the English encountered while first exploring Cape Cod. While fetching Billington from the Nauset, the English learned that the Narragansett had moved against Massasoit. Open conflict threatened to destabilize the region and the English were ill equipped to engage in any significant military action. Winslow carefully recorded how it came about.

Coubatant, a “petty” sachem and vassal of Massasoit, had sowed seeds of dissension in the village of Namaschet. This malcontent also spoke disdainfully of the English and stormed against the peace between the colonists and the Nauset. Coubatant reserved particular contempt for Tisquantum (a.k.a. Squanto) and several other Indians who collaborated with the English. One of those collaborators, Hobbamock, escaped from Namaschet to Plymouth and informed the colonists that Tisquantum had been murdered. The Pilgrims gathered together to discuss what to do. They saw events in Namaschet as the beginnings of an internal rebellion against Massasoit. Since the primary cause of this uprising concerned the Wampanoag alliance with the English, Coubatant’s revolt greatly threatened the security of the colony. The Pilgrims greatly appreciated that factions adversely affected any society, savage or civilized. Even if Massasoit managed to crush the rebellion, his enemy the Narragansett would certainly interpret this internal strife as a sign of weakness. For better or for worse, the English had cast their lot with Massasoit. If he fell, the Pilgrims knew that they were likely doomed.

The nature of this revolt against Massasoit further underlined the connection between the Wampanoag king and his English allies at Plymouth. Coubatant rebelled against Massasoit over his treaty with the English and thus had essentially declared war against Plymouth. He reportedly

---

328 During the expedition, the English repaid the Nauset for stealing their corn the previous winter. Winslow adds that the English made reparations to an old woman whose three sons had been kidnapped by Thomas Hunt. Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 113-114. See also Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 87-88.
said of Tisquantum that “if he were dead, the English had lost their tongue.” The Pilgrims took Hobbamock’s information at face value. Believing that Tisquantum had been killed for his cooperation with the English, the Pilgrims had little choice but to answer this challenge. The next morning, ten armed men along with Hobbamock departed for Namaschet on an expedition to eliminate Coubatant and avenge the supposed death of Tisquantum. The English chose to act unilaterally. They made no attempt to coordinate their response with Massasoit nor did they tell the Wampanoag king of their actions. Time was short, as the immediacy of the English response suggests. But this first offensive action by the Pilgrims demonstrated their willingness to defend themselves, quickly and with force. Their response was intended to send a message to the Indians throughout New England. Winslow’s account sent the message to England.

As Winslow related, the Pilgrims launched a covert assassination mission led by Miles Standish. Under the cloak of night, the men rushed into Namaschet while the inhabitants lay sleeping. The English did not kill indiscriminately; rather, they rushed into a “house” and demanded from the frightened villagers the location of the perfidious Coubatant. The English promised to spare their lives if they delivered him up. Winslow added that the English also assured the Indians they would not harm the women and children. Despite these assurances, a few Indians escaped out a “private doore” but before the English inflicted upon them a few minor injuries. The English later offered to take these wounded back with them to their settlement and treat their injuries. Eventually, after the Indians perceived the purpose of the

329 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 120.
330 According to Winslow, one man and a woman took them up on this offer. Winslow fails to mention how the woman was injured. Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 123.
invasion, they told the English that Coubatant had left the village prior to their arrival. They also informed them that Tisquantum lived and stayed in a house nearby.  

The next morning, the English marched to Tisquantum’s location and were thus reunited with their interpreter. At this point, Winslow claimed that “all whose hearts were upright towards us” came forth while Coubatant’s faction fled into the woods. The English again assured the friendly Indians that their animosity was directed solely at Coubatant and his supporters. But they also charged them to remember

… that although Coubatant had now escaped us, yet there was no place should secure him and his from us if he continued his threatening us, and provoking others against us, who had kindly entertained him, and never intended evil towards him till he now so justly deserved it.  

They followed this warning with a threat that should the Narragansett “offer violence” to any of Massasoit’s subjects – Winslow mentioned Tisquantum and Hobbamock by name – the English would take revenge and crush them. Upon this, the English returned to Plymouth accompanied by many of their “knowne friends” among the Indians.

This episode reinforces the importance of communication for the Pilgrims. Earlier in Mourt, Bradford downplayed Tisquantum’s value to the English. In fact, he regarded him as a nuisance. Yet here we see how important Tisquantum really was to the Pilgrims. The stated goal of the Pilgrims was to avenge his supposed murder. The need for revenge stemmed from Coubatant’s supposed motive: to silence the colonists’ tongue. The English appreciated the importance communication played in their alliance with the Wampanoag. Coubatant knew this as well which begs the question: why did he not kill Tisquantum? Did Coubatant simply lose courage? Did he fear reprisal from the English? From Massasoit?

331 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 120-122.
332 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 123.
333 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 123.
If Tisquantum’s supposed murder sparked the English to action, then Hobbamock’s role in this affair deserves more scrutiny. The Pilgrims apparently knew Hobbamock and considered him a “good friend to the English,” though neither Bradford nor Winslow referred to him before this incident. Hobbamock was also a close associate of Tisquantum. According to Winslow, Hobbamock joined Tisquantum in refusing Coubatant’s rally to overthrow Massasoit. The two went to the village of Namaschet to find their king. Learning of this, Coubatant captured Tisquantum and “held a knife at his breast.” Hobbamock, seeing his friend’s predicament, escaped and ran fourteen miles east to Plymouth to inform the English what had happened.

Perhaps Hobbamock simply assumed that Coubatant carried out his threat to kill Tisquantum and informed the English that he indeed had been murdered. Another possibility is that Hobbamock deliberately mislead the English, fabricating the death of Tisquantum in order to bait the English into attacking Coubitant. Hobbamock, either from his own contact with the English or from Tisquantum, certainly knew how to provoke them. And despite his many overtures of friendship, Tisquantum would later prove guilty of manipulating the English to his own advantage. Hobbamock may have employed a similar stratagem, engineering the entire incident in order to set the English against Coubitant. This supposition does not necessarily imply that Hobbamock had ill will towards the colonists. He may have simply saw in Coubitant a common enemy and connived a way to eliminate him without involving Massasoit.

---

334 Hobbamock was a war-captain among the Wampanoag and strong ally of Massasoit. In his The Book of the Indians (1831), Samuel Gardner Drake contends that Hobbamock eventually received land in Plymouth, converted to Christianity and died in that community sometime before 1642. Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 119n377. In Of Plymouth Plantation, Bradford describes Hobbamock in glowing terms. “And there was another Indian called Hobomok come to live amongst them, a proper lusty man, and a man of account for his valour and parts amongst the Indians and continued very faithful and constant to the English till he died.” Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 88.

335 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 118-120. The distance of 14 miles comes from Bradford in Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 88.
Because we only have Winslow’s account of these events, the possibilities described above can never be proven. Yet in trying to read between the lines of Winslow’s relation, we can better appreciate the motives behind what he tries to convey to his English reader and ultimately to us. As Winslow, and later Bradford in OPP, would have it, Hobbamock rushed into Plymouth with his dreadful news and the Pilgrims immediately responded in force to avenge their friend Tisquantum. Though the “Company” gathered together to decide how to respond, Winslow omitted details of the debate and instead presents the English acting decisively and with unanimity. Until this point, the English treated Tisquantum with distrust and annoyance. Now that he was presumed dead, Tisquantum became the indispensable man. Furthermore, the Pilgrims accept Hobbamock’s testimony without reservation, an odd token of trust since the English generally considered all Indians to be naturally duplicitous. If anyone expressed doubts during the conference, it went unrecorded. Lastly, the decision to avenge an Indian, even one as useful as Tisquantum, at great risk to the colony seems uncharacteristic for a people who generally considered them as less than human.

As Winslow related, the threat of Coubitant’s actions against Massasoit and the English likely overcame any other considerations and prompted the colonists to action. Yet Winslow recorded the episode using language specifically designed to mute individual action with only two minor exceptions. Just before the raid on the village, “the Captaine” appointed each man his task. Additionally, Winslow indicated that Hobbamock had somehow lost his way but one of the colonists had been to Namaschet before and led them to the village. For everything else, the English acted collectively. In recounting the attack, Winslow identified the English as “we” or “us,” never referring to any individual action. “We charged them not to stirre, for if Coubatant were not there, we would not meddle with them, if he were, we came principally for him.” And
to show their honor, the English declared that “… wee would not at all hurt their women, or children.” The use of the plural by Winslow seems unproblematic until we consider how the English communicated with the Indians they were attacking. In the middle of the night, the colonists burst into a house and somehow conveyed their intentions to several shocked Indians who had no knowledge of English. Those who tried to escape, undoubtedly thinking that the English had come to kill them, suffered wounds for lack of understanding. We can imagine the English desperately trying to convey their intentions, perhaps shouting “Coubitant” or some brief phrase learned beforehand, though this would likely add to the confusion. If Hobbamock communicated with the Indians during the attack, Winslow gave no indication of this. In fact, Winslow’s account suggests that Hobbamock spoke little English at all. He was somehow able to inform the colonists about Coubitant’s rebellion and Tisquantum’s supposed fate. But his command of English was clearly limited, otherwise Tisquantum’s supposed death would not have been such a blow to the English. After all, Coubitant did not refer to Hobbamock as an alternative “tongue” for the English. One year later, when Tisquantum’s perfidy had been discovered, the English refused to turn him over to Massasoit for punishment due to his great value as an interpreter. Governor Bradford in fact risked angering his greatest ally in the region just to retain Tisquantum’s services. If Hobbamock could sufficiently understand English, the governor would not have protected Tisquantum from Massasoit’s wrath.336

Since Winslow almost certainly participated in this raid, he witnessed these events first hand. A close reading of Winslow’s account therefore reveals several discrepancies that defy easy explanation. The most reasonable conclusion then is that Winslow, like Bradford, modified his journal record in anticipation of it being read by an English audience. Other aspects of the raid

336 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 118-123.
on Namaschet support this supposition. Winslow described for his English readers a suspiciously humane expedition of revenge. The English killed no one during the attack, and generously offered to heal those they wound. Significantly, Winslow provided only two specifics instances of the actual communication between the English and the Indians in Namaschet. In the first example, the Indian boys witnessed how kindly the English treated the women and cried out “Neensquaes,” meaning “I am a Woman,” in order to save themselves. The women conversely referred to Hobbamock as “Towam,” meaning “friend.” The message Winslow hopes to convey is clear. Even in fighting this nascent insurgency, the colonists never lost sight of their honor and obligation to uphold the reputation of England. The colonists were out for blood, but their integrity was never sacrificed to expediency, even when pitted against “savage” Indians.  

We saw this theme earlier when Bradford remarks how the English promise to repay the Indians for the corn they took during their explorations of Cape Cod. As mentioned above, Winslow recorded how they made good on this promise while retrieving John Billington from the Nauset. They even took a step further in giving the old woman “some trinkets” as compensation for losing her sons to Thomas Hunt. Bradford and Winslow used *Mourt* to impart an image of honor upon their enterprise. Few Europeans thought much of the Indians and would have probably dismissed any violence wrought upon these heathens. But the Plymouth colonists carefully described themselves as dealing fairly with the native inhabitants upon principle, resorting to violence only after provocation. Both the spiritual and economic objectives of the Plymouth colony required friendly relations with the Indians. But the Pilgrims needed to cultivate an image of magnanimity in order to associate their efforts as a patriotic endeavor. Treating the Indians with generosity and benevolence allowed the English to think of themselves as

---

337 Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, 122-123.
as the antithesis of the Catholic powers France and Spain who, according to the propaganda of the time, committed atrocities in the Americas on a massive scale.\textsuperscript{338} Of course, not every Englishman who went to the New World saw the need to uphold the honor of king and country. Winslow therefore used the Plymouth colonists’ foray into Namaschet as an opportunity to demonstrate their adherence to those values English readers wished to see in themselves.

In the final episode of \textit{Mourt’s Relation}, Winslow continued many of the themes established in the previous accounts. By the end of that first summer, the English had managed to forge peaceful relations with some of their Indian neighbors. But as the incident with Coubitant demonstrated, not all of the native inhabitants desired peace with the Plymouth colonists. The Pilgrims learned that Obbatinewat, sachem of the Massachusett and vassal of Massasoit, disapproved of the alliance. Obbatinewat had even threatened violence against the English. The Pilgrims decided to preempt hostilities by establishing peace with the Massachusetts, and if possible, a trading relationship. On 18 September 1621, ten colonists, along with Tisquantum to translate, boarded a shallop and sailed northward to explore the region and establish contact with the Massachusetts. They reached the coast of Massachusetts Bay after sundown and spent the night at anchor sleeping in the shallop.\textsuperscript{339} When they went to shore the next morning, the English found “many lobsters… gathered together by the savages.” Similar to when they found corn buried in Cape Cod, the English helped themselves to this discovered bounty. Standish and a few others set off into the interior and soon came upon a woman coming for the lobsters. As Winslow wrote it, the English “told her of [the lobsters], and contented her for them.” Once again we see the colonists taking the property of the Indians and then compensating them in a manner

\textsuperscript{338} The Black Legend and Las Casas.
\textsuperscript{339} The English did this out of safety, just as they generally remained aboard the \textit{Mayflower} during their first few months in New England. They spent another night aboard the shallop on their journey to visit the Massachusetts queen.
agreeable to both parties. Satisfied, the woman directed the English to where the rest of her people could be found. Winslow stated that Obbatinewat used them kindly and eagerly related his people’s troubles. Although the Massachusett had lived in settled communities, they now adopted a nomadic lifestyle for fear of the Tarratines. The Tarratines killed the king of the Massachusetts in 1619 and his queen, the “Squa Sachim,” now ruled in his stead. Obbatinewat was not on friendly terms with the queen, but after the English pledged to support him – in return for his submission to King James – Obbatinewat agreed to take the English to Squa Sachim. Similar to their deal with Massasoit, the English agree to a military alliance with Obbatinewat in exchange for fealty to King James.

The following day, the English crossed Massachusetts Bay and landed approximately at the site of the future town of Charlestown. They marched several miles inland and found several houses and a fort, all unoccupied. The queen was far away but the English eventually met with a group of women. Winslow described the women as trembling in fear at the sight of the English, but became at ease upon “seeing our gentle carriage towards them.” The English informed the women that they came in peace and desired only to trade. A solitary Indian man also met with the English. Winslow portrayed him shaking and trembling with fear, like the women. Recent events certainly gave the Massachusett reason to fear outsiders, though it is uncertain if they had any previous encounter with Europeans. Winslow again accentuated the fear of the Indians towards the English while glossing over their own trepidation – evinced by their reluctance to

---

340 According to William D. Williamson, “[t]he Tarrantines were the inhabitants of Penobscot River. They were one of the three Etchemin tribes.” See Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 126n392. Dean R. Snow traces the origin of the word “Tarrantine” to the early French explorers who used it to describe the Indians of Nova Scotia and Maine. Eventually, the term only referred to the Indians of the Penobscot drainage. Dean R. Snow, “The Ethnohistoric Baseline of the Eastern Abenaki,” Ethnohistory, 23, no. 3 (1976): 294. Morison described the Tarentines as “the Vikings of New England, preferring to take corn from their neighbors than to grow it.” Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 89n6.

341 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 125-126.

342 This man informed the English that the Queen was too far away for them to meet her.
spend nights on land – as a means of establishing English superiority over the Indians. For Europeans, fear was an essential prerequisite for loyalty and obedience, or what colonial writers often described as “love.” These two sentiments, fear and love, went hand in hand when it came to European notions of authority.343

While the English enjoyed victuals provided for them by the Massachusett, Tisquantum suddenly suggested that the colonists “rifle” the women and steal their skins “for (sayd he) they are a bad people, and have oft threatned you.” Naturally, the English refused such malicious advice. Winslow recorded their response.

Were they never so bad, we would not wrong them, or give them any just occasion against us: for their words we little weighed them, but if they once attempted any thing against us, then we would deale far worse than he desired.344

Once again, Winslow showed the colonists jealously guarding the honor of England vis-à-vis their just treatment of Indian women. He also depicted their mercantile acumen, foregoing a quick score in order to establish sustainable trade with the Massachusett. Winslow then added the obligatory threat against anyone who might cross them. The English rejected Tisquantum’s suggestion but their answer addressed issues beyond his villainous recommendation. Winslow directed his answer not to Tisquantum but to his English reader. Based on what transpires in the near future, it seems plausible that Tisquantum did make such a suggestion. The English naturally refused it and Winslow used the episode to reinforce the image of a colony determined to promote trade with the Indians without compromising the values which differentiated Englishmen from their Catholic rivals. This affair also marks the beginning of the end for Tisquantum. Until now, his skill as an interpreter made him invaluable to both the English and the Wampanoag. As the colonists’

344 Dexter, *Mourt’s Relation*, 129.
“tongue,” he held a position unique among the Indians of New England and his rather ill-timed recommendation suggests that he hoped to enhance his position by creating hostility between the colonists and certain Indian tribes. Thus far, the expedition to the Massachusett had gone reasonably well. Though the colonists failed to contact the ruling queen of the Massachusett, they successfully secured the loyalty of the sachem Obbatinewat. They had also cultivated good will with others across the bay. From Winslow’s text, it seems Tisquantum offered his advice when the colonists’ intention to meet the Squa Sachim fell through. Perhaps the queen was the source of the threats against the English and Tisquantum missed an opportunity to increase his reputation and value. Tisquantum’s motives are at best unclear. Nevertheless this friend to the English and indispensable man had suddenly become an unsavory opportunist, the Indian version of Thomas Hunt. After rejecting Tisquantum’s suggestion, the English returned to the coast accompanied by the women. Winslow described them as eager to trade with the colonists. The women literally sold them the “coats from their backes.” They dutifully blushed, then covered their naked bodies with branches, displaying a modesty that Winslow lamented was all too lacking among English women. Winslow’s critique marks the only time either author of *Mourt’s Relation* compares the Indians favorably to the English. Of course, he did so to blast the immorality of English women; a common theme, and one English writers often used. Before departing, the colonists promised to return soon and the Massachusett vowed to have skins for them when they do. On the trip back to Plymouth, Winslow recorded a few brief observations about some rivers and islands around Massachusetts Bay and ends his narrative with the English reaching the colony in safety on 22 September 1621.  

---

In many ways, *Mourt’s Relation* is a story without a beginning or an ending. The main narrative opens as the Mayflower first approaches the coast of Cape Cod and concludes after the expedition to the Massachusett returns to Plymouth. Of course, the Pilgrim story includes much more than what Bradford and Winslow expressed in the pages of Mourt. Friends of the Pilgrims – as well as some enemies – knew of their religious beliefs and at least some of their history prior to the founding of Plymouth colony. However, the vast majority in England remained perfectly ignorant of the Pilgrims and their church in Leyden. As for what transpired in Plymouth colony, only the sailors returning to England on the Mayflower knew anything and then only what they had seen or heard prior to 5 April 1621, the day they departed for England. The Pilgrims realized that rumors about their colony would circulate throughout London. Nevertheless, the dearth of information about Plymouth gave the Pilgrims an opportunity to shape public opinion in England. *Mourt’s Relation* represents their initial effort to do just that. A close reading of *Mourt’s Relation* reveals what the authors – and their associates in England – desired the public to know about their attempts to establish a colony on the other side of the Atlantic.

In this chapter, I divided *Mourt* into three categories: commercialism, unity and authority, and English/Indian relations. Each category represents a theme through which the authors hoped to legitimize their endeavor and convince readers in England that the colony deserved their support. Bradford and Winslow knew their audience and tailored their account accordingly. The majority in England saw colonization as a commercial enterprise. For this reason, the authors featured the natural abundance of the region and the trade opportunities with the local Indians. They also expressed the Pilgrims’ capacity for exploiting these opportunities. The emphasis Bradford and Winslow placed on commercial aspects of the colony allowed them to conceal their primary goal.
of establishing a separatist community. In spite of their desire to break away from the Church of England, the Pilgrims did not believe that people had the right to worship as they saw fit. Like virtually everyone in England, they judged the strength of a given community by its religious unity and obedience to authority. Not surprisingly, Bradford and Winslow failed to record the divisions among the colonists and instead presented the English at Plymouth as a settlement devoid of the schisms that plagued England. Instead, they described a group of English men and women joined by their commitment to establish a successful colony. They encountered hardships along the way, but the colonists demonstrated a resolve worthy of the English nation and the outcome never seems in doubt.

William Bradford’s account ends on 23 March 1621. In early April, immediately following the departure of the Mayflower from Plymouth, Governor John Carver died. William Bradford assumed the governorship of the colony, an event that apparently left him unable to continue his journal. Edward Winslow picked up the story several weeks later, on July 2, as he and Stephen Hopkins embarked on their journey to visit Massasoit in Pokanoket. Winslow made no mention of what transpired between March 23 and July 2. In fact, his account contains barely any references to events in Plymouth at all. Instead, the scene of the action shifts away from the English settlement toward the New England interior. During the summer of 1621, the Pilgrims conducted three expeditions: first to Pokanoket, where they convinced Massasoit to keep his people away from Plymouth; then to Namaschet, where they sought to avenge the supposed murder of Tisquantum; and finally to the Massachusett, with whom they established a commercial and political alliance. Winslow participated in each of these excursions and the change of venue in Mourt simply reflects the experiences of the author.
Despite the change in setting, Winslow stayed on message, emphasizing the commercial dimensions of the colony and the importance of unity and authority. At Pokanoket and with the Massachusetts, Winslow described how the colonists redefined their relationship with the Indians to reflect English imperatives. In both cases, Winslow related how the Indians swore allegiance to King James. Like virtually every European chronicler of the Americas, Winslow characterized the native inhabitants in monolithic terms. But using the Indian “other” enabled him to treat the English colonists in much the same way. Bradford and Winslow revealed only a handful of names in the course of their narrative, and they never alluded to their religious identity. They also failed to mention that the colonists comprised two radically different types of settlers: religious separatists from Leyden and fortune-seekers recruited by the Adventurers in England. Winslow instead described the Indians as fundamentally divided. The Wampanoag had its enemies, namely the Narragansett, but internal divisions among them appear as well. Winslow characterized Coubitant’s threats against the English as a challenge to Massasoit’s authority. Additionally, the Massachusetts, though allied to Massasoit, initially failed to honor his alliance with the English. Only after the colonists made contact with the Massachusetts do they agree to live peaceably with the English. In effect, Winslow described the Pilgrims as the glue that keeps Massasoit’s allies together.

************

Throughout Mourt’s Relation, Bradford and Winslow manipulated their account in order to present the colony in the best possible light. In doing so, they had simply followed the blueprint established by early promoters of colonization in the New World. They conspicuously omitted any reference to the great mortality endured by the colonists during the first winter in New England. More importantly, they neglected any discussion of their religious beliefs, an exclusion
that proves beyond doubt that they intended Mourt for a general audience. Comparing *Mourt’s Relation* with Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*, it becomes clear that the Pilgrims saw the former tract as an instrument to maintain their authority in New England by manipulating public opinion in Old England. This strategy marks a significant shift in the literature of the period. For the first time, colonial authors used print to advance a colonial agenda. They skillfully exploited the ambitions and fears of their English audience to not only solicit support for the colony but to also minimize interference from England. In order to establish their community of saints in the New World, the Pilgrims had to conceal their plan from prying eyes (and ears) across the Atlantic. The vast distance between the colony and England helped immensely, but the Pilgrims’ experience as exiles in the Netherlands taught them that it would be only a matter of time before hostile forces caught up with them. *Mourt’s Relation*, therefore, represents the opening salvo of a public relations war between the separatist Pilgrims and their enemies in England.

Winslow’s use of European stereotypes to describe the Indians enabled him to present the English at Plymouth as a monolithic counterpart, thereby obscuring the divisions in their colony and the religious differences between the Pilgrims and the Anglican Church. So long as the Pilgrims exercised political control of Plymouth, Bradford and Winslow could promote the colony as an exemplar of the orthodox ideal. This pretense became more difficult to maintain once additional colonists from England arrived at Plymouth. As previously mentioned, the *Fortune* arrived on 13 November 1621 and dumped thirty-five ill-prepared settlers on the colony. These colonists did not share the spiritual beliefs of the Pilgrims and the burden they placed upon the colony’s food stores greatly compromised the security of Plymouth. Ironically, the vessel which returned to England with the manuscript for *Mourt’s Relation*, a tract intended to
encourage others to emigrate to Plymouth, had just brought to New England settlers that the Pilgrims could do without.
Chapter Four

A Colonial Text for English Eyes, Part II: *Good News from New England*

The events described in *Mourt’s Relation* end in late September 1621. Most of what we know of the next few years at Plymouth comes from *Good News from New England*, a tract written by Edward Winslow and published in London in 1624. It is essentially a sequel to *Mourt*, picking up the story with the arrival of the *Fortune*. Although *Good News* continues the Plymouth story begun in *Mourt*, the needs of the colony changed after 1621 and this later tract promotes the Pilgrim colony in ways that reflect these altered circumstances. Until November of that year, the only other Europeans the Pilgrims had to contend with were those who came over with them aboard the *Mayflower*. Friction certainly existed among these colonists, but the Pilgrim leaders managed to assert themselves as the governing power in Plymouth colony. This also made them, for a brief time, the de facto English authority in the region. All of this changed, however, when the *Fortune* brought thirty-five additional colonists to the colony. Instead of bolstering their ranks, these arrivals overtaxed Plymouth’s food supplies and weakened the colony, a development that did not escape the notice of the nearby Indians. Over the next year, additional colonists reached New England and the relative peace and security established by the Pilgrims quickly unraveled. In a sense, the Pilgrims achieved their goal of creating a godly community in New England, but it did not last long. Most of those who immediately followed the Pilgrims to New England did not share their spiritual ambitions, nor did they recognize their authority. The Pilgrims may have put an ocean between them and the corruptions of Europe, but those corruptions quickly followed them to the New World.
Edward Winslow dutifully provided English readers (and posterity) a detailed account of the consequences of these corruptions. *Good News from New England* covers events from November 1621 to early September 1623. In spite of its title, *Good News* conveyed a conspicuous lack of good news. Instead, Winslow’s narrative describes a colony suffering from the havoc wrought by the influx of dozens of unscrupulous planters and traders to New England. He published *Good News* with two objectives in mind. First, he hoped to stem the tide of Old World influences on Plymouth by soliciting colonists agreeable to the Pilgrims’ ambitions. This general goal presented him with some difficulty. The Pilgrims clung to a faith deemed heretical by the Anglican Church. Winslow, unable to admit this publically, attempted to attract colonists with the “right stuff” by describing the hardships suffered – and caused – by materialistic, irreligious men in New England.

Winslow’s second objective was more specific. In *Mourt’s Relation*, the authors argued that the social and religious turmoil that plagued England did not exist in Plymouth. But when dozens of materialistic men arrived and then established a rival settlement nearby, the Pilgrims could no longer maintain the illusion of an orthodox New England. This second colony, Wessagusset, collapsed in the spring of 1623, but many of its former residents returned to England soon thereafter. Once there, they could relate to interested parties their version of events. In short, the Pilgrims lost their briefly held monopoly on reports out of New England. In order to refute the malicious accounts the former Wessagusset colonists were sure to tell, Edward Winslow left for England in September 1623. He defended the Pilgrims in writing, publishing *Good News from New England* in 1624. This tract differed considerably from *Mourt’s Relation*. In *Mourt*, Winslow knowingly suppressed the conflict among the Plymouth settlers. He attempted to solicit support for the colony by depicting it as devoid of England’s social ills. In *Good News*, Winslow
put social conflict front and center. He connected the problems that arose in New England to those in Old England, namely, commercialism and impiety. The Wessagusset colonists, he argued, brought these evils to New England. Winslow therefore depicted the Pilgrims as transatlantic allies of those in England fighting against the pernicious forces of heterodoxy.

Throughout the text, Winslow used the English “other” in much the same way he used the Indian “other” in Mourt. As each wave of undesirable colonists arrived from England, Winslow differentiated them from the original planters in Plymouth. He featured the troublesome behavior of these latecomers and the consequences thereof, yet the original settlers of Plymouth remain an ambiguous yet cohesive entity. Throughout Good News, Winslow depicted Plymouth as a community unified and ruled by a nameless “governor,” who time and again treats his troublesome additions with patience and charity. Winslow’s ambiguity is inspired by his reluctance to expose his fellow Pilgrims to unnecessary scrutiny from England, but it also invited the reader to fill in the blanks with those qualities conspicuously lacking in the newcomers. English readers certainly related to the societal problems created by disunity. The Pilgrims therefore become in Good News a group protagonist struggling to overcome the very same issues readers in England saw in their own society. In Mourt, Bradford and Winslow obscured many of their struggles in order to present a colony worthy of further support. In Good News, Winslow featured their struggles in order to align Plymouth with mainstream England and screen out further undesirables from increasing their burden.

As with Mourt’s Relation, Good News from New England begins with both an epistle dedicatory and an address to the English reader. Unlike the first tract, the author of the main narrative also penned the preliminary sections. Winslow identified himself at the end of each
section by his initials “E.W.” In Mourt, several residents in England wrote these prefatory sections. Their intention was to tie up the legal and financial loose ends of the colony. After the first year in Plymouth, these issues took a back seat to problems caused by the arrival of non-puritan colonists, sent to New England by the Adventurers. Instead of dedicating Good News to one of these investors (as in Mourt), Winslow extended the honor to “all Wel-Willers and furtheres of Plantations in New England.” Certainly, this ambiguously defined group included the Adventurers, but Winslow purposefully admonished those who possessed “the vaine expectation of present profit.” More pointedly, he blasted “the carelessness of those that send over supplies of men unto them, not caring how they bee qualified.” In no uncertain terms, Winslow expressed the viewpoint of a colonist who had suffered greatly from the unscrupulousness of those who cared for nothing except material gain.

By the time Winslow left Plymouth in the fall of 1623, the Pilgrims had become wise to the intentions of the Adventurers. Instead of supporting the planters already settled at Plymouth, the investors determined to send waves of colonists who shared their materialistic ambitions. Whereas Robert Cushman still hoped to solicit support for the colony when he wrote his dedication in Mourt’s Relation, Winslow held no such illusions. In denouncing the worldliness of the Adventurers, Winslow also sought to curb the expectations of prospective colonists. The colony, he had no doubt, would prosper in time, but “no man [should] expecteth fruit before the tree be growne.” Furthermore, Winslow insisted that the success or failure of the colony

---

346 Robert Cushman dedicated Mourt’s Relation to John Peirce, a prominent Adventurer, while extoling the blessings enjoyed by the colonists. George Morton likewise informed the “Courteous Reader” about the hopeful prospects for Plymouth. See Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, xxxv-xl.

depended upon putting God’s glory ahead of any material ambitions. In a reference to the men
sent over by Thomas Weston, Winslow noted:

… what great offence hath beene given by many profane men, who being but seeming
Christians, have made Christ and Christianitie stinke in the nostrils of the poore Infidels,
and so laid a stumbling blocke before them.\textsuperscript{348}

During their first few years in New England, the Pilgrims strove to establish friendly relations
with the Indians, but they made no effort to convert them. Winslow, therefore, relied upon a
standard trope in English promotional literature to criticize profit-seeking colonists and to
differentiate the Pilgrims from the unsavory breed of Englishmen at Wessagusett.\textsuperscript{349}

Winslow continued his attack against worldliness in the “To the Reader” section. After
offering the obligatory reluctance to publish his discourse, he explained that the circumstances
that prompted him to issue \textit{Good News} as a public print, namely the chaos that followed the
arrival of the colonists sent by Thomas Weston. Their “disorderly colony” at Wessagusett
collapsed in the spring of 1623, once again leaving Plymouth as the only permanent settlement in
the region. Despite the demise of Wessagusett, the surviving colonists continued to cause
problems for the Pilgrims. Many of them returned to England, free to render their version of
events. The Pilgrims published \textit{Mourt’s Relation} in order to neutralize the disparagements made
against them by their enemies in England. At that time, the only other source of information
about their affairs came from the sailors returning on the \textit{Mayflower}. When \textit{Mourt’s Relation}

\textsuperscript{348} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, in The Epistle Dedicatory.
\textsuperscript{349} Wessagusett (present-day Weymouth, Massachusetts) was the name of the settlement established by the colonists
sent over by Thomas Weston. Winslow used the Indian name to identify this colony. The second Wessagusset
colony, established by Sir Ferdinando Gorges in September 1623, the site was renamed Weymouth. See Charles
Francis Adams, Jr., \textit{Wessagusset and Weymouth} (Weymouth, MA: The Weymouth Historical Society, 1905), 29-34,
http://archive.org/stream/wessagussetweymo1904adam#page/n5/mode/2up.
appeared in John Bellamy’s bookshop in the summer of 1622, not a single person in all of England could gainsay the Pilgrims’ account. The return of Weston’s men to England essentially ended the Pilgrims monopoly on information about New England. Unlike the *Mayflower* sailors, Weston’s men had firsthand experience living with the Pilgrims at Plymouth and could offer eyewitness testimony to the events that occurred after November 1621.\(^{350}\)

The Pilgrims and Weston’s men loathed one another. Acutely aware that their former neighbors would disparage them upon reaching England, the Pilgrims sent Edward Winslow to London aboard the first available ship.\(^ {351}\) Winslow made the voyage to procure much needed supplies for the colony, but he also went to conduct damage control from the fallout of Wessagusett’s collapse. *Good News from New England* marks his attempt to achieve the latter objective. Beginning with the prefatory section, Winslow embarked on a literary crusade to discredit Weston’s men. Though he acknowledged the existence of a few “wel-deserving persons amongst them,” Winslow cast the majority of them as a collection of rogues. Calling them “a staine to old England that bred them,” Winslow feared that “they will bee no lesse to New-England in their vile and clamorous reports.” In describing Weston’s men as the dregs of both Old and New England society, Winslow sought to simultaneously refute the unflattering charges laid against the Pilgrims by this group while discouraging like-minded individuals from following in their footsteps. Whereas Bradford and Winslow painted a rosy picture of New England in *Mourt*, Winslow used *Good News* to illuminate the harsh realities of colonial life. Instead of a place where just about anyone could find prosperity, Winslow now depicted New

---

\(^{350}\) The *Mayflower* left Plymouth on 5 April 1621, just a few days after Pilgrims met with Massasoit. Additionally, the sailors likely spent most of their time on board the *Mayflower* and thus had limited information about the happenings on land.

\(^{351}\) This was the *Anne* which left Plymouth on 10 September 1623. This was the first of several trips Winslow made to England on behalf of Plymouth colony.
England as a destination fit for only a select few. In many ways, Winslow offered *Good News* as a testament to the disastrous consequences of when “light and vaine persons” attempt to find their fortunes in New England. By the same token, he invited the reader to discredit the defamatory claims made by those who nearly destroyed what the godly Pilgrims had labored so hard to build.\(^{352}\)

Appropriate to this purpose, Winslow opened the main text of *Good News from New England* with the arrival of the thirty-five colonists on board the *Fortune*. Most of these were planters enlisted by the Adventurers in England, but a few of them were known to the Pilgrims.\(^{353}\) Winslow neglected to identify any of these newcomers by name. Instead, he simply characterized them all as a collective drain on their already meager resources. Winslow had reason to conceal the names of his religious brethren, but the omission also enabled him to depict these new colonists as an English “other” responsible for the subsequent unrest in New England. Had he mentioned that some of these ill-supplied colonists included a handful of puritan “saints,” Winslow would have been hard pressed to blame only the “strangers” among them for Plymouth’s troubles. In *Mourt*, Bradford and Winslow’s desire to show the unity of the original settlers prompted them to omit any reference to the divisions among them. Similarly, in *Good News*, Winslow elided the differences among the *Fortune* colonists, treating them as a cohesive unit in order to render them as the indisputable antagonist of his New England tragedy.\(^{354}\)

\(^{352}\) Winslow, *Good News*, in address To the Reader.

\(^{353}\) Several family members of the Plymouth colonists came aboard the *Fortune*, including John Winslow, Edward’s brother, and William Brewster’s eldest son Jonathan.

\(^{354}\) Because of Winslow’s sweeping generalizations about the *Fortune* colonists, many historians have assumed these newer arrivals had an antagonistic relationship with the original settlers. But as Jeremy Bangs points out, there is “no firm basis for assessing some shift in the composition of the population of the colony as if divided into interest groups.” Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs, *Pilgrim Edward Winslow: New England’s First International Diplomat* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogy Society, 2004), 647.
The addition of thirty-five colonists nearly doubled the English population of Plymouth, but since they brought with them little in the way of supplies, these “reinforcements” effectively weakened the colony. The consequences of this weakness materialized in short order. Soon after the Fortune left for England, a messenger from the Narragansett came among the colonists and delivered unto them “a bundle of arrows lapped in a rattle Snakes skin.” Unable to communicate further with the English – Tisquantum was away from Plymouth at the time – the messenger desired to leave. Governor Bradford, however, detained him, placing the messenger in the custody of Captain Standish until they could decipher the meaning of his visit. Winslow interrogated the envoy and determined that Conanacus, the Narragansett king, sent the arrows as a threat. Although the colonists had made peace with them earlier that summer, the Narragansett learned of the diminished strength of the English and now sought to press their advantage. In response, the governor returned a message to Conanacus through the same envoy. He expressed the continued goodwill of the English, but also their readiness to take action should the king “not be reconciled to live peaceably as other his neighbors.”

Tisquantum returned to Plymouth soon thereafter. He informed the governor that the arrow and snakeskin “imported enmitie,” and that the English should consider it as a challenge issued to them by the Narragansett king. Once again, the Pilgrims felt compelled to make a show of strength. They sent to Conanacus their own symbol of enmity, stuffing the same snakeskin with powder and shot. Winslow reported that this message caused “no small terror to this savage King, insomuch as hee would not once touch the powder and shot, or suffer it to stay in his house

---

355 I use the appellation “king,” here and elsewhere, as Winslow did, though “sachem” would be the more appropriate term.

356 Winslow failed to mention how Governor Bradford managed to communicate this message without the assistance of Tisquantum. Winslow, Good News, 2-3.
or Country.” Winslow described yet another example of the Indians reacting in fear of the English. The frequent juxtaposition of Indian fear with English courage was calculated to mask the colony’s weakness to English readers. The Indians certainly feared European firearms, but the mysterious plague that decimated their ranks frightened them even more. The English, of course, saw disease as an act of God who inflicted his wrath against sinful colonists as readily as he did against heathen Indians. Unlike firearms, disease was a weapon the English could not use against their enemies except perhaps through prayer and piety. Notwithstanding their “high words and loftie looks” toward the Narragansett, the colonists well appreciated their own weakness. They immediately set about fortifying the town, completing the improvements by early March 1622. Captain Standish organized the able bodied men of the colony into a militia unit and trained them.

The hostility shown by the Narragansett understandably put the colony on edge. Standish could tighten up Plymouth’s defenses against an Indian assault, but there was little any of the English could do to prevent information from leaking to their enemies. Nobody from the Narragansett had visited colony during the Fortune’s short stay at Plymouth, yet Conanacus’ messenger arrived to deliver his threat soon after the ship left for home. Clearly, news of the Fortune’s departure had quickly made its way to the Narragansett king, as did knowledge of the colony’s weakened state. This information had to cross dozens of miles of Wampanoag territory to reach the Narragansett, and these two tribes were presently at odds with one another. Thus someone with intimate knowledge of affairs in Plymouth was willing and able to convey

357 Winslow, Good News, 3-4.
358 Standish created four companies, each led by a commander. Considering that the entire town, including the defenses, was constructed of wood, fire was a major concern. One of the companies was therefore assigned to take arms should the alarm for fire be raised. Standish feared the Indians might start a fire as a diversion before attacking the English. Winslow, Good News, 4-5.
intelligence to the Narragansett. The colonists’ dual purpose – to trade and to proselytize – required contact with the Indians. Friendly Indians therefore were tolerated if not in some cases welcomed by the English, but it became apparent to the Pilgrims that someone close to them was providing information to the Narragansett.

Suspicion soon fell upon Tisquantum. Hobbamock, the Wampanoag who informed the English about Coubitant’s rebellion the previous summer, came forward and dropped a bombshell on the colonists. He told them that the Massachusetts had joined the Narragansett in a plot to destroy Plymouth. Suddenly, the English faced threats on two fronts, the Narragansett to the south and the Massachusetts to the North. Hobbamock also claimed that Tisquantum was a mole, essentially working as an undercover operative against the colonists. Tisquantum even had a plan in the works for the upcoming trade visit to the Massachusetts. During the expedition, Tisquantum would persuade the English – thinking them none the wiser – to leave the safety of their shallop and into one of the Massachusetts’s houses. At which point the Massachusetts would spring their trap and slaughter the English. Meanwhile, with their captain away to the north – Myles Standish always led these expeditions into Indian country – the Narragansett would assault Plymouth from the south. This news must have struck the Pilgrims like a thunderbolt. Recent events seemed to validate Hobbamock’s claim, and the Pilgrims gathered to decide upon a course of action. Once again, the English opted to make a show of strength lest a semblance of fear further encourage their enemies to make good their threats. The visit to the Massachusetts

---

359 As recorded near the end of Mourt’s Relation, the Pilgrims had visited with the Massachusetts and promised to return in the near future to trade.
would continue as planned, though the colonists on the expedition and at Plymouth made ready in case of mischief.\textsuperscript{360}

The expedition to the Massachusett included ten colonists, Tisquantum and Hobbamock. The shallop had not gone far from the town when an Indian rushed into Plymouth and informed the English that an army was gathered at Namaschet. This fighting force supposedly consisted of the Narragansett, Coubitant, Massasoit, and several others. According to their informant, they had resolved to assault the town in Captain Standish’s absence. Governor Bradford ordered a canon fired; a signal for the captain to return at once. They returned and when apprised of the report, Hobbamock flatly denied Massasoit’s involvement in any stratagem against the English. As one of Massasoit’s “chiefest champions,” the Wampanoag king would have consulted him before considering such a move. It was soon discovered that Massasoit indeed had not conspired against the English, and an assault against Plymouth never materialized.\textsuperscript{361} The English had thus far managed to avoid open hostilities with their Indian neighbors, but it seemed only a matter of time before violence broke out. Furthermore, the peace established between Plymouth and the surrounding Indians began to unravel soon after the \textit{Fortune} deposited the newcomers at the colony. Predisposed to interpret social divisions as a fundamental weakness, the Pilgrims likely saw the influx of profane colonists as the source of their troubles. But as Winslow made clear, the Pilgrims were not the only ones who noticed Plymouth’s lack of solidarity and strength.

\textsuperscript{360} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 5-6.

\textsuperscript{361} Winslow identified the informant as “an Indian of Tisquantum’s family.” This is the only reference to another member of the Patuxet in any English source. In fact, it was generally believed that Tisquantum alone survived the great plague that ravaged the Patuxet several years before the Pilgrims arrived. In \textit{Mourt’s Relation}, Winslow claimed that “all the Inhabitants dyed of an extraordinary plague, and there is neither man, woman, nor childe remaining.” Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 6-8; Dexter, \textit{Mourt’s Relation}, 84-85.
During his time spent in Europe, Tisquantum learned a great deal about the English. He spoke their language, he had at least a rudimentary understanding of their religion, and he certainly knew how to manipulate them. As the only individual in all of New England who could move comfortably in both English and Indian circles, Tisquantum found himself in a unique position. With his own people, the Patuxet, wiped out by disease, Tisquantum used his familiarity with English and Indian cultures to become a power broker in the region. The English now suspected that Tisquantum had orchestrated the ruse described above. They also believed he had communicated with the Narragansett. As Winslow described it, Tisquantum did not plot the overthrow of the English; rather, he planted seeds of distrust between the colonists and various Indian tribes in order to bolster his own position.

In the general, his course was to persuade [the Indians] hee could lead us to peace or warre at his pleasure, and would oft threaten the Indians, sending them word in a private manner, wee were intended shortly to kill them, that thereby hee might get gifts to himself to worke their peace, insomuch as they had him in greater esteeme than many of their Sachims.\(^{362}\)

Tisquantum, Winslow argued, hoped to bring the English and the Indians to the brink of war in order to elevate himself as an instrument of peace. Tisquantum told “his Countrymen” that the English had buried the plague in a storehouse and could send it forth to wherever they would. Winslow interpreted this last bit as part of Tisquantum’s deception. However, Tisquantum, like most Indians, connected the plague with the English and noted that physical proximity had little bearing on the phenomenon. Winslow, like most Europeans, attributed the plague to God’s will. But Tisquantum was no Christian and his “ruse” may simply be a sincere attempt on his part to make sense of something he could not possibly understand. Regardless, the privileges bestowed

\(^{362}\) Winslow, Good News, 8.
upon him as chief interpreter fell short of his ambition and Tisquantum used his unique position in order to advance himself. Though the English uncovered his plot, Tisquantum’s linguistic skill saved him. Bradford rebuked Tisquantum, but since he was “so necessarie and profitable an instrument,” the governor refused to send him away or punish him further.³⁶³

Governor Bradford advised their Indian neighbors of Tisquantum’s subterfuge and again pledged the colonists’ intention to live in peace. Massasoit, however, became enraged at Tisquantum’s perfidy and demanded Bradford hand him over for punishment. Conscious of the interpreter’s value to the English, the king offered “many Beaver skins” as recompense. He also reminded the English of their treaty, under which the English were obliged to surrender to him one of his subjects upon demand.³⁶⁴ Bradford found himself in a jam. He greatly desired Tisquantum’s services but also needed Massasoit’s good will. Should the English fall out with the Wampanoag, Massasoit could send a message that did not require interpretation. Massasoit sent his own knife for either his emissaries or the English to cut off Tisquantum’s head and hands and return them to the king. Just as Bradford was about to submit to Massasoit’s demand, a boat appeared on the horizon. The governor delayed his decision until the identity of the ship was determined. Rumors of French vessels in the region gave the Governor pause. Should the mysterious vessel be a Frenchmen, the governor desired Tisquantum’s help should the French also have “savages” with them. Massasoit wanted Tisquantum’s head and hands, but Bradford

³⁶³ Winslow, Good News, 8-10.
³⁶⁴ The terms of this agreement, as listed in Mourt’s Relation, makes no reference to the English having to surrender anyone to the Wampanoag. Bradford stated that Massasoit would have to hand over to the English any of his people found guilty of a crime against the English, but he poignantly omitted the provision that the colonists had to reciprocate. Certainly, Bradford felt that such a concession would not be well received in England. Nevertheless, Winslow revealed in Good News that the English had indeed agreed to hand over malefactors to the Indians upon request.
still needed his tongue. According to Winslow, the governor’s delay tactic so enraged Massasoit’s emissaries that “they departed in great heat.”

The boat proved to be a shallop from an English fishing vessel, the Sparrow, commissioned by Thomas Weston. The boat deposited “six or seven passengers” who should have arrived with the Fortune along with the others. These latest additions were as ill-equipped as their immediate predecessors. All of the colonists suffered greatly from a lack of food but Winslow surprisingly blamed neither the new arrivals nor the company in England. Instead, he cited letters sent to England by the colonists themselves wherein they “were too prodigall in their writing and reporting of the plenty we enjoyed.” This comment may be in reference to private letters written by the Pilgrims, but Winslow, recording this comment over a year later likely thought of Mourt’s Relation in a similar vein. As argued in the previous chapter, Bradford and Winslow exaggerated their prospects in Mourt and concealed their sufferings, all in order to convince those in England that their colony was worthy of support. In consequence, additional colonists arrived first in the Fortune and then in the Sparrow without “so much as a barrel of bread or

---

365 Winslow, Good News, 9-11.
367 It is difficult to state with certainty if the colonists sent these letters back to England aboard the Mayflower or the Fortune. The Mayflower departed for England on 5 April 1621 after several grueling months in which many had died and nearly all had fallen ill. If these letters were indeed sent aboard the Mayflower, then the colonists greatly exaggerated their good condition. By the time the Fortune arrived in November 1621, things had certainly improved. The Fortune left the colony on 13 December 1621 and was captured en route, delaying the arrival of its passengers in England until early February 1622. The Sparrow departed from England sometime in May, yet in two letters delivered at Plymouth aboard the Sparrow’s shallop, Thomas Weston addresses Governor Carver, not Governor Bradford. Weston wrote the letters in January 1622, before the Fortune returned, and thus before he became aware of John Carver’s death. Yet he sent this correspondence after the Fortune reached England. Weston was either unwilling or unable to replace the letters addressed to the deceased governor of Plymouth. In a subsequent letter sent to Governor Bradford aboard the Charity, Weston writes: “The Fortune is arrived, of whose Good News touching your estate and proceedings I am very glad to hear.” The Charity left England on 30 April 1622 and reached Plymouth in late June. Winslow, Good News, 11; Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 99-103.
meale.” In buttering the bread of readers back in England, the Pilgrims quite literally took bread out of their own mouths in Plymouth.368

In Mourt’s Relation, Bradford and Winslow adopted the well-established habit of promotional writers by embellishing their accounts of the colony. Yet perhaps for the first time, the authors employing this convention endured physical hardship as a result of their persuasiveness. The vast majority of writers promoting the colonies in the New World did not reside there long term. They simply saw colonies as an economic venture, making promotional literature little more than an advertisement written by English investors hoping to make a quick profit. We rarely see the consequences of their sales pitch, especially in the colonies themselves. Yet Winslow’s pithy remark about the tall tales they send to England provides a revealing glimpse into the realities created by such literature. In truth, the unpreparedness of the newer colonists likely stemmed more from a lack of foresight on their part and/or the parsimony of Thomas Weston. Bradford, in OPP, laid full blame on the capriciousness of the colonists.

And they when they came ashore and found all well and saw plenty of victuals in every house, were no less glad; for most of them were lusty young men, and many of them wild enough, who little considered whither or about what they went till they came into the harbor of Cape Cod and there saw nothing but a naked and barren place.369

---

368 Of course, the passengers who came to Plymouth aboard the Fortune could not have read Mourt’s Relation as Robert Cushman carried the manuscript for that tract back to England on the same vessel. Letters sent back on the Mayflower may have influenced these colonists, but none have survived. As Winslow prepared the manuscript for Good News, he likely reflected on the effect previous communications had on readers in England. Having bared witness to the tragic results of unprepared colonists coming to New England, Winslow appreciated that earlier embellishments had been a mistake. Winslow, Good News, 11.

369 Bradford here describes the passengers on board the Fortune. Like the Mayflower, the Fortune first sighted Cape Cod on their voyage to New England. Nobody knew if the first colonists were dead or alive. Fearing the former, some of these “lusty young men” thought of commandeering the sails from the ship to prevent the captain from abandoning them on shore. The master caught wind of these stirrings – secrets were difficult to keep aboard a sailing vessel – and promised to take the passengers to Virginia should they fail to find the Mayflower colonists. They found Plymouth colony a few days later however. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 92.
If Bradford seems less charitable in his criticism towards these English “strangers,” it must be remembered that he wrote his history years after the events he describes, during a time when his godly community groaned under the strain of rampant commercialism. Winslow on the other hand took to published writing with more enthusiasm than Bradford, and thus was more disposed to see events as a consequence of the printed word. After Mourt’s Relation, Bradford never published again, though he continued to write letters and record events in his history. It is conceivable that he abandoned published authorship after witnessing its deleterious effects in the form of the “lusty young men” who came to Plymouth after 1621. Bradford, like many devout puritans, looked askance at public authorship, partly because it challenged traditional sources of authority and partly because it suggested a lack of humility. The governor may have been radical in his religion, but he remained socially conservative. Winslow proved more comfortable in this arena. His name appeared as the author of Good News and he frequently made personal visits to England in order to drum up support for Plymouth. As a result, Edward Winslow became the face of the colony in England.

If the ill-prepared colonists from the Fortune and the Sparrow caused Winslow to question the wisdom of what he and Bradford sent to England, those who came that summer aboard two other vessels certainly convinced him. Near the end of June two more of Thomas Weston’s ships, the Charity and the Swan, entered Plymouth harbor “having with them some fifty or sixty men sent over at his owne charge to plant for him.” After depositing these settlers at Plymouth, the Charity continued on to Virginia while the smaller Swan explored the New England coast in search of a suitable location to launch another colony. In the meantime, the new arrivals stayed at Plymouth colony and quickly made themselves most unwelcome. Winslow made no reference
as to the lack of preparedness of this latest group perhaps because other qualities even more pernicious soon manifested themselves.

That little store of corne wee had, was exceedingly wasted by the unjust and dishonest walking of these strangers, who though they would sometimes seeme to helpe us in our labour about our corne, yet spared not day and night to steale the same…

These latest arrivals proved to be cut from the same cloth as the infamous Thomas Hunt; avaricious, unscrupulous, and completely disinterested in making sacrifices for the greater good. Though these latest arrivals added to their troubles, the Pilgrims nevertheless showed kindness to these disreputable interlopers. According to Winslow, the Pilgrims took in these men for Weston’s sake, “who formerly had deserved well from us.” Winslow tacitly implies in this statement that the Pilgrims’ debts to Thomas Weston convinced them to tolerate these troublesome guests. However, in *OPP*, Bradford records having received letters from Weston and others in England which clearly exposed Weston’s duplicity in regard to his obligations to Plymouth colony. Weston proved guilty of withholding material support – confirmed by the paucity of supplies sent aboard the four vessels come to Plymouth – while also prohibiting letters sent by the other Adventurers in the company from sailing aboard his ships. The Pilgrims also learned that Weston was no longer a member of the company, having been bought out by the other investors. Two of these investors, Edward Pickering and William Greene, advised Governor Bradford that the planters sent aboard the *Charity* and the *Swan* intended the undoing of Plymouth colony. Another letter from John Peirce, in whose name the patent for New England was taken, likewise attested to the disposition of these men.

But as for Mr. Weston’s company, I think them so base in condition (for the most part) as in all appearance not fit for an honest man’s company; I wish they prove otherwise.\footnote{Winslow, *Good News*, 13-14.}
And finally, Robert Cushman sent a warning as well.

The people which they carry are not men for us; wherefore I pray you entertain them not, neither exchange man for man with them, except it be some of your worst.372

This revelation in Bradford’s history makes the forbearance shown by the Pilgrims all the more remarkable. Winslow avoided any mention of Weston’s betrayal in *Good News*. He may have done this in order to avoid staining the reputation of the New England Company and, by association, their endeavor in Plymouth. Bradford in *OPP*, however, pulled no punches about Weston’s complicity. Nevertheless, the governor gave his men “friendly entertainment, partly in regard of Mr. Weston himself… and partly in compassion to the people.”373

But Christian charity can explain only so much. When Weston’s men reached Plymouth and their poor character manifested itself to the Pilgrims, Governor Bradford convened a meeting to discuss what to do. The men proved unruly, perhaps ungovernable. Although Thomas Weston’s brother Andrew arrived with the bulk of these planters aboard the *Charity*, Winslow lamented that their leaders “were not of more abilitie and fitnesse for their places.”374 Winslow admitted that the Pilgrims desired to be rid of them all, praying that “God in his providence would disburden us of them.” After some consideration, the Pilgrims welcomed Weston’s men, providing them shelter and tending to those who were sick. They undoubtedly saw this as part of their Christian duty, but they had other more worldly reasons for their actions.375

374 In October, Winslow records the death of Richard Greene, brother-in-law to “Master Weston,” who is described as having “charge in the oversight and government of his Colony.” The Pilgrims apparently thought little of his abilities as governor, but nevertheless gave him a burial “befitting his place.” Winslow does not mention him anywhere else in *Good News*. Winslow, *Good News*, 16.
Weston’s men resembled the planters who came on board the *Fortune* in that they arrived “altogether unacquainted” with the rigors of life in New England and “knew not what to do.” But while the *Fortune* colonists remained at Plymouth, these latest arrivals had no intention of staying. Andrew Weston claimed to have a patent to establish a colony independent of Plymouth. A select few scouted the vicinity for a suitable location and ultimately chose the site of Wessagusset on the southern edge of Massachusetts Bay. Although the Pilgrims sincerely desired to be rid of their impious company, they anticipated the consequences of having another English settlement in New England. Far away in England, Robert Cushman likewise guessed the outcome.

I fear these people will hardly deal so well with the savages as they should. I pray you therefore signify to Squanto that they are a distinct body from us, and we have nothing to do with them, neither must be blamed for their faults, much less can warrant their fidelity.

Cushman, of course, had no idea that Squanto (a.k.a. Tisquantum) had succumbed to his own ambitions, but his counsel to Governor Bradford proved sound. Hunger and want had compelled the Pilgrims to steal corn from the Nauset during that first winter on Cape Cod. Weston’s men brought little in the way of provisions and even less in the way of Christian morality. While the Pilgrims at the very least had recognized their obligation to repay the Nauset for taking their corn, they justly predicted that Weston’s group would likely disregard such niceties to the detriment of all. Allowing Weston’s men to stay at Plymouth allowed the Pilgrims to keep an eye on their unruly countrymen. Although Bradford and Winslow stated otherwise, the Pilgrims

---

376 Robert Cushman mentions this patent in his letter to Governor Bradford sent aboard the *Charity*. In fact, he had no patent, but the Pilgrims had no way of knowing this. Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 108-109.
377 Wessagusset was located in what is now Weymouth, Massachusetts.
welcomed Weston’s men only to prevent them from upsetting their uneasy alliance with the Indians.

The arrival of Weston’s men marks a turning point in the history of early New England. Prior to their arrival, the Pilgrims were the unchallenged English authority in the region. Not only did they conduct affairs with the Indians with relative impunity, but they also had a near monopoly on information that filtered back to England. While many of the colonists who came aboard the Fortune had little interest in the spiritual aims of the Pilgrims, they nevertheless agreed to live under the Pilgrims’ authority. Weston’s men had no such intentions. The seven men who came to Plymouth in late May had previously reconnoitered the coast around Massachusetts Bay. They settled on the site of their colony in advance of the main party due to arrive that summer on the Charity and Swan.\(^{379}\) This group, numbering around sixty individuals, stayed at Plymouth for just a few weeks before heading northward to establish their own settlement. Winslow recorded that the English at Plymouth and Wessagusset managed to coordinate their efforts from time to time, but each colony saw the other as competitors for the same prize. The planters at Wessagusset saw Plymouth as a rival over the Indian trade. The Pilgrims on the other hand viewed Weston’s men not only as economic adversaries, but a fundamental threat to New England as a haven for godliness.\(^{380}\)

It would be a mistake to overlook the economic dimensions of the Pilgrims’ objectives in New England. They jealously guarded their access to the Indian trade. A few months after the

\(^{379}\) These men selected Wessagusset due to the low number of Indians in the region. They apparently bade a bargain with a sachem named Aberdecest for the land. Nevertheless, they became uneasy at the smallness of their own party and proceeded to Plymouth for safety and for news of their compatriots who followed. See Adams, Jr., *Wessagusset and Weymouth*, 9.

\(^{380}\) Of course, the Pilgrims had a specific definition of godliness. The colonists at Wessagusset were likely Anglicans though references to their religious affiliation has not survived. The Puritan accounts we do have describe them as profoundly irreligious, but they would likely avoid making any public disparagement of Anglican faith.
founding of Wessagusset, the ill-prepared colonists found themselves starving. With food scarce, the value of corn skyrocketed and the Indians took advantage. Winslow recorded how the inflated prices, wrought by the desperation of Weston’s men, negatively impacted trade for the Pilgrims: “But indeed the trade both for Furres and corne was overthrown in that place, they giving as much for a quart of corne, as we used to doe for a Beavers skin.”

While the Wessagusset planters saw trade as the reason for coming to New England, the Pilgrims considered trade as a means to a spiritual end. A significant number of colonists at Plymouth held material ambitions, but they lived under the care and authority of the Pilgrims. Weston’s men presented a different challenge, one the Pilgrims felt obligated to meet. The remainder of Good News reveals the circumstances from which this challenge emerged and the Pilgrims attempt to overcome it. But more than just a documentation of the Pilgrims’ attempt to reassert their authority in New England, Good News represents Winslow’s effort to establish an official account of these events in England.

As the primary ambassador to the Indians, Edward Winslow knew better than anyone the delicate balance of power in New England. The alliance between Plymouth and the Wampanoag stabilized the political situation, but in a general sense peace hinged on the honorable carriage of the English settlers. As depicted in Mourt’s Relation and in Good News, the Pilgrims conducted themselves in a manner befitting the expectations of honest English Christians. They made a show of strength when they had to, but generally made it clear to the Indians their desire to live among them in peace. Winslow attributed the diplomatic success of the Pilgrims as a product of their authority in New England. From their minor difficulties with the Nauset, they appreciated the consequences when less scrupulous members of their nation encountered the Indians. Now

381 Winslow, Good News, 18.
that Weston’s men had established another English settlement at Wessagusset, the Pilgrims rightly feared that the peace they had worked so hard to achieve would quickly unravel.

Predictably, trouble began soon after Weston’s men began at Wessagusset. As Winslow described it, “the Indians soon filled our eares with clamours” against Weston’s men “for stealing corne, and other abuses.” Governor Bradford had no authority at Wessagusset and informed the Indians that there was little he could do except admonish their wayward brethren into “better walking.” But the bonds of Englishness proved thicker than godliness. Bradford’s decision to originally take in Weston’s men may have prevented them from becoming desperate, but it reduced Plymouth’s own supply of food to dangerous levels by summer’s end. Near the end of September, the two colonies participated in a joint venture to trade with Indians along the southern coast of Cape Cod. Though Weston neglected to adequately support Plymouth, he sent a small ship, the Swan, to serve his colony at Wessagusset.382 The English set out aboard the Swan but foul weather forced them back and delayed the expedition until November.383

Over the winter, the English conducted several visits to Indian communities throughout Cape Cod and managed to procure several hogsheads of corn and beans for both colonies. Though initially described as a joint enterprise, Winslow firmly established Bradford and Standish in command of these trading missions.384 He depicted the colonists from Wessagussett as playing a

---

382 If the Pilgrims took umbrage at Weston supporting this colony after having virtually ignored the needs of Plymouth for the previous two years, neither Bradford nor Winslow bothered to record it.  
384 The Plymouth colonists certainly had greater experience with the Indians of New England. They also had the linguistic services of Tisquantum at their disposal. The Swan, however, remained in New England to support Weston’s men. Winslow suggests that they approached the Pilgrims with the idea of a joint trading expedition. “At which time they desired to joyn in partnership with us to trade for corne; to which our Governour and his Assistant (Isaac Allerton) agreed upon such equall conditions, as were drawne and confirmed betweene them and us.” Bradford, in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, confirms that Weston’s group approached Plymouth for help in trading for corn with the Indians. They offered the services of the Swan and asked for some “trading commodities” to be repaid upon receiving resupply from England. Winslow, *Good News*, 15; Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 113-114.
supporting role, appearing only to accept their half of whatever they get from the Indians. For a short while the friction between the Pilgrims and Weston’s men disappears, though the Massachusetts at one point renew their complaints about their “injurious walking” to Governor Bradford. Virtually all of Winslow’s account between October 1622 and March 1623 concerns these trading excursions to the south. This period represents a high point in relations between the two English colonies. Their first joint venture succeeded in acquiring provisions for Plymouth and Wessagusset. The English also established friendly relations with Indians throughout Cape Cod. However, this period of cooperation and friendship did not survive the winter. Even as the English managed to reach out to new trading partners along the cape, events quickly took a turn for the worse.  

While trading in Cape Cod, the English uncovered a conspiracy hatched against them by the Massachusetts. Captain Standish was in the house of Canacum, a sachem at Manomet, when two Massachusetts men entered. One of them, a “notable insulting villaine” named Wituwamat, presented the sachem with a dagger acquired months earlier via trade with Weston’s men. He claimed to have killed some English and French long before and derided all Europeans as weak and cowardly. This speech of course was made in an Indian tongue, unintelligible to Standish though he clearly fathomed the hostility behind these words. The two Massachusetts Indians had journeyed to Manomet to enlist the sachem as an ally against the English. Although the

---

385 Winslow, Good News, 15.
386 Manomet was located about twenty miles south of Plymouth, near the present-day town of Sandwich, Massachusetts.
387 European vessels periodically visited the region looking for trade. In 1662, Phineas Pratt, one of Weston’s men who settled at Wessagusset, provided the General Court of Massachusetts an account of his experiences in that colony. According to Pratt, an Indian named Pecksuot (Winslow in Good News spells it Pecksnout) spoke of two separate incidents in which French vessels visited the region. The first was wrecked by a storm and the Indians enslaved the survivors. Another came to trade, but the Indians supposedly murdered the crew. See Phineas Pratt, “Phineas Pratt’s Relation,” Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 4th series, Vol. IV, 472-476.
Plymouth colonists had never exhibited hostility towards the Massachusetts, these Indians now regarded all the English colonists as their enemy.

The [Massachusetts] had formerly concluded to ruinate Master Weston’s Colonie, and thought themselves, being about thirty or forty men strong, enough to execute the same: yet they durst not attempt it, till such time as they had gathered more strength to themselves to make their party good against us at Plimoth, concluding, that if we remained (though they had no other Arguments to use against us) yet we would never leave the death of our Countrymen unrevenged, and therefore their safety could not be without the overthrow of both Plantations.\(^{388}\)

The Massachusetts therefore attempted to secure confederates for an all-out assault against both English colonies. Canacum joined them as did others in and around Cape Cod. When they discovered Myles Standish at Manomet, the envoys from the Massachusetts apparently hatched a plan to kill Standish that night. The captain, however, stayed awake that night and the murder plot came to nothing.\(^ {389}\)

In *Mourt’s Relation*, Bradford and Winslow took pains to hide the divisions among the English colonists in Plymouth. Winslow continued this strategy in *Good News*, but once additional colonists begin to arrive in droves, this happy orthodox façade could no longer be maintained. The most recent arrivals, designated by Winslow (and Bradford in *OPP*) as “Weston’s men,” were carefully described as “outsiders” in Plymouth. In *Good News*, we see that the Indians lumped these different colonies together under a common English heritage, not the Pilgrims. Winslow, writing for an English audience, desired to differentiate between the colonists at Plymouth and the dishonorable settlers at Wessagusset. But the degrees of separation readily apparent from an English perspective failed to register from the viewpoint of the Massachusetts Indians. Complaints made by the Massachusetts to Governor Bradford fell on deaf ears.

ears. Bradford rightly claimed a lack of authority over Weston’s group. But the Indians saw them sheltered at Plymouth when they first arrived and naturally looked at Governor Bradford as the senior English official in the region. Moreover, the Pilgrims expected Massasoit to compel his vassals to honor the peace agreement made between them. Why then did the governor claim he could not reciprocate with his “vassals?” On top of this, some of Weston’s men informed the Massachusetts that Governor Bradford planned to take their corn by force.390

Of course, nobody among the English knew during the winter of 1622/1623 of the Massachusetts plot to wipe them out. The substance of the insulting speech made in front of Myles Standish at Manomet was unknown until later.391 Only the “abundant mercies of God” thwarted the ad hoc plan to murder the captain later that night. About this time, news reached Plymouth that Massasoit lay dying.392 This news must have deeply affected the English at Plymouth. Massasoit’s death would alter the entire political landscape in New England. Whoever succeeded him would more than likely prove less hospitable to the English, particularly now since Weston’s group made themselves so troublesome. Winslow recorded a custom of the Indians in which the friends of anyone who becomes ill at the point of death visit them in their extremity. While most Europeans scorned Indian customs, the Pilgrims saw the utility in honoring this “good and warrantable action.” Governor Bradford again charged Edward

---

390 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 115.
391 Once again, the issue of language complicates matters. Winslow likely accompanied Standish to Manomet but neither one could understand the Indians’ speech. Perhaps Hobbamock translated – he does not appear in this scene – but Winslow described how Standish, “though… the best Linguist amongst us,” could not understand Witawumat’s speech. It seems certain that Winslow simply extrapolated from what he learned later on to create this scene. Winslow, Good News, 24.
392 They also learned that a Dutch ship had run aground within a few miles of Massasoit’s location. The English were understandably eager to contact the Dutch, but the vessel departed before the English arrived. Winslow, Good News, 25-26.
Winslow to represent Plymouth. He was joined by John Hamden, a gentleman from London who “desired much to see the Countrey,” and Hobbamock as their translator.\textsuperscript{393}

Hobbamock replaced Tisquantum as interpreter and liaison for the Pilgrims after the latter died at Cape Cod during the fall of 1622. While helping the English purchase corn and beans from Indians at Manamoycke (present day Chatham, MA), Tisquantum fell ill and expired a few days later. The English had planned to continue trading along the southern edge of Cape Cod, but without Tisquantum to guide them and facilitate their introduction, there was little chance of success. The voyage itself would have required them to sail aboard the \textit{Swan} through the same dangerous shoals which forced the \textit{Mayflower} back two years earlier. Tisquantum had apparently convinced the English to make the attempt near the time when he became ill. Winslow recorded his death thusly in \textit{Good News}:

> But here, though they had determined to make a second assay, yet God had otherwayes disposed, who strucke Tisquantum with sicknesse, in so much as hee there died, which crossed their Southward trading, and the more because the Masters sufficiency was much doubted, and the season verie tempestuous, and not fit to goe upon discoverie, having no guide to direct them.\textsuperscript{394}

This brief passage is all Winslow devoted to the death of Tisquantum; an elegy hardly befitting someone once deemed indispensable to the colony’s survival. The previous May, the Pilgrims risked their alliance with Massasoit in order to retain his services.\textsuperscript{395} Five months later, Winslow recorded Tisquantum’s death with barely a shrug. Despite the loss of their “tongue,” the Pilgrims did not miss a beat. Hobbamock seamlessly took over as translator and faithfully served the

\textsuperscript{394} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 17-18.
\textsuperscript{395} Massasoit had not communicated with Plymouth for several months. This prompted the colonists to construct a fort, a task which diverted significant manpower away from the business of farming. The subsequent lack of food forced the English to trade with the Indians at Cape Cod. Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 13-16.
Pilgrims for the remainder of Winslow’s account. Just as Bradford originally downplayed the appearance of English-speaking Indians in Mourt’s Relation, Winslow barely paused as Hobbamock assumed Tisquantum’s duties as interpreter for the English colonists. Apparently, Hobbamock became sufficiently adept with the English language to make the loss of Tisquantum of little consequence. However, if Hobbamock had indeed become fluent in English, why then did the Pilgrims refuse to hand the perfidious Tisquantum over to Massasoit just a few months earlier? Hobbamock was a trusted member of Massasoit’s inner circle. Perhaps the Pilgrims felt it unlikely that he could adequately serve two masters, yet Winslow never expressed a doubt about Hobbamock’s faithfulness in either Mourt or Good News.

The manner in which Winslow presented the transition from Tisquantum to Hobbamock as primary interpreter for the Pilgrims appears odd until it is examined in the context of the Indian conspiracy against the English. When Tisquantum died, the Pilgrims had yet to learn about the plot against them. His untimely demise left the English without anyone to facilitate their introduction with the Indians along the southern edge of Cape Cod. Winslow’s blasé description of both this setback and the loss of their supposedly indispensable translator certainly belied the trepidation the English felt when these events occurred. When Winslow recorded this episode months later, the conspiracy against the English had already manifested itself. The Pilgrims certainly suspected that Tisquantum had a hand in cultivating the Indians’ hostility towards them. Additionally, Hobbamock had already proven a loyal and reliable interpreter. Thus, the offhand way in which Winslow described the loss of Tisquantum signifies the extent to which Good News reflects how the author perceived – and wished readers in England to perceive – events after the Indian uprising had been crushed. The rendering of Tisquantum’s death, influenced as it was by later events, indicates that the conspiracy and subsequent collapse of Wessagusset shaped
the narrative in *Good News* and in fact convinced the Pilgrims of the necessity of publishing the tract in England.

Continuing with the story, we see other examples of Winslow describing events in a way that situates the climatic events in context. In early March 1623, the Pilgrims got word that Massasoit lay dying and immediately sent Winslow, accompanied by Hobbamock and John Hamden, to pay their respects. Along the way, some Indians informed them that Massasoit had died. The news greatly affected Hobbamock who desired to return to Plymouth at once. Winslow however pressed on, eager to establish friendly relations with whoever succeeded Massasoit as king of the Wampanoag.\(^{396}\) Winslow here took a moment to reinforce some English stereotypes of the Indians, perhaps to offset the potential stigma of his following an Indian custom in visiting Massasoit. Hobbamock manifested “a troubled spirit” upon hearing of Massasoit’s death, and launched into speech “with such signes of lamentation and unfei

gned sorrow, [that] it would have made the hardest heart relent.” Winslow related what Hobbamock addressed to him in particular.

And turning him to me said; Whilst I lived, I should never see his like amongst the Indians, saying. he was no lyer, he was not blody and cruell like other Indians; In anger and passion he was soone reclaimed, easie to be reconciled towards such as had offended him, ruled by reason in such measure, as he would not scorend the advice of meane men, and that the governed his men better with few strokes than others did with many; truly loving where he loved…\(^{397}\)

---

\(^{396}\) Winslow expected Coubantant to replace Massasoit. Coubantant was an outspoken enemy of the English and had resisted the alliance with the colonists. During the summer of 1621, Winslow led the attack at Namaschet against him and now thought it likely that Coubantant would exact his revenge. Hobbamock did not help matters. Mourning the loss of his “loving Sachim,” he told how often Massasoit had restrained the malice of the others against the English and feared they “had not a faithfull friend left among the Indians.” Winslow, *Good News*, 26-27.

\(^{397}\) Winslow, *Good News*, 27.
In his premature eulogy – Massasoit in fact still lived – Hobbamock assigned to his beloved sachem characteristics idealized within the Christian ethic. Honest, benevolent, and judicious, Massasoit possessed virtues English readers hoped to see in their own king. Massasoit’s English-like qualities, as related by Winslow, made him the natural ally of the colonists at Plymouth. Indeed, the passage above, though attributed to Hobbamock, was manipulated by Winslow and rendered comprehensible to his English readers. Hobbamock certainly did not think of Indians as inherently bloody and cruel. This vignette played upon English preconceptions and identified Massasoit and Hobbamock as exceptional among the Indians the colonists encounter in New England. Massasoit willingly allied himself to the English at Plymouth and, aside from a brief disagreement over Bradford’s reluctance to surrender or punish Tisquantum, he consistently demonstrated loyalty and friendship toward the colonists. Many of the sachems mentioned in Mourt and Good News loathed the English. Winslow therefore imparted Christian qualities to Massasoit’s character as reason to explain his willingness to ally himself with the English. It also reinforced Massasoit’s bona fides as an honest and trustworthy partner, virtues that would become important later in the text.398

Within a few miles of their destination, the village of Puckanokick, the party learned that Massasoit had not died, though little hope remained of his surviving long. They rushed to the village where they found Massasoit surrounded by men performing “charmes” for their king. Winslow described the men conducting this pagan rite as “making such a hellish noise, [that] it distempered us that were well, and therefore unlike to ease him that was sicke.” Winslow then related a dramatic and touching sickbed scene. Upon hearing that he had English visitors, Massasoit bade them to approach. Massasoit, blinded by illness, extended a hand and in a low

voice asked “keen Winsnow?” meaning, “Art thou Winslow?” The Indians, Winslow explained, cannot pronounce the letter L; thus “Winsnow” for “Winslow.” It is an intimate detail designed to underscore the affection between Massasoit and the English. “Oh Winslow, I shall never see thee againe,” lamented Massasoit. Winslow, with Hobbamock translating, conveyed Governor Bradford’s respects and great sorrow at hearing his dear friend’s condition. He then proceeded to nurse Massasoit back to help, giving him “a confection of many comfortable conserves” and removing an “abundance of corruption” from the sachem’s mouth. Within half an hour, Massasoit regained his sight. Over the next few days, Winslow administered to his patient a variety of remedies: confections, English pottage, chicken broth, and relish made from local herbs. Massasoit began to recover and publically announced the English – via Edward Winslow – as “the instruments of his preservation.” During this episode, Winslow revealed his knowledge of medicine though he admits “not being accustomed with such poysonous favours.” Nevertheless, his visit to the ailing Massasoit provided him another opportunity to position the civilized English above the savage Indian. Whereas the Indians resort to pagan ritual, Winslow, though not a surgeon by trade, successfully treated Massasoit and several other Indians suffering from a similar malady. English readers would have been familiar with the “medicine” prescribed by Winslow, essentially chicken soup and other foodstuffs considered essential for good health. What was commonplace for the English – Winslow here represents an ordinary Englishman – was for the Indians miraculous. Winslow naturally thanked God “for giving his blessing to such raw and ignorant meanes,” further underlining the providential nature of his, and Plymouth’s, efforts in New England.\textsuperscript{399}

\textsuperscript{399} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 28-31.
The scene also marks the first appearance by Massasoit since the dispute between him and the English over Tisquantum. Bradford’s refusal to turn him over to Massasoit clearly strained their relationship. Some among the Wampanoag and their allies saw an opportunity to drive a wedge between their king and the English at Plymouth. Before Winslow and company arrived at Puckanokick, a sachem attempted to use their absence as evidence to show Massasoit “how hollow-hearted the English were.” However, after his recovery, Massasoit announced: “Now I see the English are my friends and love me, and whilst I live I will never forget this kindnesse they have shewed me.” Massasoit immediately made good on his word. He summoned Hobbamock and revealed to him the plot against the English led by the Massachusett, along with several other tribes. The conspirators had invited Massasoit to join them, but he refused. He next recommended that the English at Plymouth launch a preemptive strike against the Massachusett and thus nip this insurgency in the bud. Massasoit charged Hobbamock to relay this message to Winslow “by the way,” meaning on their way back to Plymouth.

Upon Winslow and company’s departure for Plymouth, they received a surprising request from Coubitant to break their journey and lodge with him at Mattapuyst. Two years earlier, Coubitant had threatened the English by silencing their “tongue” Tisquantum. In Mourt, Winslow related the English response, a raid against Coubitant at Namaschet whereby they found Tisquantum alive and issued a warning against any Indian who would offer violence against them or any of Massasoit’s loyal subjects. They apparently never confronted Coubitant and Winslow failed to record the outcome of their raid. According to Drake, Massasoit

---

400 Massasoit named the other tribes: Nauset, Paomet, Succonet, Mattachiest, Manamet, Agowaywam, and the Isle of Capawack. These tribes were located south of Plymouth, mostly along Cape Cod where the English had purchased corn the previous winter. The Isle of Capawack is present day Martha’s Vineyard. Assuming that Bradford and Winslow faithfully recorded their actions, the disaffection of these Indians toward the English must have lingered from their earlier encounter with Thomas Hunt, etc. Winslow, Good News, 32.

401 Winslow, Good News, 28-32.
interceded and compelled Coubitant and several other sachems to sign a treaty with the English on 13 September 1621. Among the sachems forced to sign this treaty was Canacum who now appeared determined to eradicate the English as before. Winslow, of course, likely had misgivings about Coubitant but accepted the invitation. Earlier in Good News, Winslow acknowledged Coubitant as Massasoit’s likely successor. Though Massasoit seemed to be on the mend, Winslow, as representative of Plymouth surely felt some obligation to comply with Coubitant’s request.

His brief stay with Coubitant went better than Winslow could have anticipated. He described the sachem as affable, making “merry jests & squibs” toward his guests and beamed when his visitors returned the favor. Upon Coubitant’s request, Winslow promised to send the same “Physicke” he gave to Massasoit should Coubitant also become ill. The sachem then asked how Winslow dared to travel so far away from the safety of Plymouth. He replied that “where was true love there was no feare, and my heart was so upright towards them that for mine owne part I was fearless to come amongst them.” Coubitant followed this up with another question.

If your love be such, and it bring forth such fruits, how commeth it to passe, that when wee come to Patuxet [Plymouth], you stand upon your guard, with the mouths of your Peeces presented towards us?

Winslow answered that this was an English custom intended as “the most honourable and respective entertainment” they could bestow upon their “best respected friends.” Coubitant, like all the Indians, greatly feared European firearms and replied that “he liked not such salutations.” Coubitant next inquired about the English custom of blessing their food which prompted

---

403 Winslow, Good News, 32-33.
404 Winslow, Good News, 33.
Winslow to expatiate upon the Christian faith. Everything good in their lives, Winslow explained, came from God and thus the English took every opportunity to thank Him. Coubitant appeared satisfied with this explanation and said that his people held similar beliefs. “Much profitable conference was occasioned hereby,” reported Winslow, though he deemed it “too tedious” to relate in his account. They remained only that night in Coubitant’s company but Winslow acknowledged that he “never had better entertainment amongst any of them.”

Winslow featured several important themes in this apparent digression with Coubitant. While the English received threats from the Narragansett and engaged in minor skirmishes with the Nauset, Coubitant was the only Indian identified by name who had expressed hostility towards them. Significantly, Winslow never mentioned the incident at Namaschet during this visit and if he had any misgivings about Coubitant’s intentions he failed to record them on paper. The entire scene seems contrived to establish a lack of animosity between the English and their former enemy. Winslow’s glib response to Coubitant’s concern about the cannons at Plymouth was less about assuaging the fears of the sachem than it was about showing the colony in a position of strength to his readers in England. Their discussion about religion is a surprisingly rare account of a colonist’s attempt to explain the Christian faith to the Indians. Although the Pilgrims listed converting the Indians as part of their mandate, Winslow failed to record any serious attempt to do so. This brief exchange with Coubitant represents the only recorded attempt in both Mourt and Good News to engage the Indians in matters of faith. Winslow chose not to relate the “tedious” details of their discussion except to indicate that the Indians believed in “the same power that wee called God.” Here, Winslow employed the oft-used convention of similitude to establish a connection between the English and Indians. He certainly knew that the Indians did

405 Winslow, Good News, 33-34.
not practice monotheism yet he neglected to mention this seemingly crucial detail in his theological discussion with Coubitant. 406

This episode marks a high point in the peaceable state of affairs between the English and the Indians. Winslow had just saved Massasoit’s life – and likely the alliance between the English and Wampanoag – and on his return to Plymouth enjoyed a pleasant evening with their former adversary Coubitant. But Coubitant was not just any Indian sachem. Winslow described him in Mourt as Plymouth’s most outspoken enemy. We hear nothing of him again until Winslow’s visit to an ailing Massasoit. Then, on the return trip, Coubitant and Winslow spend an evening together exchanging friendly jibes and pleasant conversation. The contrast between this scene and the previous one in Mourt suggests that Winslow included it in Good News for a reason. Though he and Coubitant talked for several hours, Winslow related only the following: the bonhomie between himself and Coubitant, his fearlessness via his faith in God, Coubitant’s fear of the English cannons, and their mutual spirituality. The sum effect of this episode seems designed to establish a favorable relationship between the English and the Indians, one weighted toward the mutually acknowledged superiority of the former.

The next day, as they again set out for Plymouth, Hobbamock informed Winslow of his private conference with Massasoit. Winslow must have blanched at the news, but it also put recent events in a clearer light. The English had recently traded with several of the tribes who had joined in a confederacy against them. While there, Winslow observed several Indians acting

---

406 In fact, Winslow remarked later in Good News that the Indians of New England “conceive of many divine powers” under the principal deity called Kiebtan. Like the Christian God, Kiebtan “created the heavens, earth, sea, and all creatures contained therein.” He also made one man and one woman, “of whom they and wee and all mankind came.” The Indians, however, also worshiped a deity named Hobbamock, who appeared to them in several forms: man, deer, fawn, eagle, etc. Winslow likens Hobbamock to the devil, whom the Indians call upon to heal wounds and disease. These and other details Winslow discusses in an addendum to the main narrative and omits these details while portraying his amenable conversation with Coubitant. Winslow, Good News, 52-53.
strangely toward the English. He himself had just come from a visit to one of the conspirators, the sachem of Manomet. The unprovoked hostility displayed by the Massachusetts envoy Wituwamat while they were at Manomet now made sense and certainly confirmed what Hobbamock now told him. Armed with this new information, Winslow raced back to Plymouth to alert the colony of their impending danger.

Winslow offered nothing to explain why Massasoit did not inform him directly about the Massachusetts conspiracy. Massasoit certainly had reason for proceeding with caution. His relationship with the English seemed to have cooled over the previous few months; the Pilgrims apparently had not heard from him since the previous summer. The Massachusetts likely knew of the recent discord between Massasoit and the English and hoped to convince the Wampanoag king to join them in their plot. Winslow’s account suggests that Massasoit harbored some doubts about his English allies, but Winslow’s visit and ability to restore Massasoit back to health served to renew the bond between them. Assured of Plymouth’s good will, Massasoit decided to inform his friends of their danger. However, if those behind the conspiracy remained in Puckanokick during his convalescence, Massasoit certainly did not wish for them to know it was he who tipped off the English. Thus, he likely instructed his trusted lieutenant Hobbamock to wait until they were away from prying eyes to inform Winslow. Hobbamock, perhaps uncertain as to the loyalties of Coubitant, delayed until after they departed from his company to relay Massasoit’s message to Winslow.

407 Winslow, however, never explained how he came to learn the substance of the fiery speech Wituwamat delivered at Manomet. He records many of the details of this speech in Good News. Winslow almost certainly fabricated much of the scene based on this new information.

408 Winslow, Good News, 34-35.
Winslow reached Plymouth two days after leaving Coubitant at Mattapuyst. He had much to tell. Winslow undoubtedly met with William Bradford straightaway and provided the governor with a complete report of what he did and learned. The information came not a moment too soon. In recent days, a member of the Paomet tribe convinced Captain Standish to accompany him on a visit to the Massachusetts. The Paomet were among those in league with the Massachusetts and Winslow characterized this Indian’s solicitations as an attempt to ambush the captain. Fortunately, contrary winds delayed their departure, and Winslow’s return exposed the plan. As usual, the magnanimous Pilgrims refused to punish the guilty party and sent him on his way. While they showed mercy toward the Paomet agent, the Pilgrims eventually decided to take the initiative against those involved in the conspiracy. Launching a preemptive strike, however, presented the Pilgrims with a problem. The Indians made threats and spoke a great deal about attacking the English, but had not yet committed a hostile act. A year earlier, a coordinated attack by Indians in Virginia resulted in the death of over three hundred English colonists. Knowledge of this massacre undoubtedly factored in the Pilgrims decision to strike first. However, they also appreciated the potential backlash in taking such a step. The Pilgrims had powerful enemies in England who could use their attack against the Indians to undermine Plymouth colony. As we shall see, the Pilgrims had good reason for these concerns.

The assault against the Massachusetts Indians was not the only preemptive strike launched by the Pilgrims in 1623. To forestall their critics in England, the Pilgrims chose Edward Winslow to write and publish an account of these events. This effort produced Good News from New England, published a year later in London. In the first half of that tract, examined thus far in this

---

409 The reference here is to the massacre of 347 English colonists at Jamestown by the Powhatan Confederacy on 22 March 1622.
chapter, Winslow depicted Plymouth as a godly, peaceable and unified settlement – a worthy English colony with unlimited potential. As we have seen, later arrivals from England threatened everything the Pilgrims had achieved, leading to the Indian conspiracy and the decision to nip that conspiracy in the bud. Thus far in the story, Weston’s men appear as part of the supporting cast. They cause considerable problems for the Pilgrims, but rarely do we see them as anything other than a shadowy group of troublemakers operating behind the scenes. After Winslow returned from his visit to Massasoit, Weston’s men finally appear on center stage.

Earlier in the tract, Winslow mentioned complaints registered at Plymouth against the behavior of Weston’s men at Wessagusset. He quickly moved on to other issues in those instances, but here, after his return from visiting Massasoit, he provided a more detailed explanation. The complaints stemmed from the desperate actions of Weston’s men. Though they received their share of the food acquired on the trading missions to Cape Cod, Weston’s men failed to ration their stores, nor did they save any corn for seed to plant in the coming spring. Faced with starvation, some robbed the Indians of their food. Others hired themselves out to the Indians who paid them in corn. The thieves among them were publically whipped for their crime, but Winslow reserved special condemnation for those who “abased” themselves by working for the Indians. He described their labor as “fetching them wood and water,” a clear reference to Joshua 9:23 – “Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed

---

410 Phineas Pratt’s narrative substantiates much of this account with only a slight difference. Pratt insisted that only one of their number stole corn, and that person was first whipped by the English and then – after the thief apparently repeated the offense – was offered to the Indians for them to mete out punishment. Pratt recorded the sachem’s response: “That is not just dealing. If my men wrong my neighbor Sachem or his men, he sends me word & I beat or kill my men, according to the offense. If his men wrong me or my men, I send word & he beats or kills his men according to the offense. All Sachems do justice by their own men. If not, we say they are all agreed & then we fight, & now I say you all steal my corn.” Pratt, “Relation,” 472-476.
from being bondmen, and hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the house of my God.” Winslow’s English readers would have immediately associated the reference with slavery. In other words, some of Weston’s men had become slaves to the Indians in order to save themselves. By March, Weston’s men had become so desperate that many had “forsaken the towne,” trading their clothes for corn and eating their victuals in the woods instead of returning with it to Wessagusset. One member of their company had even “turned Savage” in order to save himself from starvation. In essence, Winslow described them as having abandoned their Englishness in order to survive. He highlights this point via the complaints received at Plymouth against Weston’s men. The grievances supposedly came from both the Indians and “some others of best desert amongst Master Weston’s Colony.” Not only is this the first time Winslow mentioned complaints from among Weston’s group, but it also marks the first time he indicated anyone of merit dwelling among them. Significantly, Winslow claimed that the Indians and the more respectable colonists at Wessagusset had the same objection: the willingness of the colonists to abase themselves toward the Indians. This, of course, was merely fodder for English readers. Even if the “best desert” among Weston’s men blushed at their fellow Englishmen’s behavior, the Indians were certainly not ashamed of these colonists for coming to them for food. The complaint as described here merely represents the way in which the Pilgrims – and hopefully Winslow’s readers – looked upon the colonists at Wessagusset.412

Winslow’s intent here is to juxtapose the undisciplined and desperate rabble in Wessagusset with the honorable and orderly colonists in Plymouth. By situating Plymouth in a favorable light, Winslow promoted his colony as the legitimate representative in the region, a truly English

411 Joshua 9:23 (Geneva Bible).
412 Winslow, Good News, 34-35.
community adhering to English values and ideals. He further emphasized the superiority of Plymouth by featuring the colony as the site to where the Indians and Wessagusset elite made their appeals. The Indians certainly recognized Wessagusset as having a type of feudal relationship with Plymouth, with the former in a state of vassalage. When Weston’s men first arrived at Plymouth, the Indians saw their indigence. They needed Plymouth, not the other way around. Plymouth also had a widely recognized alliance with the Wampanoag whereas Weston’s men had no formal ties to any Indian tribe. Lastly, the Massachusett planned to attack Plymouth only because they expected that colony to revenge any violence inflicted upon Wessagusset. Winslow provided examples showing Weston’s men recognizing Plymouth as a higher authority. On the brink of starvation, these colonists saw violence against the Indians as the only means to procure food. Before committing themselves to such an act, “some more honestly minded” individuals advised their leader, John Sanders, to consult with their fellow Englishmen at Plymouth. In a letter sent to Governor Bradford, Sanders expressed their desperate situation and tendered a plan to take food from the Indians who he claimed had “maliciously withheld” it from them.  

Bradford gathered his advisors and formulated a response. Winslow wrote that Sanders merely requested advice from Plymouth, but it seems likely that he desired assistance from them as well. Until this point, Winslow characterized Weston’s men as incorrigible and utterly contemptuous of the Pilgrims. They cooperated briefly during the trading mission to Cape Cod; however, Winslow barely mentioned the other colonists during the trip. Moreover, he lamented the fact that no one among them exercised proper authority over the whole. Suddenly, not only

---

413 This is the first reference to John Sanders. Winslow designated him as the “Overseer” for Wessagusset, perhaps a deliberate choice of words befitting a colony comprised of Englishmen willing to enslave themselves to the Indians. In late March, John Sanders sought to purchase provisions from the English traders and fishermen at Monhegan Island, a mission Winslow had undertaken previously and perhaps recommended to him. Winslow, Good News, 35-37.
did the English at Wessagusset have leaders, but they also had prudence enough to appeal to the Pilgrims for advice.

Despite Winslow’s earlier characterization that Weston’s men arrived leaderless, they did in fact have some authority figures. Andrew Weston, brother of Thomas, came over from England with the group on board the Charity. He represented his sibling while in New England, though we do not know how much actual authority he possessed. In a letter to Governor Bradford, Edward Pickering described Andrew Weston as the “principal” of the colonists. Weston did not remain with the group however, returning to England aboard the Charity. The Pilgrims surely loathed both Westons at this point. Winslow’s characterization of Weston’s group arriving without leadership may have reflected their low opinion of the leader rather than an accurate description of the situation. After Weston, the quality of leadership apparently improved among the Wesagusset colonists. Richard Green, brother-in-law of Thomas Weston, brokered the joint trading excursion to Cape Cod the previous fall. Samuel Morison described Green as “one of the few respectable characters in his settlement,” but offers no reason for his opinion. Respectable or not, Green died before the Swan set sail for the cape. John Sanders replaced Green and at the very least had the good sense to keep Governor Bradford apprised of their situation and plans.

\[\text{Footnotes:}\]

414 In a letter to William Bradford, Thomas Weston suggested his brother had some authority but not total control over the other colonists. Weston cautioned the governor to receive his group with kindness – as others suggested to Bradford – else “not only my brother but others also would have been violent and heady against you, etc.” In the same letter, Weston advised Bradford that he had “given order to my brother and those with him to do as they and himself shall find fit.” Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 104-105.

415 In the aforementioned letter, Edward Pickering called the younger Weston “a heady young man and violent, and set against you there and the company here; plotting with Mr. Weston [Thomas] their own ends, which tend to your and our undoing.” Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 105.

We will never know for certain if Sanders asked for anything more than advice; nevertheless, Bradford tailored his response as an appeal to Sanders’ civic duty and self-interest.

Wee altogether disliked their intendment, as being against the law of God and nature, shewing how it would crosse the worthy ends and proceedings of the King’s Majestie, and his honourable Councell for this place, both in respect of the peaceable enlarging of his Majesty’s Dominions, and also of the propagation of the knowledge and Law of God…  

He reminded Sanders of “their owne weakenesse,” and doubted they could achieve a military victory over the Indians. Bradford then spelled out the long-term consequences of making an enemy of the Indians. Lastly, he warned that “the principall Agents” of this rash plan, if attempted, would surely have to answer for it to the crown. To emphasize this point, Bradford sent a private letter to John Sanders, “shewing how dangerous it would be for him above all others.” Winslow described the good effect of Bradford’s response. Upon receiving the governor’s letters, the colonists at Wessagusett “altered their determination” and abandoned their plan to take food from the Indians by force. If Governor Bradford could not directly command the colonists at Wessagusset, he was certainly in a position to influence them.  

The passage in *Good News* was also meant to influence its readers. Bradford’s response sounds as if it came from the king’s man. The only other direct reference to the king comes at the beginning of *Mourt’s Relation* in the text of the Mayflower Compact. In both instances, the Pilgrims grounded their authority as representatives of the king. These conspicuous displays of loyalty to the crown certainly carried more weight among the colonists they hoped to influence than any religious overtures. The Pilgrims appreciated that the malcontents who accompanied them on board the *Mayflower* as well as Weston’s men in Wessagusset cared little for planting a

---

godly community in New England. The same was true for the majority of those in England. Religion may have been the primary mover and shaker of things in England, but most thought of colonization as an economic or political endeavor. In truth, the king mattered little to the short-term needs of either colony and appears in Good News as a symbol of proper authority. Bradford may have indeed cited the king and his “honourable Councell” in his response to Sanders’ letter, but Winslow included it in Good News in order to demonstrate two English communities on the opposite ends of the colonial spectrum.

The exchange of letters occurred in February 1623, prior to Winslow’s visit to Massasoit. Governor Bradford rightly feared that an attack against the Massachusetts might destabilize the political status quo in New England and seriously jeopardize the future of his own colony. But everything changed when Winslow returned to Plymouth in early March. With strong evidence of a sizeable conspiracy aligned against the English, Bradford’s hopes of a peaceable solution now seemed unlikely. On 23 March 1623, members of the Company gathered for the annual Court Day.⁴¹⁹ Governor Bradford revealed the conspiracy in public and asked the assembled members to consider their next course of action. War seemed likely, but Bradford was unwilling to commit to this without the consent of “the bodie of the Company.” Eventually, they concluded that the only way to “deliver our Countrymen [in Wessagusset] and preserve ourselves” was to return the conspirators’ “malicious and cruell purposes upon their owne heads.” Still, it grieved them “to shed the blood of those whose good wee ever intended and aymed at as a principall in

⁴¹⁹ Bradford was reelected as governor, a position he would hold for most of the next thirty-four years.
all our proceedings.” Just a few weeks after Governor Bradford advised John Sanders not to engage in hostilities against the Massachusetts, he ordered Captain Standish to do just that.420

Bradford’s decision to launch a preemptive strike against the Massachusetts begins the dramatic climax of Winslow’s story. Everything he previously described was intended to put Standish’s offensive in the proper context. Time and again, Winslow revealed how Weston’s men brought chaos to New England. Whereas the colonists at Plymouth – led by the Pilgrims – cultivated peace and trade with the Indians, those at Wessagusset wrought nothing but conflict and dishonor. Winslow carefully included the exchange of letters between Sanders and Bradford as a prelude to the latter’s decision to attack the Massachusetts. The episode revealed the Pilgrims’ commitment to peace until news of the conspiracy reached Plymouth. Of course, Winslow described the actions of Weston’s men as the catalyst for the conspiracy. Nevertheless, he anticipated that critics in England would see the Pilgrims’ actions as self-serving and contrary to their expressed commitment to treat the Indians with Christian love. To help refute these accusations, Winslow once again used an Indian voice to substantiate an English assessment. Earlier in the tract, he recorded the secret conversation in which Massasoit informed Hobbamock about the conspiracy against the English. Not only did Massasoit reveal the plot to his trusted lieutenant, he instructed Hobbamock to advise Winslow on how the Pilgrims should proceed.

And whereas wee [the Pilgrims] were wont to say, we would not strike a stroke till they first begun; if said he upon this intelligence, they make that answer, tell them, when their Countrypmen at [Wessagusset] are killed, they being not able to defend themselves, that then it will be too late to recover their lives, nay through the multitude of adversaries they

420 Winslow records that the Company agreed to leave the matter to three people: Governor Bradford, his Assistant Isaac Allerton, and Captain Standish. Winslow implied a general consensus that not every man of the Company was qualified to plan their response nor trustworthy enough to keep it from the Indians with whom they had “dayly association.” This is almost certainly Edward Winslow’s private assessment as it seems unlikely that the members of the Company would publicly acknowledge their own lack of wisdom and reliability. Winslow, Good News, 37-38.
shall with great difficulty preserve their owne, and there he counseled without delay to take away the principals, and then the plot would cease.\footnote{Winslow, Good News, 32.}

Massasoit may have had motives for setting the English against the Massachusett and their allies, but the passage above almost certainly represents the Pilgrims’ own line of reasoning. Shrewdly, Winslow presented this calculus as originating from Massasoit, thus legitimizing the Pilgrims’ later actions as an idea originally inspired by the Indians and approved by the same.

The above passage also helped legitimize the Pilgrims’ decision to suddenly abandon a peaceable solution to the crisis with the Massachusett. But they were also putting a great deal of stock in what Hobbamock told Winslow. A year earlier, the Pilgrims heard that Massasoit had joined with the Narragansett and Coubitant in an alliance against them. The rumor proved completely unfounded.\footnote{Tisquantum’s supposed relative informed the Pilgrims of the conspiracy. Hobbamock denied that Massasoit was involved and sent his wife to Puckanokick for confirmation. According to Winslow, Massasoit “was much offended” by the accusation and blamed Tisquantum for trying to drive a wedge between him and the English. Curiously, this conspiracy rumor and the one that precipitated the preemptive strike in March 1623 reached Plymouth colony immediately after Myles Standish had embarked on a trading expedition to the Massachusett Indians. The absence of their military captain left Plymouth particularly vulnerable to a surprise attack, but in both instances Standish was immediately recalled to the colony. This is a remarkable coincidence similar to how in Mourt’s Relation, the Indians appear several times just as the English are considering their military orders [see Chapter Three]. Winslow, Good News, 7-8.} The summer before that, Hobbamock stumbled into Plymouth and informed the Pilgrims that Tisquantum was dead and his murderer Coubitant had begun a revolt against Massasoit. Alarmed, the Pilgrims immediately dispatched an armed expedition only to find Tisquantum alive and little evidence of a rebellion. Now, the Pilgrims were set to launch yet another offensive based on what Hobbamock told them. If any of the Pilgrim leaders had doubts about dancing to Hobbamock’s (or Massasoit’s) tune, Winslow failed to mention it in Good News. Nevertheless, the manner in which Winslow revealed the conspiracy to the reader suggests
that the Pilgrims had concerns about how their abrupt change of heart would be received in England.

Throughout *Good News*, Winslow featured the growing tension between the English and the Indians as a prelude to the plot against the colonists and the preemptive strike by the Pilgrims. Within this general milieu, he situated earlier events in the context of a conspiracy that remained unknown to the English until Hobbamock supposedly divulged it in mid-March 1623. Winslow first introduced the conspiracy while Standish and company visited Canacum at Manomet. While there, Witawumat suddenly arrived and addressed the English in an insolent manner. The English discerned the hostility behind his words, but without Tisquantum to translate (he died months earlier) they had no idea what Witawumat said to them. Winslow acknowledged that at the time the English “could not gather anything from it.” Nevertheless, he provided a detailed rendition of Witawumat’s tirade wherein he laid bare the plot against Wessagusset and Plymouth colonies. Winslow almost certainly concocted Witawumat’s speech. Shortly after this episode, he included another imagined dialogue: Massasoit instructing Hobbamock to tip off the English about the plot against them. The discussion may have occurred, but the actual exchange in *Good News* was a product of Winslow’s imagination. Winslow recreated these dialogues in order to expose the conspiracy to the reader earlier in the story. A strictly chronological account would have shown the Pilgrims abandoning their commitment to peaceful diplomacy with the Indians solely upon Hobbamock’s word. The Pilgrims could not afford to take any threat lightly, but they needed a smoking gun to justify their preemptive strike. In *Good News*, Winslow provided

---

423 Winslow claimed that he “discovered” the substance of Witawumat’s speech at a later date but failed to provide any details. He could not have transcribed a speech delivered in an unknown language for later interpretation. Most likely, Winslow simply connected the conspiracy with Witawumat’s tirade after Hobbamock relayed Massasoit’s message.
“evidence” that the Indians indeed had plotted against the English. Hobbamock’s warning, therefore, merely confirmed what the reader already knew. Had Winslow kept to a strict chronological record, the preemptive strike would read as a kneejerk reaction to the latest rumor of Indian attack.

In addition to the imagined Indian speeches, Winslow provided another dubious piece of evidence of an Indian conspiracy. Around the same time Winslow returned to Plymouth, a sachem named Wassapinewat appeared and informed the Pilgrims about the plot. In doing so, he betrayed his brother Obtakiest, one of the chief conspirators against the colonists, and his people to the English. According to Winslow, Wassapinewat feared the colonists’ retribution, having “smarted for partaking with Coubitant” during the summer of 1621. Winslow recorded this episode in Mourt’s Relation. After receiving word of a rebellion (from Hobbamock no less), the Pilgrims immediately sent an armed expedition to nip it in the bud. They raided a quiet village in the middle of the night but found no sign of a rebellion. The next morning, the Pilgrims delivered a speech warning anyone against plotting against them or Massasoit. Afterwards, they returned to Plymouth, offering medical assistance to anyone wounded in the assault. Winslow dressed up the action in Mourt, but the expedition was hardly the Pilgrims’ finest hour. Nevertheless, Winslow claimed that Wassapinewat, “fearing the like again,” became desperate to avoid enduring the Pilgrims’ swift justice. These circumstances are difficult to believe. Many Indians feared the English, but could the Pilgrims’ rather clumsy expedition against Coubitant make Wassapinewat, a sachem no less, desperate enough to betray his people to the English nearly two

---

424 An Indian later captured by the Pilgrims declared that Obtakiest was a reluctant participant in the conspiracy. This may be true, but Obtakiest just as likely made this claim after the fact for political reasons. Regardless, he was deeply involved in the plot against the English. Winslow, Good News, 45.

425 Winslow made no reference to Wassapinewat – or any other sachem – in his account of Coubitant’s rebellion. Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 118-123.
years after the fact? The defection of a high-ranking member of the very Indian tribe who intended to wipe out both English colonies seems like an event deserving of some attention. Yet Winslow devoted only a few lines, using it merely to corroborate his own evidence and affording the governor “a double testimony” as proof of the conspiracy. Bradford, in OPP, referred only to “other evidence… too long here to relate,” and made no mention of Wassapinewat. Lastly, the timing of Wassapinewat’s testimony – just as Winslow returned to Plymouth with his own evidence – is the icing on a very implausible cake. The likelihood that Winslow fabricated Wassapinewat’s betrayal suggests anxiety on the part of the author to substantiate the Indian conspiracy. A plot of some sort likely existed, but to justify their actions, the Pilgrims needed a smoking gun. Winslow clearly felt that Hobbamock’s warning alone would not justify the preemptive strike against the Massachusetts, at least in the minds of English readers.

After providing the reader with a detailed account of the Indian conspiracy and its causes, Winslow proceeded to the Pilgrims’ response. Alarmed at the reports, Governor Bradford nevertheless refused to undertake war with the Indians without the consent of “the Company.” He supposedly put the question to them as they gathered for the yearly Court Day. In fact, there was no public referendum. The call to arms fell to a select few, both because the matter was “of such weight as every man was not of sufficiency to judge,” and to keep their plans secret from

---

426 The lack of any significant treatment of Wassapinewat’s testimony in Good News could be attributed to Winslow not having heard it firsthand. Naturally, Winslow featured events in which he participated. But as we have seen, he did not abstain from providing detailed accounts of things he did not himself witness (e.g. Massasoit’s conversation with Hobbamock). If Wassapinewat did confess, Winslow would have undoubtedly learned the specifics from Bradford.
427 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 117.
428 Winslow, Good News, 37.
the number of Indians who visited Plymouth on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{429} At length, the Pilgrims decided to attack the Massachusett. Captain Standish chose eight men to accompany him to Wessagusset.\textsuperscript{430} While pretending to have come on a trading venture, Standish carefully assessed the situation. Instead of engaging the Massachusett warriors in the field, Standish hoped to end the conspiracy by taking out its principal leader Witawumat. Appropriate to the plan, Standish had orders to return Witawumat’s head to Plymouth so that it might “be a warning and terror to all of that disposition.” Meanwhile, the colonists at Plymouth made ready in case the Indians saw the absence of their captain as an opportunity to attack them. Governor Bradford imprisoned a Massachusetts Indian on a return visit from Manomet on suspicion of visiting Plymouth to gather information and coordinating activities with his co-conspirators to the south. When Standish reached Wessagusset, he discovered a colony in disarray. Their ship, the \textit{Swan}, lay at anchor in the harbor without a single man aboard. He saw several colonists foraging for groundnuts along the shore. They seemed unconcerned about their own lack of security having already resigned themselves to the mercy of the local Indians. Standish proceeded to the plantation where John Sanders had left the most trustworthy of Weston’s men in charge. The captain immediately assumed command. He informed the colonists of the conspiracy and the reason for his coming. He swore them all to secrecy and ordered those colonists who had removed themselves the furthest away from the Plantation to return at once. Aware that Weston’s men could no longer remain in safety at Wessagusset once hostilities commenced, Standish invited all to Plymouth.

\textsuperscript{429} Winslow made reference to three individuals by their title: the governor [William Bradford], his assistant [Isaac Allerton] and the captain [Myles Standish]. Other prominent members among the Pilgrims, such as Winslow, were surely consulted as well. Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 37-38.

\textsuperscript{430} The number of men may have some significance. According to Winslow, Captain Standish agreed to take with him “so many men as he thought sufficient to make his party good against all the Indians in the Massachusetts Bay.” In every other military operation (e.g. the mission to Namaschet to revenge the supposed death of Tisquantum) mentioned in \textit{Mourt and Good News}, the number of men sent was ten. Winslow records this fact each time and thus seems to mark this number of men as the standard complement. Standish took only eight in order to “prevent jealousie,” that is, to avoid raising suspicion among the Indians. Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 38.
afterward. If any preferred another course, he promised to assist them in any way he could. Weston’s men agreed to the captain’s proposal and they now awaited a break in the weather to put their plan in action.  

During this time, an Indian came to Wessagusset with some furs to trade though Standish and concluded that his real purpose was to determine the captain’s intent. Winslow records the incident as follows.

In the meane time an Indian came to him and brought some furres, but rather to gather what hee could from the Captain, then coming then for trade; and though the Captaine carried things as smoothly as possibly he could, yet at his returne hee reported hee saw by his eyes that hee was angry in his heart, and therefore beganne to suspect themselves discovered.

The jig was up. Another Indian named Pecksuot approached Hobbamock, informing him that they knew the true reason why Captain Standish had come and that they were unafraid of him. The Indians and English commenced a game of cat and mouse. Several times, a small group of Indians came to the Plantation and taunted Captain Standish, hurling insults his way and sharpening the points of their knives before his face. Witawumat again boasted of his prowess at killing Europeans and vowed he would do so again. Pecksuot threw in his own two cents calling the captain “but a little man.” Standish endured these threats and insults with equanimity and waited for an opportunity to strike. The chance came when Standish found Wituwamat, Pecksuot, and two other Indians at Wessagusset and in the same room. The captain gave the word and his men shut the door. Standish and others managed to kill three of the Indians. The

---

431 Winslow, Good News, 40-41.
432 Winslow, Good News, 41.
433 Standish was vertically challenged and may have been sensitive about his lack of height. Thomas Morton referred to Standish as “Captain Shrimp” in New English Canaan.
434 Winslow does not explain why the Indians put themselves in such a vulnerable situation.
fourth, Witawumat’s brother, survived the attack but was afterwards hanged. Hobbamock witnessed the fight and offers the following panegyric.

Yesterday, Pecksuot bragging of his owne strength and stature, sayd, though you were a great Captaine yet you were but a little man; but today I see you are big enough to lay him on the ground.\textsuperscript{435}

Once more, Winslow utilized an Indian voice to commend the Pilgrims’ actions. Hobbamock proclaimed Standish’s valor, but another Indian, a nameless youth, verified the righteousness of the attack itself. Shortly after hostilities ended, this Indian youth, who “was ever of a courteous and loving disposition towards us,” approached Captain Standish “without feare.” He confessed the Massachusetts’s intentions to wipe out Wessagusset. The plan, the youth stated, was to construct five canoes with which to take the Swan, lying in harbor, and thus eliminate the colonists only escape route. Standish arrived in the nick of time and foiled the plan. The youth’s story strains credibility. When Standish first arrived at the colony, he noted the Swan abandoned and the colonists wholly unconcerned about an Indian attack. The Indians could have wiped them out at any time. They hardly needed five canoes to capture an unoccupied vessel the colonists had no intention of defending. The contradiction in Winslow’s account suggests the author manipulated the Indian youth’s confession to further legitimize the Pilgrims’ actions. The mysterious youth added that Weston’s men in fact were used as laborers to construct the canoes, having completed three of them prior to Standish’s arrival. Thus, Winslow showed the Wessagusset colonists sowing the seeds of their own destruction only to be saved by the righteous assault by the Pilgrims.\textsuperscript{436}

\textsuperscript{435} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 43. 
\textsuperscript{436} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 45.
After Standish killed Wituwamat, the English engaged in a few other small skirmishes in which several more Indians died. If any Englishmen perished in these battles, Winslow did not reveal it. He did however describe the manly behavior of the English and the reluctance of some of the Massachusett to face Captain Standish in combat. When the fighting was over, Standish again offered to take Weston’s men with him back to Plymouth. Most refused, preferring to sail to Munhiggen [Mohegan Island] in hopes of finding passage back to England. Standish also released the Indian women captured during the conflict, allowing them to keep their beaver coats and forbidding the men to offer them any discourtesy.  

The behavior of the English under Myles Standish’s command exemplified the nobility of the participants and the righteousness of their cause. When Captain Standish returned to Plymouth, they showed Wituwamat’s head to the prisoner (the Indian suspected of spying) who summarily confessed all he knew about the conspiracy. Governor Bradford spared the terrified prisoner his life and charged him to send a message to his sachem.

That for our parts, it never entered into our hearts to take such a course with them, till their owne treachery enforced us thereunto, and therefore might thanke themselves for their own overthow, yet since he had begun, if againe by any the like courses he did provoke him, his Countrey should not hold him, for he would never suffer him or his to rest in peace, till he had utterly consumed them, and therefore should take this as a warning.

The message greatly resembles the speech after the English raid at Namaschet in August 1621. Again, the English state their intent to live peaceably with the Indians, but promise to revenge themselves against any who oppose them. Considering that Coubitant, the primary target of the

---

438 The captive begged for his life and said he was not “a Massachusett man.” Also, Hobbamock apparently knew the individual and “gave a good report of him.” Winslow, *Good News*, 45.
previous threat, had apparently reformed his attitude, the English at Plymouth hoped this latest warning might have a similar effect. Nearly two years transpired between the Namaschet speech and evidence of Coubitant’s reformation. The English did not have to wait nearly as long to see results from this latest threat. A few weeks after Bradford sent away his former captive with this message, a woman appeared and informed the governor that Obtakiest, the sachem to whom the message was primarily intended, desired to renew his peace with the English. With the defeat of the Massachusett, the conspiracy collapsed. According to Winslow, the execution of Wituamat “terrified and amazed” their allies to the point in which they abandoned their homes and fled into the “swamps and other desert places.” Disease summarily eliminated the other principal heads of the Indian conspiracy, including Canacum.

The assault against the Massachusett eliminated the immediate threat of an Indian attack, but the Pilgrims still faced their old enemy: hunger. During the previous year, Governor Bradford compelled the English at Plymouth to devote much of their labor toward military preparations. This reduced their collective efforts towards farming and because they also shared some of their victuals with Weston’s men, the colonists now had to make do with even less. Though Bradford successfully led his colony through these difficult times, he now “had nothing to give men for their necessities,” and thus found himself less able to command the colonists as he had previously done. As a result, Bradford ended the communal system of farming in which his government collected and distributed food grown by the planters in the colony. Instead, he privatized agriculture, allowing each person to keep whatever they grew, taking only a small

---

440 Governor Bradford demanded Obtakiest return three Englishmen who were with this sachem when Captain Standish attacked the Massachusett. Regrettably, Obtakiest killed them prior to receiving Bradford’s warning. The woman also informed Bradford that Obtakiest desired peace but had difficulty enforcing it with his subjects because most have them had fled after hearing of the English victory against the Massachusett. Winslow, Good News, 46.

441 Canacum was the sachem at Manomet to whom Witawumat delivered his fiery oration denouncing the English. Winslow, Good News, 46-47.
portion from each for the maintenance of those whose duties prevented them from farming. This made it necessary to allocate plots of land to families for their private use. Technically, the privatization of agriculture and land violated the Pilgrims’ agreement with the investors, but it was presented as a stopgap measure, for “the present and future good of the Company,” lasting until the next harvest. Winslow carefully avoided any reference to the good effect this policy had in the colony. In OPP, Bradford was less circumspect. The governor freely acknowledged that the colonists planted more corn that year than what could have been done under his own direction.

The women now went willingly into the field, and took their little ones with them to set corn; which before would allege weakness and inability; whom to have compelled would have been thought great tyranny and oppression. Writing for posterity, Bradford had little issue praising a policy that privileged local imperatives over those of the investors in England. Winslow, writing for an English audience could not afford to express such a parochial viewpoint. Having already admitted to breaching their contract, he wisely refrained from extolling the virtues of such a move.

The final episode described in Winslow’s narrative concerned the drought that plagued the colony throughout the summer of 1623. The privatization of agriculture in Plymouth enabled the colonists to plant more crops, but the lack of rain spoiled their efforts. Crops withered beneath a relentless sun, leaving the English on the brink of starvation. Like a good puritan, Winslow believed that God sent the drought to chastise the colonists, though he omitted the

---

442 The land was given to families for their “present use” only, meaning the grantee could not pass on the land to his heirs. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 120.
443 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 120.
444 Winslow, Good News, 46-47.
445 Winslow did not provide a time frame of the drought. Bradford, in OPP, wrote that it last from the third week in May until mid-July. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 131.
particular sin that merited this punishment. The drought occurred right after their attack on the
Massachusetts. For a group in search of signs of God’s favor or disapproval, the Pilgrims must
have wondered if their preemptive strike had angered the Almighty. Winslow understandably
avoided making this connection in *Good News*. Instead, he noted that disease claimed the lives of
several Indian sachems, the “just judgement of God” for having conspired against the English.
The strained logic illustrated in *Good News* may have reflected the true assessment of the
Pilgrims, but Winslow certainly knew that critics in England might interpret the drought as
God’s punishment against the colonists for their assault against the Indians.\footnote{In fact, John Robinson wrote a letter to Governor Bradford highly critical of the attack against the Massachusetts. If someone inclined to think well of the Pilgrims disapproved of the action, it is easy to assume that their enemies in England would have a similar reaction.}{446} He therefore
offered English readers a more suitable target for God’s wrath.\footnote{Winslow, *Good News*, 46-49.}{447}

The drought continued for several weeks and with no relief in sight, Governor Bradford
ordered a day of fasting and humiliation in the hopes of moving God to have mercy upon them.
Eight or nine hours into this “exercise,” clouds appeared in the sky. The next morning rain began
to fall and continued for two weeks, reviving Plymouth’s wilting crops as well as the colonists’
spirits. The English naturally saw the end of the drought as a consequence of their prayers to
God. But instead of describing the revitalization of the colony, Winslow instead related how the
Indians were made to see the return of the rains as evidence of the power of the Christian God
and the colonists’ ability to summon it. The ubiquitous Hobbamock witnessed the English fast
day observance and apparently reported its effect to the Indians in New England. The Indians
had their own tradition of appealing to the divine for rain, but as Winslow pointed out, these
pagan rites did not always produce the desired result. Their “conjurations” produced
such stormes and tempests, as sometimes instead of doing them good, it layeth the Corne flat on the ground, to their prejudice; but ours in so gentle and seasonable a manner, as they never observed the like.\textsuperscript{448}

Winslow danced around the reason why God punished the colonists with a drought, but he made it abundantly clear that He still blessed their endeavor. For good measure, Winslow relied upon the faithful Hobbamock to once again vouch for the righteousness of the Pilgrims. The Indians, vis-à-vis Hobbamock, may not have fully embraced Christianity, but they recognized the power of God and the ability of the Pilgrims to harness it.\textsuperscript{449}

Winslow ended his narrative with the arrival of the \textit{Anne} and the \textit{Little James} later that summer. He made no mention of the sixty passengers who disembarked except to say that one arrived ill but soon recovered. Furthermore, Winslow claimed that the passengers found not a single planter in poor health in spite of their wants and hardships. Bradford, in \textit{OPP}, told a different story. The governor admitted that these newest arrivals “were much daunted and dismayed” when they saw “their low and poor condition ashore.” Some, he continued, desired an immediate return to England while others let loose a torrent of bitter tears, “fancying their own misery in what they saw now in others.” Bradford attributed their plight to the recent drought. The discrepancy between Winslow and Bradford reflect the different purposes of each author. Winslow, anxious to convince English readers that the Pilgrims were back in God’s good graces, described how the conspicuous piety of the colonists ended the drought. He made no mention of

\textsuperscript{448} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 50. In \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, Bradford also mentions the “Indians’ admiration” of their God’s “gracious and speedy answer” to the colonists’ prayers. Like Winslow, he added that the rain came “without either wind or thunder or any violence” which revived their crops instead of destroying it. Both authors make oblique references to a destructive storm apparently conjured by the Indians. Morison, \textit{Of Plymouth Plantation}, 131.

\textsuperscript{449} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 49-50.
any lingering effect. Bradford, eager to depict the early struggles of the founders, freely acknowledged that their sorry condition continued for some time after the rains came.  

On 10 September 1623, Winslow boarded the *Anne* for the return voyage to England. It would be the first of several Atlantic crossings he would make in the service of Plymouth colony over the next two decades. Winslow’s standing among the Pilgrims and his considerable talents as a diplomat made him the obvious choice to represent the colony’s interests in England. His mission was twofold: “to inform of all things and procure such things as were thought needful for their present condition.” Winslow hoped to address the material needs of the colony through the sale of goods, mainly clapboard and beaver furs sent back to England aboard the *Anne*. To inform the English public, he prepared a manuscript for print. Winslow composed most, if not all, of *Good News from New England* while on board the *Anne*. Before he left, Winslow met with Governor Bradford (and likely Standish) to compare notes and discuss publishing an account of recent events in the colony. The Pilgrims had good reason to want their version circulating in England. The preemptive strike against the Massachusetts opened them to criticism. And unlike when they published *Mourt’s Relation*, the Pilgrims now had in

---

450 Bradford reported that some sixty persons came to the colony on board the *Anne* and *Little James*. Some were the wives and children of those already at Plymouth. The remainder were a mixed lot, including a number of colonists who were on their “particular” (i.e. settlers who paid for their passage and were not part of the company). Tensions flared. Despite “a fruitful and liberal harvest,” the “Old Planters” became worried that the newcomers would be a burden to them. Conversely, some of the new colonists feared the residents would appropriate what they brought with them from England. Governor Bradford mitigated the crisis by granting private ownership of food. Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 127-132.

451 Meanwhile, the *Little James* was “fitted for Trade and discovery” and headed southward. Winslow, *Good News*, 51.


453 Winslow may have worked from a journal written in New England but the semi-omniscient mode of narration in the final product imparts a decided retrospective quality to the work.

454 There is no direct proof that Winslow met with anyone about the text, but it is extremely unlikely that Winslow would publish an account on behalf of the Pilgrims without discussing it with Governor Bradford. Winslow participated in most of the events he described in *Good News*, but it seems likely that parts of the text came from the testimony of others. Hence, he likely met with Myles Standish and perhaps others.
England a substantial number of eye witnesses, the Wessagusset survivors, willing to testify against them. The Pilgrims anticipated the consequences. They considered it imperative “that the truth and grounds of this action… should be made knowne,” as well as “the severall dispositions of that dissolved Colony, whose reports undoubtedly will be as various.”

The Pilgrims knew their enemies in England, both religious opponents and commercial rivals, would find the testimony of the disaffected survivors of Wessagusset useful. Winslow could repudiate their accounts verbally or through personal correspondence, but only a public refutation could reach an audience wide enough to offset the “various reports” of a few dozen former colonists. No record of these reports have survived. Nevertheless, a reasonable approximation exists in the form of *New English Canaan*, published in 1637 by Thomas Morton. Throughout much of the 1620s, Morton lived in New England and clashed mightily with the puritan authorities in Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. He first went to New England in the summer of 1622 on board the *Charity*, the same vessel that delivered Weston’s men to Plymouth. After a brief stay, Morton left on the same vessel for Virginia. In early October, the *Charity* stopped at Wessagusset on the return voyage to England. Undoubtedly, Morton learned

---

455 Winslow noted their intentions to return to England in *Good News*: “Mr. Weston’s people resolved to leave their Plantation and go for [Monhegan Island], hoping to get passage and retune with the fishing trips.” A few, he later added, “disliked the choyce of the body” and chose to accompany Captain Standish back to Plymouth. Winslow, *Good News*, 44.

456 Winslow, *Good News*, 47.

457 There is no record specifying how many colonists actually returned to England. From an original count of fifty to sixty individuals, a few died and a few returned with Myles Standish to Plymouth. Phineas Pratt claimed that nine died of starvation and one on the return voyage to Maine. Because we find no mention of any significant casualties in any of the available sources, it seems reasonable to accept Pratt’s estimate. Pratt, “Relation,” 472-476.

of the discord between Weston’s men and the Pilgrims during this visit.\textsuperscript{459} Nevertheless, he remained eager to make his own fortune as a colonist and returned to New England two years later with Captain Richard Wollaston. Wollaston intended to establish a colony within a few miles of Wessagusset. Morton, a lawyer by training and obsessed with living in New England – an endeavor he would doggedly pursue for the next twenty-five years – certainly contacted several of the returnees from Wessagusset prior to leaving. Indeed, he likely knew some of them quite well. Morton drew upon his exchanges with the Wessagusset colonists, on both sides of the Atlantic, when he wrote \textit{New English Canaan}.\textsuperscript{460}

By the time Morton wrote \textit{New English Canaan}, he had become a sworn enemy of the Pilgrims. Not surprisingly, his version of events differs considerably with that of Winslow and Bradford. He presented the initial encounter between the English and Massasoit (via Samoset and Squanto) from the Indian point of view, a subtle move that denied the Pilgrims their role as protagonist in the story of early New England. Morton also depicted Thomas Weston and the men he sent over as victims of the Pilgrims’ jealous cruelty. Both Pilgrim authors described Weston’s men as woefully undersupplied and unwilling to live honestly at Plymouth. Morton, however, claimed that Weston fitted his men “with provision of all sorts.” He next described “the Brethren” – Morton’s term for the Pilgrims – as welcoming at first. For a while “the good cheare went forward, and the strong liquors walked.” The Brethren, however, saw in Weston’s men competitors for the commercial and spiritual control of the colony. Weston’s men, Morton

\textsuperscript{459} Morton was a companion of Andrew Weston. It seems he had no intention of staying in English America. Instead, he explored the region in preparation for his own venture.

\textsuperscript{460} Morton had many possible sources of information by the time he set out to write \textit{New English Canaan}. Tracts printed in England included \textit{Mourt’s Relation}, \textit{Good News from New England}, \textit{Hakluytus Posthumus} (or \textit{Purchas his Pilgrims}), and several works by John Smith. The first two, of course, were written by the Pilgrims. The latter two expressed only mild criticism of them and greatly relied on \textit{Mourt} and \textit{Good News} for their information. \textit{New English Canaan} offers a highly critical – and original – account of events that reflect the mutual hostility of Weston’s men and Thomas Morton.
revealed, “were no chosen Separatists,” and were therefore unwanted. Edward Winslow wrote that Weston’s men left Plymouth on their own accord. Morton contradicted this point. He claimed the Brethren, after the newcomers’ supplies ran short, “hasted them to a place called Wessaguscus, in a weake case, and there left them fasting.”

Morton characterized the Pilgrims as dishonest manipulators opposed to anyone who did not share their separatist beliefs. Their cruel treatment made Weston’s men desperate. Three men lived among the Massachusett Indians in order to survive. Another stole “a capp full of corne” from “an Indian barne.” The owner discovered the crime, along with English footprints, and demanded justice from the colonists at Wessagusset. The English considered substituting the true thief, “an able bodied man,” with “a sickly person that cannot escape death.” They ultimately rejected the proposal and hung the guilty party, apparently to the satisfaction of the Indian plaintiff. The episode was later immortalized in Hudibras, Samuel Butler’s scathing polemic against puritans. In Butler’s poem, the colonists actually go through with the switch. By the time Hudibras was published in the 1660s, New England had become synonymous with puritanism; thus Butler manipulated the details in order to cast the puritans as hopeless radicals. The juice Butler added to this incident tends to obscure the reason why Morton recorded it in New English Canaan. Although tempted, in the midst of their extremity, to sacrifice an innocent man for the crime, the Wessagusset colonists show their resolve to uphold “the Lawes of England.” They bend but do not break. In both Mourt and Good News, Winslow meticulously identified the Pilgrims as instruments of proper authority in New England. In New

---

461 Wessaguscus is an alternative spelling of Wessagusset. Adams, Jr., New English Canaan, 245-6.
462 Butler published Hudibras in three parts, in 1663, 1664 and 1678. Adams suggests the strong possibility that Morton and Butler met in London during the late 1630s/early 1640s. Given Morton’s “sense of humor and convivial tastes,” Adams deemed it likely that Morton met often with poets and playwrights. He added: “there is much that is Hudibrastic in the New Canaan.” Adams, Jr., New English Canaan, 96-97.
English Canaan, Morton took a page out of the same playbook, casting Weston’s men in a similar role.\textsuperscript{463}

Morton continued his attack against the Pilgrims in several more passages. After cheating Weston’s men, the Pilgrims defaced an Indian monument to the dead at Passonagessit.\textsuperscript{464} Whereas Winslow charged Weston’s men with destabilizing English relations with the Indians, Morton placed the blame on the Plymouth Pilgrims. His most damning accusations appeared in his account of the Pilgrim attack against the Massachusett. According to Winslow, the Massachusett sniffed out Standish’s intent prior to the captain’s ambush of Witawumat and Pecksuot. He thus presented the contest as a fair fight. Morton on the other hand claimed that the Indians were “without suspicion of any mischief.” In his version, Standish brought pork and other foodstuffs from Plymouth and proposed to feast with the Indians. During the meal, Standish launched an unprovoked attack, taking the Massachusett completely by surprise. Morton’s account showed the Pilgrims behaving with Machiavellian cruelty. The veneration of the Plymouth Pilgrims has prompted most scholars to dismiss Morton’s account as malicious invention. Yet Winslow failed to provide a reason why Witawumat and Pecksuot had such a careless disregard for their lives. Winslow claimed these Indians had made threatening speeches against the English and knew Standish had come to kill them. Nevertheless, the next day Standish managed to lure them into a closed room with several other Englishmen, at which point the captain gave a signal to commence the attack. This seems highly improbable. The Massachusett may have suspected something – the captain’s arrival with several armed men

\textsuperscript{463} Morton acknowledged that Weston’s men shared some blame for their troubles. He called them lazy and disinclined “to take the benefit of the Country.” Nevertheless, the cruelty of the Pilgrims put Weston’s men in a position to fail. Adams, Jr., \textit{New English Canaan}, 249-251.

\textsuperscript{464} Passonagessit means “Little Neck of Land” and was located in present-day Quincy. Adams, highly prejudiced against Weston’s men, suspected they committed this atrocity. Adams, Jr., \textit{New English Canaan}, 247n.
surely put the Indians on their guard – nevertheless, the known circumstances of the event suggests that Standish did take the Massachusetts by surprise.\textsuperscript{465}

Ironically, details from \textit{Good News} supports Morton’s version of events. Prior to the ambush, Winslow described how Pecksuot taunted the English, claiming they would not “shunne” them even though they knew their intentions. The next day, after killing Witawumat and Pecksuot, along with two other Indians who had joined them, Standish sent word “to another Company that had intelligence of things” to kill every male Indian among them.\textsuperscript{466} He ordered the women be taken prisoner. Two Indians were slain. Standish then led his own detachment “to another place.” They murdered one more Indian man, but a second escaped, Standish lamented (along with Winslow) due to “the negligence of one [English]man.” The presence of Indian women among the English at Wessagusset indicates that the Massachusetts did not anticipate bloodshed. Women went there to trade.\textsuperscript{467} If they expected violence from the English, women would not have been anywhere near Wessagusset and Standish would have no need to take them prisoner. The discrepancy in Winslow’s account is difficult to reconcile. The seemingly minor detail of women prisoners undermines Winslow’s implausible argument that the Massachusetts had forewarning of hostilities.

The Indians were not the only ones in the dark about Standish’s plan. Most of Weston’s men had no idea the captain intended to attack the Massachusetts. They were also completely unaware

\textsuperscript{465} This does not negate the existence of a conspiracy against the English, nor Witawumat and Pecksuot’s hostility toward them. Regardless, Morton’s assessment balances with the details Winslow provided. Adams, Jr., \textit{New English Canaan}, 249-251.
\textsuperscript{466} Concerning the two Indians who accompanied Witawumat and Pecksuot, one was an unidentified man who died during the initial attack. The other was the younger brother of Witawumat, a youth who trod “villaine-like” in his steps. He survived the surprise attack but was later hanged. Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 40-43.
\textsuperscript{467} There is no evidence of the Massachusetts trading with the Wessagusset colonists, yet it is almost a certainty it happened, and likely often. In \textit{Mourt’s Relation}, Winslow mentioned that the Pilgrims traded with women during their visit to the Massachusetts. Women would have no other business at Wessagussett.
of the Indian conspiracy to wipe them out. Per Winslow, Standish reached Wessagusset only to find the entire colony wholly unconcerned with defending themselves against the Indians. The captain asked some colonists how they dared to leave their guard down.

[The colonists] answered like men senseless of their owne misery, they feared not the Indians, but lived and suffered them to lodge with them, not having sword, or gunne, or needing the same.\textsuperscript{468}

Discovering the colonists sleeping with the enemy must have shocked Standish. Like most Europeans, Standish regarded the Indians as an enemy “other.” The Pilgrims tolerated Indians at Plymouth, but they never considered them as part of the community. At Wessagusset, the Massachusett tolerated the English, and lived among the colonists in a position of strength. Weston’s men seemed perfectly content to live at the mercy of the Indians. They did not even make a pretense of defending themselves. As a professional soldier, Standish found this unacceptable. He concealed his anxiety (and his disgust), pretending satisfaction that the colonists had no cause for concern. To the leaders of Wessagusset colony, Standish told a different story.\textsuperscript{469} He informed them of the conspiracy as well as his plan to strike the Indians first. Knowing this action meant the end of Wessagusset as a colony, at least for the short term, Standish offered to take them back to Plymouth.\textsuperscript{470}

In \textit{Good News}, the leaders at Wessagusset believed Standish about the Indian conspiracy and readily agreed to the captain’s proposal to attack the Massachusett. They also agreed to keep the plan a secret from the others. Previously, Winslow indicated discord between the “best desert” at

\textsuperscript{468} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 40-41.
\textsuperscript{469} Again, a mysterious group of leaders among Weston’s men emerge as convenient. Earlier in \textit{Good News}, Winslow complained bitterly about their lack of leadership. He identified them here only as “those in whom John Sanders had received most special confidence.” Sanders had left for the coast of Maine to secure supplies. Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 41.
\textsuperscript{470} Winslow, \textit{Good News}, 41.
Wessagusset and the rest of Weston’s men. The former group, presumably the same with whom Standish now confided, had earlier complained to the Pilgrims about the lowly among them living with the Indians. In fact, the grievances received at Plymouth concerned the objectionable behavior of the English colonists, not the Massachusetts. By all indications, Weston’s men received equitable treatment from their Indian neighbors. Standish witnessed undeniable proof of this: the colonists’ indifference to defending themselves against the supposedly malicious Indians. But according to Winslow, Standish arrived and convinced the leaders at Wessagusset to attack the Massachusetts and abandon the colony.

It is difficult to see what would motivate the leaders of Wessagusset to cooperate with Standish. Even if they believed the Massachusetts were involved in a conspiracy against the English, Weston’s men had the means to leave the colony at any time. The leaders likely had a financial stake in the colony as well. A preemptive strike, even if justified, meant losing everything. It would also mean the end of peaceful relations with the very people they intended to trade with. Weston’s men had cooperated with the Pilgrims before (e.g. their joint venture trading along Cape Cod), but they were definitely not partners. The preemptive strike hardly served their purposes, but it suited the Pilgrims to a tee. It would make Plymouth the sole English presence in the region. It would also make future encroachments by Weston and others of his ilk much more difficult. Finally, an attack against the Massachusetts would assist in securing Massasoit’s northern flank, and thus strengthen the Pilgrims’ indispensable ally. Standish may indeed have convinced (or even compelled) the leaders at Wessagusset to support

471 Winslow never explained what the Wessagusset leaders hoped the Pilgrims could do about this problem. As mentioned above, the Indians supposedly registered this complaint as well.

472 The Pilgrims and Massasoit needed each other. The Pilgrims demonstrated a clear understanding of this earlier. During the summer of 1621, they attacked Coubitant at Manomet for supposedly rebelling against Massasoit.
the preemptive strike; nevertheless, Weston’s men had little to gain by an unprovoked attack against the Massachusetts.

If the leaders at Wessagusset lacked a clear motive for supporting Standish, then the lowly servants in the colony had even less incentive to attack their Indian neighbors. Standish kept his plan a secret for this very reason. He ambushed Witawumat and Pecksuot while three Englishmen were then living with the Massachusetts in a nearby village. In launching the attack, Standish knowingly condemned these men to death. Thomas Morton made this very point in *New English Canaan*. If Standish intended good toward Weston’s men, Morton argued, he would have taken the Indian men prisoner. The captain could have then exchanged them for the lives of the Englishmen. Winslow, naturally, gave a slightly different take in *Good News*. He claimed Standish ordered every colonist to remain at Wessagusset prior to his attack. Three of Weston’s men ignored this command – and perhaps doubted the captain’s authority to issue one – and left the colony. These men, Winslow scoffed, “more regarded their bellies than any command or Commander.” Of course, Winslow neglected to mention that the men in question had received “very good quarter” from the Massachusetts and knew nothing of Standish’s plan to attack them.\(^{473}\)

Throughout *Good News*, Winslow depicted the Pilgrims in the best possible light. Even so, a careful reading of this tract reveals numerous clues that cast doubts upon his version of events. Thomas Morton’s *New English Canaan* only adds to this uncertainty. Morton’s account has been typically dismissed as a blatant attempt to disparage the Pilgrims for his own material gain. He certainly had cause to dislike the Pilgrims and other puritan authorities in New England.

Nevertheless, Morton issued *New English Canaan* for the very same reason Winslow printed *Good News*: to promote a specific vision of New England amenable to a particular interest. No evidence exists to even suggest – let alone prove – that Morton took greater liberties with the truth than Winslow. He simply offered a glimpse of the same events from the point of view of the non-puritan colonists. Morton was also one of the few European chroniclers who expressed a good opinion of the Indians. Rarer still, he frequently described events from their perspective. Whereas Europeans on both sides of the Atlantic generally dismissed the Indians as savages and abhorred the idea of living among them, Morton compared them favorably against the conduct of the English colonists: “I have found the Massachusetts Indian more full of humanity than the Christians; and have had much better quarter with them.”

For generations, scholars thought of Thomas Morton as an unscrupulous opponent of the puritan authorities in New England. Not surprisingly, they dismissed *New English Canaan* as a highly charged and untrustworthy account, mere propaganda designed to undermine the noble efforts of the Pilgrim fathers. The reputation of both the man and his text improved beginning in the early 1970s. Around this time, scholars challenged the integrity of written texts in general, and Morton’s generous characterizations of the Indians were no longer held against him. For obvious reasons, *New English Canaan* was compared with the tracts penned by Bradford and Winslow. Minor Wallace Major, Karen Ordahl Kupperman and John P. McWilliams, Jr., among others, argued that the commercial rivalry between Plymouth and Mare Mount [Merrymount]

---

474 Adams, Jr., *New English Canaan*, 252-255.
475 Scholars followed Bradford’s example in *Of Plymouth Plantation* in which the Pilgrim governor described *New English Canaan* as “an infamous and scurrilous book against many godly and cheery men of the country; full of lies and slanders, etc.” Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 274.
drove the authors to publish in order to weaken the competition. Matt Cohen expanded the rivalry beyond economics. He believes Morton provoked Bradford by publicizing his ribald poetry – orally and in writing on the famous maypole – throughout New England. He introduced a competing vision for New England, one that threatened to undermine the spiritual ambitions of Bradford and other puritan authorities. Cohen stressed a local struggle for information disseminated via the written and spoken word. The Pilgrims had published both *Mourt* and *Good News* prior to Morton’s arrival at Mare Mount. Nevertheless, Cohen’s argument indicates the Pilgrims had an acute awareness and sensitivity to the expressed opinions of their English neighbors. If no one among Weston’s men possessed the literary talents of Thomas Morton they nonetheless could still communicate their views, locally and in England. Michelle Burnham connected the economic and literary dimensions of early New England. She described *New English Canaan* as a “trading–post pastoral.” The prototypical English pastoral helped reconcile the traditional ideals of English country life with the realities of a shift toward agrarian capitalism. Morton simply adopted this literary form to promote his vision of New England.

---

477 Major argued that Bradford manipulated the facts when he wrote *Of Plymouth Plantation*. For example, Governor Bradford claimed that Morton had no respect among the colonists at Mare Mount. Nevertheless, Morton assumed control of the colony after Captain Wollaston left for Virginia, something he could not have done without the cooperation of the settlers there. Bradford also accused the Mare Mount group of selling guns to the Indians and had Morton arrested. Morton vehemently denied the charge and claimed the governor fabricated it as an excuse to imprison him. Minor Wallace Major concurred, arguing that the Mount Mare colonists did not possess enough firearms to sell to the Indians. See “William Bradford versus Thomas Morton,” *Early American Literature* 5:2 (1970): 1-5. Karen Ordahl Kupperman maintained that Morton simply offered another version of events that conflicted with Bradford’s account. In particular, she argued that the preemptive attack against the Massachusetts was motivated by revenge against Thomas Weston. See “Thomas Morton, Historian,” *The New England Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (1977): 660-664. John P. McWilliams, Jr. emphasized the commercial rivalry between the colonies. Morton took over Mount Mare after Captain Wollaston left for Virginia. Morton offered each colonists a full share in the profits. His experiment with social leveling and free enterprise proved financially successful. Bradford, McWilliams argued, felt threatened by this alternative system of governance and determined to nip it in the bud. He arrested Morton on bogus charges in order to eliminate the competition. See “Fictions of Merry Mount,” *American Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1977): 3-30.

Writing for the landed gentry on the Council, Morton presented New England as a place in which the economic and social relations of the old English countryside could be maintained through trade. Conversely, he openly mocked the Pilgrims’ attempt to circumvent these traditions by connecting labor with social and political status.  

Recent scholarship has rendered a more evenhanded examination of *New English Canaan* and its author. The result is a more sympathetic profile of its author and a greater appreciation of his text as an historical document. Perhaps inevitably, Thomas Morton is defined by his conflict against the puritan authorities in New England. This same dynamic invites comparisons between *New English Canaan* and the Pilgrim chronicles. Such considerations have confirmed Canaan’s place in the canon of early New England literature. Nevertheless, the legitimization of Morton’s writings did not lead to any serious questioning of the motives that prompted Bradford and Winslow to publish their accounts. Indeed, most of these revisionist scholars ignore or give only passing interest to *Mourt* and *Good News*. They instead compare *Canaan* with *OPP*, two works written for different audiences and for different reasons. Although Morton published *Canaan* more than ten years after *Good News* first appeared in London, his denunciation of the Pilgrims resembled that of the Wessagusset colonists who returned to England during the summer of 1623. Thus we can see in *Canaan* the type of report Winslow hoped to dispute by publishing *Good News* upon his return to England in 1624.

The collapse of Wessagusset rid the Pilgrims of their troublesome neighbors, but it may have caused more problems that it solved. As Thomas Morton demonstrated years later, many

---

479 Burnham also treats all three books of *New English Canaan* as parts to a collective whole. Most scholars focus on Book Three, Morton’s historical narrative. Michelle Burnham, “Land, Labor, and Colonial Economics in Thomas Morton’s ‘New English Canaan,’” *Early American Literature* 41, no. 3 (2006): 405-428.
believed the Pilgrims had acted with Machiavellian efficiency, ruthlessly eliminating anyone, English or Indian, who opposed them. The veneration of the Pilgrim fathers by later generations masks the great uncertainty in the 1620s as to who’s narrative would prevail in the battle over the hearts and minds of English readers. During the summer of 1623, Winslow and the other Pilgrim leaders (Bradford, Allerton, and Standish for sure) discussed the problem. They had just launched an unprovoked attack against the Massachusett and forced their English rivals to abandon their colony. Suffering from the drought, the need for good relations in England, especially with the company, seemed especially acute. To counter the unfavorable reports spread by Weston’s men upon their return to England, the Pilgrims decided to publish an “official” account in London. They had experience printing tracts, both while in Leyden and in Plymouth colony. The direct effects of these efforts may have been as uncertain then as they are now, but the Pilgrims certainly expected their literary efforts to produce results. In Mourt’s Relation, Bradford and Winslow featured commercial opportunity and embodied a casual indifference to spiritual matters. The first few vessels to then reach Plymouth deposited a goodly number of materialistic and irreligious men to the colony. Mourt may not have been responsible for this outcome, but it certainly did not help prevent it.

We can never know the immediate effect Good News had in England. The publication may have prompted other puritans to make the journey to Plymouth or, a few years later, to their neighbor colony of Massachusetts Bay. Perhaps it even dissuaded a few worldly individuals from trying their luck in New England. The Pilgrims certainly anticipated its good effect. While the influence of Good News in 1620s England will forever remain a matter of speculation, it has contributed mightily to the historical record. As with Mourt and OPP, Good News is almost universally treated as an honest and accurate account of early New England. Among the first to
question Winslow’s motives for writing *Good News* was George F. Willison. In 1945, Willison published a critical examination of Plymouth colony entitled *Saints and Strangers*. He argued that the Pilgrim “saints” established a repressive theocracy whereby the non-puritan colonists, the “strangers,” lived as second-class citizens. Willison also maintained that the Indian conspiracy that prompted the preemptive strike against the Massachusett was a hoax, fabricated by Winslow as a cover up for the “treacherous actions” of the Pilgrims.  

Given the intellectual climate after the Second World War and the long-standing reverence of the Pilgrim Fathers as the spiritual founders of the country, Willison’s analysis understandably received mixed reviews. Critics blasted Willison for declaring *New English Canaan* as reliable as the works of Bradford and Winslow. Some believed Williston’s sympathetic treatment of the Indians clouded his objectivity. Others argued that Willison’s harsh assessment of the Pilgrims stemmed from an inveterate hostility toward religion. Willison openly challenged the received

---

480 Willison called attention to the many dubious circumstances reported in *Good News*. He questioned why Massasoit informed Hobbamock about the conspiracy instead of telling Winslow directly. He also wondered why Massasoit failed to offer assistance against the Massachusett as per the treaty signed with the English. If the Cape Cod Indians conspired against the English, then they were in fact rebelling against Massasoit’s authority, something he would never have tolerated. Willison suspected that Hobbamock invented the conspiracy in order to make the English dance to his tune, much like Squanto had previously done. Finally, Willison cited the fact that Standish had left for Wessagusset (only for the weather to force him back to Plymouth) before Winslow returned with the news of the conspiracy as evidence that the Pilgrims intended violence irrespective of the Indian plot against them. However, Willison errs in assuming the nature of Standish’s original mission: there exists no evidence to indicate the Pilgrims’ initial intent. George F. Willison, *Saints and Strangers* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945), 223-224.


wisdom of the Pilgrims and dared to look at them and their writings with an objective eye. For this reason he incurred the wrath of many in the academic establishment. His views became more accepted during the late sixties and seventies (for reasons explained in my discussion of New England Canaan above), but scholars still take umbrage with his critical estimation of the Pilgrims. In particular, Jeremy Bangs takes Willison to task for his “tendentious, distorted, and unreliable” account of early Plymouth. Willison wrote for a general audience. His study lacks the academic rigor of a professional historian and he at times fails to provide adequate evidence to support his claims. Bangs rightly identifies these shortcomings. He also blasts Willison for his unquestioning acceptance of New English Canaan as an authoritative account of early New England.

To illustrate this last point, Bangs alludes to Morton’s claim that the Pilgrims desecrated an Indian grave. When the Massachusetts Indians discovered the violation, a sachem named Chickatawbut delivered an impassioned speech to his men denouncing the Pilgrims. Morton included this speech in New English Canaan and Willison cited it as evidence that the Pilgrims, and not Weston’s men, antagonized the Indians. Of course, neither Morton nor any other Englishman witnessed Chickatawbut’s oration. He therefore either fabricated the incident or based his account on second-hand reports. Bangs seized upon this obvious contrivance to discredit both Morton and Willison. Any “suspicious, critical reading” of New English Canaan,
he argued, “might inspire the question how Thomas Morton obtained the text of this eloquence.” Of course, Winslow is guilty of the same charge in *Good News*: transcribing the words of Indian speeches that he did not hear or understand. In essence, Bangs fails to heed his own advice in refusing to subject *Good News* to the same “suspicious, critical reading” he renders to *New English Canaan*. And like Willison, Bangs makes several assertions without offering a shred of proof. In *Saints and Strangers*, Willison argued that the aborted expedition to the Massachusetts, launched just prior to Winslow returning to Plymouth with news of the conspiracy, proved that the Pilgrims intended violence toward the Indians irrespective of any plot against them. Bangs refuted this assumption, stating that no evidence exists to indicate the purpose of this expedition. He then undermines his own position, suggesting without evidence that Standish intended to bring supplies to the beleaguered colonists at Wessagusset until the weather forced them back.

Despite some shortcomings in *Saints and Strangers*, Willison nevertheless subjected the Pilgrim tracts to a degree of professional skepticism that had been (and still remains) lacking. Because we rely so much upon the words of Edward Winslow, we can never know for sure what really happened at Wessagusset in March 1623. But given the conflicting report from Thomas Morton, as well as the many inconsistencies in *Good News*, it seems almost certain that the

486 Concerning Mourt’s *Relation*, Bangs contends that Winslow was “a major author” of the opening section generally attributed to William Bradford. He claimed that Winslow ceased recording entries for this section, which end on 23 March 1621 due to grief over the loss of his wife. This is pure speculation. Bangs also argued that the Pilgrims intended the manuscript for Mourt’s *Relation* (this first section) for the return voyage on the *Mayflower*. Furthermore, he stated that copies were sent back aboard this vessel but never reached its destination. Bangs offers no proof to support any of these claims. Bangs, *Edward Winslow*, 24-25; Bangs, *Strangers and Pilgrims, Travelers and Sojourners* (Plymouth: General Society of Mayflower Descendants, 2009), 658.
Pilgrims contrived the Indian conspiracy as a cover for their Machiavellian agenda. Even Jeremy Bangs concedes that the Pilgrims published *Good News* “in order to provide a general story [that would] be otherwise represented to their disadvantage.” Perhaps the most damning indictment against the Pilgrims comes from their spiritual leader John Robinson. News of the Pilgrim attack traveled fast, reaching Robinson in Leyden within a few months. He fired off a scathing letter, dated 19 December 1623, to Governor Bradford, criticizing his protégé for initiating violence against the Massachusett.

Concerning the killing of those poor Indians… Oh, how happy a thing had it been, if you had converted some before you had killed any! Besides, where blood is once begun to be shed, it is seldom staunched of a long time after. You will say they deserved it. I grant it; but upon what provocations and invitements by those heathenish Christians [Weston’s men]?

Robinson heard about the incident as well as the justification for the Pilgrims’ actions. He wasn’t buying it. The Pilgrims voyaged to the New World in part to spread the Word of God to those shores. This mandate included an obligation to treat the Indians with Christian charity. Robinson feared the Pilgrims had succumbed to the temptation of violence. He saw in the preemptive strike evidence that Myles Standish had imparted a martial spirit upon the colony. The Pilgrims, Robinson argued, should have punished the two principal agitators as a lesson to the others. In fact, the Pilgrims employed this very strategy in August 1621 when Standish led an expedition to

---

489 It is uncertain how Robinson got wind of the incident. He most likely heard of it through friends in London sometime after Winslow reached that city. In the letter, Robinson referred to two sources, “we heard [about the attack] at first by report, and since by more certain relation.” Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 374.
490 The letter reached Plymouth in March 1624 on board the *Charity*.
492 Robinson thought well of Standish and believed that God had sent him among the Pilgrims to help in their mission. Nevertheless, it was incumbent upon Bradford and others to check the captain’s “disposition” towards violence. Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 375.
493 Robinson does not mention Pecksuot and Witawumat by name, but mentioned “one or two principals,” undoubtedly a reference to these two individuals. Robinson also cites “that approved rule, the punishment to a few, and the fear to many.” Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 375.
kill Coubitant at Namaschet. During that episode, the Pilgrims directed their assault solely against the ringleader of the rebellion, assuring the villagers that they intended no harm toward them. But for reasons Winslow never adequately explained, the Pilgrims abandoned this practice when they attacked the Massachusett. Robinson interpreted this development as a conspicuous digression from the principles fostered by the church in Leyden.

It is also a thing more glorious, in men’s eyes, than pleasing in God’s or convenient for Christians, to be a terror to poor barbarous people. And indeed I am afraid lest, by these occasions, other should be drawn to affect a kind of ruffling course in the world. Robinson feared that violence, once begun, would be exceedingly difficult to contain. More importantly, he believed that the Pilgrims had established a disturbing precedent: English colonists resolving their disputes with the Indians through bloodshed instead of Christian love.

Few people enjoyed greater respect among the Pilgrims than John Robinson. Every former member of the Leyden church fervently hoped their beloved pastor would soon join them in New England. Robinson’s rebuke, therefore, must have cut them to the quick.

As Robinson’s letter suggests, the Pilgrims actions toward the Indians and their fellow Englishmen fell well short of the Christian ideal they purported to represent. Nevertheless, the Pilgrims had risked everything to make their dream of godly community a reality. They were not about to let anyone – English or Indian – interfere with their plans. Still, the Pilgrims made considerable efforts to live in peace with the Indians and Weston’s men. Only when these groups

---

494 Dexter, Mourt’s Relation, 118-123.
495 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 375.
496 William Bradford must have been tempted to destroy Robinson’s letter, but in the end he included it in Of Plymouth Plantation. Even if the raid against the Massachusett represented a failure on the part of the Pilgrims to uphold their Christian virtues, these were men deeply committed to their faith. They also believed that God punished the prideful. Bradford may have inserted the letter in his History as a type of confession. Of course, if Of Plymouth Plantation had been intended for a different audience (e.g. English readers), he almost certainly would have kept Robinson’s missive to himself.
threatened to undermine their mission did they resort to violence. If the Pilgrims did not scruple to launch an unprovoked attack against the Massachusetts, then they certainly had few qualms about manipulating the facts in their published account of their affairs. Undoubtedly, the Pilgrims saw these measures as righteous obligations, deeds made necessary by the underhanded behavior of Weston’s men and the perfidious Massachusetts Indians. As religious zealots on a crusade to preserve the true faith, the Pilgrims surely felt that the ends justified the means.

The preemptive strike against the Massachusetts forced Weston’s men to abandon their colony at Wessagusset. The Pilgrims now had to perform damage control in England. Edward Winslow crafted *Good News from New England* in an attempt to influence public opinion in England. He devoted a significant portion of this tract to defending the Pilgrims’ preemptive strike against the Massachusetts Indians. Implicitly, Winslow blamed the influx of unscrupulous colonists for upsetting the peace and prosperity established by the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Weston’s group met with failure – with some help from the Pilgrims – but others like them would surely follow. Casting these worldly men as villains served a dual purpose. It called into question the ill reports spread by them in England while also discouraging similar individuals from seeking their fortunes in New England. The Pilgrims saw themselves in competition with Weston’s men – and those like them – over the spirit of New England. In *Mourt’s Relation*, Bradford and Winslow hoped to encourage support by obscuring the difficulties they encountered in New England. In *Good News*, Winslow struck a very different chord, emphasizing the precariousness of colonial life. Those looking to strike it rich or live in comfort, he warned, had no business coming to New England. In short, Winslow hoped *Good News from New England* would help screen out undesirables and mitigate corrupting influences from England.
As with Mourt’s Relation, the Pilgrims used Good News from New England to advance a colonial agenda. In both tracts, the authors promote the Pilgrims – though not by name – as the proper authority in New England. They also establish Plymouth colony as a bastion of unity and orthodoxy. The change in circumstances after 1621, namely the arrival of colonists unaffiliated with their religious beliefs, required a different type of work. When Bradford and Winslow penned Mourt, their enemies dwelled in England. They could therefore deny the existence of factions at Plymouth and promote economic opportunities for investors and colonists alike. In effect, they had exclusive rights to truth-telling about affairs in New England. All of this changed after dozens of rival settlers came to the region and threatened their godly community. The vast distance between New and Old England, which for a brief time insulated the Pilgrims from their enemies, had been bridged. In just a few years, the Pilgrims saw the Atlantic change from a protective barrier to an open conduit, a passageway through which their enemies could directly undermine their efforts in New England. In response, the Pilgrims took measures to eliminate their rivals and provided a highly subjective account of their actions to English readers. In doing so, they continued what they started two years earlier with Mourt’s Relation: using the printed word to advance a particular colonial objective. In effect, they inaugurated a new type of literature – the English colonial tract – a genre that generations of New England writers would eventually adopt and modify to achieve their own purposes.
On 12 January 1623/24, Edward Winslow left England for the second time in nearly as many years. His visit to England lasted less than three months, but he accomplished a great deal in such a short time. As he did in New England with the Indians, Winslow represented the Pilgrims’ interests as de facto ambassador. We have few records of his dealings in England, but we have the results. We know from Bradford that Winslow procured for the colony “a pretty good supply,” including the first cattle ever brought to New England. When he left Plymouth in September, the colony had endured a summer of drought. This occurred on top of Governor Bradford’s decision to allocate significant resources toward defense – and away from agriculture. Winslow had several objectives in England, none of more immediate import than the purchase of basic supplies.

Bradford and Winslow also looked to the colony’s future. With the Adventurers far from united in support of Plymouth – the colony itself and/or the Pilgrims as ruling junta – Winslow had his work cut out for him. Fortunately, he had good friends like Robert Cushman in England. Undoubtedly, Cushman stoked conflicting passions among many of his brethren, but no one could doubt his commitment to the colony’s welfare. He also had experience performing a variety of useful tasks. His familiarity with London’s print trade surely recommended him to

497 This was on board the Charity, commandeered by William Peirce. Whereas some ship’s captains cared little for the Pilgrims’ cause (e.g. Christopher Jones of the Mayflower), William Peirce supported the colony and its leaders. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Master Peirce informed Governor Bradford of John Lyford’s machinations in England. He also coordinated efforts with Governor Bradford to seize letters written by Lyford and John Oldham. Peter Wilson Coldham, The Complete Book of Emigrants: 1607-1660 (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1987), 35.

498 The cattle consisted of “three heifers and a bull.” From this meager stock, the colony grew a modest cattle industry with substantial profits coming from supplying the needs of Massachusetts Bay after 1630. Winslow also procured clothing, a basic necessity difficult to produce in the colony. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 141.
Winslow. Having already published two tracts concerning Plymouth colony, Cushman likely assisted Winslow in bringing *Good News from New England* to print.\(^{499}\) Winslow and Cushman also worked toward expanding the Pilgrims’ territorial holdings in New England. For years, European ships had come to the rich fishing grounds off the coast of present-day Maine. Located in the heart of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth was too far away to take advantage of this bounty. The Pilgrims, therefore, sought a location to the north from where they could fish and/or service the growing fleet of ships that came to those waters. On 1 January 1623/24, Winslow and Cushman received, from the Council for New England, a patent for Cape Anne, a rocky tract of land on the northern tip of Massachusetts Bay.\(^{500}\)

Winslow neglected to include any of this in *Good News*. In fact, he made no mention of his affairs in England at all.\(^{501}\) And while he did not explicitly reveal any motive for his return to England, Winslow invited the reader to believe that he had no other objective in mind other than to publish his account. Clearly, Winslow wished to keep English readers in the dark about his (and the Pilgrims’) more material ambitions. His willingness to reveal the privations endured by the Plymouth colonists makes it unlikely that Winslow scrupled to report his efforts to procure supplies in England. Indeed, he recorded several attempts to purchase food from both the nearby

---

\(^{499}\) There is no direct evidence to indicate Cushman had anything to do with *Good News from New England*. John Bellamy, the printer for *Mourt’s Relation* and *A Sermon Preached at Plimmoth*, also printed Winslow’s manuscript. Since Winslow had extensive contact with Cushman in England, it is almost certain that they collaborated to some extent.


\(^{501}\) Winslow ended his narrative abruptly with the arrival of the *Anne and Little James* to Plymouth (late July/early August). He offered next to nothing of what happened between this event and his departure for England six weeks later. Winslow mentioned that the passengers on the *Anne* and *Little James* were in excellent health (only one casualty during the voyage) and that these latest arrivals found “not any one sicke person amongst us at the Plantation.” They fitted out the *Anne*, the larger of the two ships, for its return to England. The *Little James* sailed southward on a mission of trade and exploration for the company. Winslow, *Good News*, 51.
Indians and the English mariners visiting the region. Their patent for Cape Anne was a different matter. Despite the fact that English colonies in the Americas had yet to generate much profit, investors competed for land grants and trade monopolies. In securing the patent for Cape Anne, the Pilgrims had entered the fray. The patent that legitimized their settlement at Plymouth was issued in the name of John Peirce, a member of the company in England. This helped the Leyden Pilgrims keep a low profile in 1620. In taking a patent made out to Winslow and Cushman, the Pilgrims had made a conspicuous play to expand their influence in New England.

Understandably, neither Winslow nor Cushman sought to publicize their expansion project. If anything, Winslow used *Good News* to discourage those with dreams of making their fortune in New England. Economic opportunity existed, he argued, but only to those truly devoted to God (i.e. orthodox puritans). At any rate, Winslow was not about to reveal their plans – or that they even had a plan – to the general public. Robert Cushman remained silent as well. Since Winslow departed London on 12 January 1624, and England a couple weeks later, he must have entrusted his manuscript to someone.\(^\text{502}\) Many of the sentiments expressed in *Good News* resemble those in Cushman’s *A Sermon preached at Plimmoth*. Furthermore, they used the same printer, John Bellamy. Had he so chosen, Cushman could have contributed to the final printed version, and possibly did. He could have also added a preface or postscript to the tract, as he did with *Mourt’s Relation*. Cushman, a man who felt justified, even compelled, to act as he saw fit, left no overt mark of his contributions to *Good News*. At the very least, he saw no reason to embellish the tract with any reference to his and Winslow’s affairs in England. Cushman

\(^{502}\) Like most vessels sailing westward through the English Channel, the *Charity* made several stops along the southern coast. We do not know where or when the ship made port, but several letters written to Governor Bradford are dated in late January, two weeks after the vessel departed from London. For certain, these letters were delivered on board ship at one or more these ports of call. See Morison, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 372-377.
understood the dynamics of the English merchant community, perhaps better than any of the
Plymouth Pilgrims. He knew well the rivalries and the jealousies among them, even those who
ostensibly pursued concurrent objectives. As a radical puritan living in Jacobean England, he
also appreciated the importance of maintaining a low profile. English readers discovered a great
deal about New England by reading Good News, but they remained ignorant of the Pilgrims’
immediate plans to build at Cape Anne.  

As a devout puritan, Edward Winslow embraced an ethic of humility. But when he arrived at
Plymouth in late March 1624, he could be forgiven if he took some pride in his
accomplishments. The store of supplies Winslow carried with him was sorely needed in the
colony after the long New England winter. Additionally, the patent for Cape Anne offered the
colony a potential source of new revenue. But Winslow also brought with him some bad tidings.
He reported “a strong faction amongst the Adventurers” had risen against the Pilgrims. In
particular, their adversaries were dead set against bringing any more from Leyden to New
England. For the Pilgrims, who longed for a reunion with their brethren in Holland, especially
with their beloved pastor John Robinson, this news must have greatly disappointed them. The
Adventurers instead sent over John Lyford, a self-styled minister who quickly became the
ringleader of a smear campaign against the Pilgrims.

---

503 Morison notes that the Pilgrims considered Cape Anne as a possible location for their settlement prior to settling on Plymouth. He is mistaken. In December 1620, after their second exploratory mission in Cape Cod, they debated the merits of two locations: Plymouth and Agawam (Ipswich). There is no mention of Cape Anne in Mourt’s Relation. The Pilgrims may have heard of it from John Smith. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 68n7.

504 Bradford included in Of Plymouth Plantation several letters from the Adventurers detailing this conflict. Winslow could also substantiate what was contained in these letters and give his own impressions to Governor Bradford. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 372-377.

505 I discuss the John Lyford affair in Chapter Two.
Before the Pilgrims felt the negative impact of any of these unhappy developments, Governor Bradford moved to establish a presence at Cape Anne. After dropping its passengers and cargo at Plymouth, the Charity sailed next to Cape Anne with a small group entrusted with laying the foundations of the new settlement. They managed to build a stage where they could dry and cure fish before shipment to Europe. Unfortunately, their efforts failed to yield any significant revenue. Bradford laid some of the blame on the Adventurers in England: the discord wrought by infighting among them caused delays in sending fishing vessels to New England. He also accused “one Baker,” a man ostensibly in charge of the operation, of drunkenness. Apparently, the others sent with him proved equally susceptible to the evils of drink. The redoubtable William Peirce, master of the Charity and great friend to the Pilgrims, could do nothing to improve the situation. Eventually, he sailed back to England. The loss would have been complete had not a few remained at Cape Anne to trade with the Indians.

In the coming years, the Pilgrims neglected to make any serious attempt to settle Cape Anne. Bradford offered no explanation for this in OPP, nor did he explain what happened to the few who remained behind to trade with the Indians. The omission is particularly odd since Cape Anne figured prominently in Bradford’s plan for the future. In a letter sent to England on the Winslow mission, the governor informed the Adventurers of his intent to procure a patent for

---

506 A stage resembled a pier, a structure extending from the shore into the sea that allowed fisherman to unload their catch. Builders erected another structure near the end of the stage on shore where workers processed the fish before shipping it to market in Europe. See E.A. Churchill, “A Most Ordinary Lot of Men: The Fishermen at Richmond Island, Maine, in the Early Seventeenth Century,” The New England Quarterly 57: 2 (1984): 187-188.

507 Bradford did not provide any details about those who remained at Cape Anne. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 141-146.
that location. He called it “as good a harbore as any in this land,” and “a good fishing place.”

In fact, Bradford rested the future hopes of his colony on getting the patent.

[S]eeing fishing must be the cheefe, if not the only means to doe us good; and [Cape Anne] is like to be so fite a place, and lyeth so neer us; we thinke it verie necessarie to use all diligence to procure it; and therefore we have now write unto you [i.e. the Adventurers] and the counsell againe about it, least our former letters should not be come, or not delivered, of which we have some suspition.

This passage not only reflects the import Bradford placed in their making use of Cape Anne, but it also indicates that he had made previous attempts to obtain a patent. Indeed, the governor sent Winslow to England, in part, to carry forth the business in person. With the help of Robert Cushman, Winslow succeeded. Yet upon receiving authorization to settle Cape Anne, the Pilgrims made only one half-hearted attempt to do so.

In the aforementioned letter, Bradford referred to others interested in the site. The infamous Thomas Weston, he claimed, “hath written for it, and is desirous to get it before us.” Bradford also cited a “Mr. Thompson” as an interested party. This almost certainly refers to David Thomson, governor of Piscataqua, a small colony founded in the spring of 1623 in present-day New Hampshire. As indicated in the passage quoted above, Bradford had “some suspition” that these, and perhaps others, had thwarted his efforts to obtain a patent for Cape Anne. But neither Weston nor Thomson ever made an attempt to settle there. And in the early spring of

---

508 Bradford sent a second copy of this letter on an unspecified vessel, a common practice in transatlantic communication. The letter was signed by Bradford and Isaac Allerton on 8 September 1623.


510 There is no record of these earlier attempts. Robert Cushman seems a likely candidate to facilitate this earlier effort. He collaborated with Winslow during the winter of 1623/1624. Nonetheless, Cushman betrays nothing of it, in print and in his known letters to Governor Bradford.


1624, Plymouth commenced building a colony at Cape Anne. Years earlier, the Pilgrims had defied the odds, overcoming enormous obstacles to build the first permanent settlement in New England. But after one comparatively minor setback at Cape Anne, they gave up. Again, Bradford offered no explanation. He made only one other reference in OPP to Cape Anne: a conflict in 1625 between Miles Standish and a small number of English settlers who had appropriated the stage built by the men from Plymouth.513

The incident involving Standish occurred about a year after the Pilgrims’ first attempt to settle Cape Anne. In the spring of 1625, a group of fishermen led by one Captain Hewes came to New England on a fishing expedition. Bradford claimed these fishermen were sent by “some of Lyford’s and Oldham’s friends,” a reference to the faction among the Adventurers in London opposed to the Pilgrims. The previous summer, Governor Bradford expelled Lyford and Oldham from Plymouth. The decision, though perhaps justified, induced some of the Adventurers to quit the business. These former members devised a new scheme and backed Captain Hewes’ fishing expedition. A few of the Adventurers continued to support the colony at Plymouth. Once again, they sent the Charity to trade and fish on behalf of the company. But Hewes reached New England first. He fished along the coast and used the stage built by the Plymouth men at Cape Anne the previous year. As owners of the stage, the Pilgrims demanded recompense from Hewes and sent Miles Standish to collect. Hewes refused and fortified his position. Standish, a man quick to anger, prepared to make good his claim by force. Bloodshed was avoided, however, by

513 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 170.
the intercession of William Peirce, master of the Charity, and Roger Conant, a former resident of Plymouth colony.  

Uncertainty surrounds the nature of the truce brokered by Peirce and Conant. Bradford claimed that he simply sent some planters from Plymouth to construct a new stage, allowing Hewes to keep the one built a year earlier. This seems unlikely. Not only had Hewes effectively stolen Plymouth’s stage, but he also lacked permission to land his catch at Cape Anne. Bradford had every right to oust Hewes. By law, the penalty for trespassing in New England was loss of vessel and its cargo. One can easily imagine the hot-tempered Standish threatening Hewes with this very action. Bradford also knew that his former enemies among the Adventurers in England supported Hewes. Allowing them to profit from their illegal activities at the expense of Plymouth seems charitable to the point of foolishness. Why would Bradford send planters to build a new stage for a rival company and then forfeit the privileges granted exclusively to his colony by patent? William Hubbard, the famed and often unreliable seventeenth-century historian, offered a different version. He claimed that Peirce and Conant convinced Hewes to build a new stage for Plymouth as recompense for his violation. Either way, Plymouth had at least one stage at their disposal after the spring of 1625. They never used it.

Bradford abandoned his plans for Cape Anne immediately after the incident between Standish and Hewes. He noted that the interlopers “made so poor a business of their fishing” that they could not pay for even “the small supply of little value” the governor sent to them from

---

515 In fact, Bradford never mentioned sending Standish to Cape Anne. He also omitted any reference to Peirce and Conant as peacemakers. These details were chronicled by William Hubbard.
Plymouth. Bradford concluded the episode on a dismissive note, writing “so as after this year [1625] they never looked more after them.” This vague and incongruous record of Plymouth’s involvement at Cape Anne deserves some scrutiny. Bradford never identified anyone there by name, referring to them only as “the fishermen.” He certainly saw these fishermen as interlopers, but he also treated them with generosity. The contrast makes sense only when we consider the settlers at Cape Anne as a mixed group. We know very little about Captain Hewes and his crew, only that they arrived there in 1625, appropriated Plymouth’s stage, and clashed with Miles Standish. But another group of Englishmen settled at Cape Anne about a year before Hewes arrived. Sponsored by the newly formed Dorchester Company, this group had a patent from the Council for New England, giving them the legal right to settle and fish at Cape Anne. Bradford conveniently left out this detail in OPP. Nevertheless, it explains why he regarded these settlers as both interlopers and tolerable neighbors.

The presence of another group of Englishmen at Cape Anne, independent of the unwelcome visit by Hewes and company, began would be a fundamental shift in the political and economic landscape of New England. Of course, nobody could have predicted this in 1625. But when Bradford penned OPP years later, he appreciated the arrival of the Dorchester group for what it was: the founding of Massachusetts Bay colony. Thus, we see in his account of Cape Anne overtures of friendship juxtaposed against a latent antagonism of their new neighbor to the north. Unlike the disreputable colonists at Wessagusset, the Dorchester group – or at least the colony they would come to establish – held religious beliefs similar to those of the Pilgrims. And like

---

517 Hubbard identified the chief interloper as Captain Hewes.
518 The relationship between the first wave of settlers sponsored by the Dorchester company and Captain Hewes is uncertain. It seems likely that the company sent Hewes to support the fourteen individuals who settled there in 1624. The conflict between Hewes and Standish may have simply been a product of two equally pugnacious personalities butting heads. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 170.
the Pilgrims at Plymouth, these later colonists experienced persecution for their beliefs prior to leaving England. In many ways, the Pilgrims provided the Dorchester group, and their immediate successors, a blueprint for colonizing New England. Part of this blueprint, and the one featured in this study, is the use of print as an instrument to advance their agenda.

Though considered a failure by both the Pilgrims at Plymouth and the Dorchester Company in England, Cape Anne nonetheless signified a momentous transition in the early history of New England. Of course, nobody appreciated this at the time. By 1630, however, the anonymous author of a tract entitled *The Planters Plea* consecrated the attempt to settle at Cape Anne as the second phase of a larger effort to bring the Gospel to New England. William Bradford, writing not long afterwards, essentially agreed with this sentiment. Historians have routinely traced the origins of Massachusetts Bay colony to Cape Anne largely in consequence of *The Planters Plea*. However, the author of this work, John White, gave precedence to Plymouth. He argued that Cape Anne, the colony at Salem and all future settlements followed in the footsteps of the Pilgrims.519 Others certainly suggested a relationship between Plymouth and Cape Anne, either verbally or in private correspondence, but White became the first to express it in print. *The Planters Plea* was but one of four tracts, printed in 1630 at the behest of the Massachusetts Bay Company (MBC), to articulate a vision of New England as a refuge for puritan orthodoxy. Naturally, the company saw *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England* as twin exemplars of this literary argument.

519 Of course, John White never referred to them as “Pilgrims.” He did, however, consider Plymouth colony as an archetype of puritan orthodoxy. White knew others from England had joined the Leyden pilgrims on the Mayflower, but his references to the colony in *The Planters Plea* make no allowance for a plural society. Thus, the use here of “Pilgrims” to refer to Plymouth colonists in general is in keeping with the intent of the author.
In this chapter and the next, I examine the literary inheritances and the historical context of the four MBC tracts: *New Englands Plantation, God’s Promise to His Plantation, The Humble Request* and *The Planters Plea*. The authors of these works relied heavily on the literary strategies first developed by William Bradford and Edward Winslow. Of course, the MBC tracts reveal influences from other sources; namely, English puritan writing and the promotional literature of English America. Nevertheless, a close reading of the works printed by the MBC reveals an undeniable relationship to the works penned by Bradford and Winslow. We cannot hope to understand the literary connections, however, unless we tease out the historical circumstances in which these tracts appeared in print. As with any historical event or episode, the settling of Massachusetts Bay occurred under a particular and unique set of conditions. Thus, the literature printed for this occasion has, at least to some degree, a distinctive quality. Indeed, each of the four MBC tracts, printed within a few weeks of one another and having a common purpose, possess traits not found in the others. But as the MBC itself realized at the time, the similarities between their situation and what the Pilgrims endured and overcame just a few years earlier bore enough resemblances to warrant imitation. Just as the Pilgrim authors used print to advance its colonial agenda, the MBC followed suit, mobilizing its resources to sway public opinion in England.

Though usually told as part of an American story, I consider the events and the literature that describe the founding of Massachusetts Bay colony in its transatlantic context. As with *Mourt’s Relation* and *Good News from New England*, the MBC tracts owe historical and literary debts on both sides of the Atlantic. Some of this shared history was manufactured after the fact, not by historians writing centuries later, but by contemporaries who stood to gain the most from the relationship. But a historical survey from both sides of the Atlantic provides the context
necessary to understand the relationships, both real and imagined, between Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. For the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the founding of Salem from the perspective of its residents and the MBC in London. Afterwards, in chapter six, I will examine how the works printed by the MBC attempt to navigate the complexities of this imagined transatlantic community.

THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY COMPANY

On 19 March 1627, the Council at Plymouth sold the rights to plant in New England to “some knights and gentlemen about Dorchester.” Among these investors, a few considered plantations across the Atlantic as a purely commercial endeavor. Those of a more religious bent, however, saw New England as a spiritual refuge where puritan nonconformists could worship according to their beliefs. They quickly joined with several like-minded individuals in London and established the Massachusetts Bay Company. Although in agreement concerning matters of religion, the members of the company argued over how to best achieve their ambitions. The debate centered on authority. By and large, the investors pledged to support the colony monetarily, but they proved reluctant to donate their persons. A significant number of them felt strongly that the enterprise could succeed only if one of their number relocated to the plantation. With good reason, they feared a proxy would not fully represent their interests, both

521 “It is very likely [that Roswell, Young and Southcoat] had nothing more in view by the purchase than a settlement for trade with the natives, or for fishery, or for other advantageous purposes. As soon as a colony for religion was projected, we hear no more of them.” Thomas Hutchinson, The History of Massachusetts, from the First Settlement thereof in 1628, until the year 1750, Vol I (Salem, MA: Thomas C. Cushing, 1795), 9, http://archive.org/stream/historyofmassach01hutc#page/n5/mode/2up.
commercially and spiritually, and to ill effect. The problem was solved when John Endicott, one of the “gentlemen about Dorchester,” volunteered to serve as governor in New England.\textsuperscript{522}

The company had their man, but they still lacked the authority to establish a government in New England. As an officer in the Massachusetts Bay Company, Endicott had power over its other members, but not everyone in New England owed allegiance to the company. For example, their grant purchased from the Council preserved the rights of Sir Ferdinando Gorges’ son Robert in the region.\textsuperscript{523} The company also knew of several previous attempts to settle in Massachusetts Bay. Indeed, a few scattered individuals had already taken up residence within the boundaries of their grant.\textsuperscript{524} Having learned of the difficulties experienced by the Pilgrims with “strangers” like Robert Weston and John Lyford, the company greatly desired to establish itself as the unquestioned authority in Massachusetts Bay. To this end, they petitioned and, on 19 March 1627/28, received from the Crown a royal charter.\textsuperscript{525} In late June, John Endicott, along with a few dozen planters, departed England on board the Abigail. They arrived at Naumkeag, a small fishing village on the northern coast of Massachusetts Bay, on 6 September 1628.\textsuperscript{526}

When Endicott reached his destination, he established the first permanent and legally recognized settlement in Massachusetts Bay. But the men and women from the Abigail were not

\textsuperscript{522} John White described this episode about John Endicott in The Planters Plea. Hubbard mentioned this as well in his history. Endicott was given the title of Governor in the spring of 1629 but he was essentially given authority to act in the Company’s name prior to this. See Young, Chronicles, 141-171; John White, The Planters Plea (London: 1630), 76-77, http://0-eelho.chadwyck.com.ilsprod.lib.neu.edu/search/full_rec?SOURCE=conf.cfg&action=byid&ID=99847001&SUBS
ET=
\textsuperscript{523} Young, Chronicles, 29-30.
\textsuperscript{524} Young, Chronicles, 150n4.
\textsuperscript{525} This patent, unfortunately, has not survived and little is known of it. It passed the seals on that date. See Young, Chronicles, 13n2, 309-310.
\textsuperscript{526} Charles M. Endicott, Memoir of John Endicott, First Governor of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay (Salem: Printed at the Observer Office, 1847), 16, http://archive.org/stream/memoirjohnendec00endigoog#page/n8/mode/2up.
the first English settlers at Naumkeag. Two years earlier, a small number of English colonists abandoned the settlement at Cape Anne and made their way south to this location. Their leader, Roger Conant, previously served as an agent for the Dorchester Company at Cape Anne. Several shareholders of the Massachusetts Bay Company had also invested in the Dorchester Company and knew Conant, at least by name. But Conant’s loyalties to the new company were uncertain. Endicott knew Conant’s band of settlers awaited them at Naumkeag. In fact, the company likely chose that destination based upon reports received from Conant.527 Upon his arrival, Endicott naturally assumed command of the settlement. But Roger Conant and his group had lived there for two years. They thought of Naumkeag as their home. And as Endicott quickly discovered, Roger Conant refused to simply yield authority to another, even to one backed by a charter from the king.

Roger Conant had demonstrated an independent spirit since his arrival in New England. He came to Plymouth colony “on his Particular” sometime before 1624.528 Bradford, in OPP, made no reference to him by name, but did refer to a salter as one of the “malignant spirits” who aligned with Lyford and Oldham against the Pilgrims. Roger Conant had been a member of the Salters Company in London. When Bradford banished Lyford and Oldham from the colony, he

527 According to Hubbard, Roger Conant secretly conceived in his mind that Naumkeag would “prove a receptacle for such as upon the account of religion would be willing to begin a foreign Plantation in this part of the world.” Furthermore, he supposedly intimated this to “his friends in England.” No direct evidence exists to back Hubbard’s claim; however, John White, in The Planters Plea, made a reference to accounts sent back to England boasting about freedom of religion. Hubbard likely met with Conant years later and one or both men may have embellished this history. It is, however, likely that Conant communicated with “friends” connected to the Massachusetts Bay Company, especially John White. See Hubbard, A General History of New England, 107; White, The Planters Plea, 81.

528 It is uncertain how Conant came to New England. His brother Christopher was a passenger on the Anne, which arrived at Plymouth colony in the summer of 1623, and he may have arrived then. Alternatively, Conant may have come over on a fishing boat, which would explain why his name does not appear on any passenger list. The year of his arrival is corroborated in a petition, made to the General Court of Massachusetts on 18 May 1671, in which Conant wrote that he had been a planter in New England for forty-eight years. See Young, Chronicles, 23n4; Frederick Odell Conant, A History and Genealogy of the Conant Family in England and America (Portland, ME: Privately Printed, 1887), 100, http://archive.org/stream/historygenealogy00cona#page/n3/mode/2up.
stated that “Lyford went to Nantasket in the Bay of the Massachusetts with some other of his friends with him.” According to Hubbard, Conant resided in Nantasket when John White, on behalf of the Dorchester Company in England, tapped him to oversee their colony at Cape Anne. White had heard of “some religious and well-affected persons… lately removed out of New Plymouth, out of dislike of their principles of rigid Separation.” Conant’s association with John Lyford and his departure from Plymouth colony in 1624 – either voluntarily or under orders from Governor Bradford – suggests a man who jealously guarded his liberty.529

On 13 September 1628, one week after arriving at Naumkeag, John Endicott penned a letter to the company in London. They had arrived safely in New England, he informed them, but they had received an unexpected welcome. The “old planters,” he informed them, believed the company intended to “make them slaves.” They had built homes and planted crops, including tobacco, and had grown accustomed to self-rule. By the terms of the charter, they had no place in the company nor in the government Endicott intended to establish at Naumkeag. Sent there to establish the company’s authority, Endicott instead encountered resistance.530

Around the same time governor Endicott dispatched his letter from Naumkeag, a man eager to make his fortune in New England made a personal appeal to the company in London. John Oldham had spent the previous four years exploring and trading throughout New England. After Bradford expelled him from Plymouth in 1624, Oldham moved to Nantasket with a few other exiles from the Pilgrim colony. He refused an offer to trade with the Indians on behalf of the Dorchester Company.531 In 1626, Oldham sailed for Virginia. During the voyage, he survived

530 Young, Chronicles, 142-147.
531 According to Hubbard, Oldham preferred to “trade for himself, and not become liable to give an account of his gain or loss.” Hubbard, A General History of New England, 107.
some great danger, most likely a storm, and became a penitent man. Oldham soon reconciled with his old nemesis, William Bradford. The governor granted Oldham permission to visit Plymouth – and undoubtedly trade there – whenever he pleased. In June 1628, when Governor Bradford arrested Thomas Morton and sent him back to England, he placed his prisoner into the custody of John Oldham. Despite his reformation, Oldham continued to eye the main chance for himself. Soon after delivering Morton to justice in England, Oldham met with the Massachusetts Bay Company in an attempt to fulfill his greatest ambition.\footnote{Young, \textit{Chronicles}, 48n1.}

Oldham had refused to trade for the Dorchester Company a few years earlier, but he now hoped to perform this service for the Mass Bay Company. He promised a return of three to one if they allowed him to manage their stock in New England. In return, he asked only for the “overplus of the gains.” The company resisted Oldham’s proposal, but continued to negotiate with him throughout the winter and into spring. Meanwhile, they made substantial plans to send and supply a larger group of planters for New England. According to the company records, Oldham proved “obstinate and violent in his opinions,” and refused to compromise. He thought himself negotiating from a position of strength, having in his possession a patent to settle in Massachusetts Bay from Sir Ferdinando Gorge’s son.\footnote{When the company purchased their patent from the Council at Plymouth, Sir Ferdinando Gorges added a provision that guaranteed a previous grant extended to his son Robert. Robert died – no one knows exactly when or how – and his rights passed on to his younger brother John. Oldham apparently received his grant from John Gorges. Young, \textit{Chronicles}, 51n2, 147-148.} From his experience with the Plymouth Pilgrims, Oldham knew the company wished to avoid competing factions in New England. The group at Wessagusset had been a thorn in the side of the Pilgrims and Thomas Morton, the man
Oldham escorted back to England as a prisoner, had been particularly disruptive. Essentially, Oldham gave the company a choice: take him into their service or deal with him as a rival.\textsuperscript{534} The Massachusetts Bay Company called Oldham’s bluff. Finding him “a man altogether unfit for us to deal with,” the company cut off negotiations and left Oldham to fend for himself.\textsuperscript{535} Although they dismissed Oldham’s proposals, they did not dare ignore the threat he posed to them in New England. John Endicott’s letter from Naumkeag described significant division between the colonists sent by the company and the old planters. With Oldham returning to New England, the company feared he might use this discord to his advantage. Like the Pilgrims in Plymouth, the puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Company saw a lack of unity as the greatest threat to their ambitions. Interlopers trading with the Indians threatened to destabilize the region. Men who answered to no authority had no qualms about trading firearms to the Indians in exchange for furs. They also had a tendency to abuse or cheat the Indians, and in some cases captured them for sale in the transatlantic slave market. Should Oldham return and draw Conant and the others into his confidence, the company’s plans might fall apart before they had even started.

To meet this threat, the company decided to act before Oldham could return and drive a wedge between them and the old planters. On 17 April 1629, just before they stopped negotiations with Oldham, the company drew up a letter of instruction for John Endicott in Naumkeag. They intended to “put life in [Endicott’s] affairs,” naming him governor and giving him wide latitude to deal with any potential threats to the plantation. Next, they addressed the tension with the old planters. The company wished to check the divisions that had already

\textsuperscript{534} Young, Chronicles, 48-51, 147-149.
\textsuperscript{535} The company believed Oldham’s patent would not hold up to a legal challenge. Still, they had no wish to engage in any drawn out legal battle that would invite unwanted attention to their colony. Young, Chronicles, 148.
formed in the colony. To that end, they offered to make the old planters “partakers of such privileges as we,” incorporating them as full members of the company. Designating a thirteen-member council to govern the plantation, the company invited the old planters to choose two from among their number to serve on this body. Additionally, they allowed them – and only them – to plant tobacco, though they strictly forbade any of their own from buying or using it. With these measures, the company hoped to empower Governor Endicott to end the dispute and bring everyone in Naumkeag into the fold. But to achieve their principle aim of propagating the Gospel in New England, the company was sending spiritual reinforcements.

John Endicott was a man of good repute, an adept administrator and, when necessary, a capable soldier. He successfully incorporated Roger Conant and the others into the company. This achievement allegedly prompted them to rename the colony Salem, from the Hebrew word for “peace.” Additionally, John Oldham returned to New England but instead of challenging the company’s authority, he became a respected member of the colony. In the final analysis, however, success or failure depended upon their ability to establish a godly community in New

---

536 The company preselected seven individuals to serve, none of whom had yet to leave England: Francis Higginson, Samuel Skelton, Francis Bright, John Browne, Samuel Browne, Thomas Graves and Samuel Sharpe. Young, *Chronicles*, 144-145.  
537 The old planters apparently grew the crop for sale for the transatlantic market, following the blueprint of the Virginia planters. Of course, the puritans considered the “noxious weed” a deplorable vice, ill fit for the godly saints among them. Some in the company “absolutely declared themselves unwilling to have any hand in this Plantation if we intended to cherish or permit the planting [of tobacco]” other than for private use. It would seem that Endicott disapproved of the old planters’ actions and this caused at least some of the rancor between them. The soil and climate of New England was ill suited for tobacco so the issue was more about principle than any real economic plan. It is possible that Endicott informed the company that tobacco had no future in New England, thus making this concession a well-conceived, if empty, gesture. Young, *Chronicles*, 145-147.  
538 William Hubbard gave Roger Conant most of the credit for the reconciliation between Endicott and the old planters. However, he claimed the change of name from Naumkeag to Salem occurred soon after the ministers sent by the company reached Salem in late June 1629. Of course, this time frame also corresponds to when the company’s letter to Governor Endicott arrived. Hubbard also reported that some, who “liked not such affected names,” objected to the change. Hubbard, *A General History of New England*, 109-113.  
539 The accord reached between the MBC (via Endicott) and the old planters may have factored in Oldham’s good behavior. When he returned to New England, he found the settlement far more stable than when he had left it. Oldham was eventually admitted as a freeman of the colony in 1631. A year later, he became one of Watertown’s two Deputies to the General Court. Young, *Chronicles*, 169 n1.
England. For this they needed trained ministers. Differences of opinion over religion permeated every aspect of English life, but all agreed that ministers played an indispensable role in the community. This was especially true in English America where the traditional instruments of power were largely absent. As we have already seen, colonial administrators throughout New England registered numerous complaints about outlaws such as the infamous Thomas Hunt. In the spring of 1629, Governor Endicott wrote to the company in England, complaining of “the profane and dissolute living of divers of our nation.” These rogues, he continued, traded illegally with the Indians in violation of the king’s Proclamation of 1622. Not surprisingly, the company considered this illicit activity as a moral failure.

Like nearly everyone in seventeenth-century England, the company saw godliness as the means to maintain authority and to vanquish the Thomas Hunts of the world. But the greatest threats to any society came from within. In writing to the company, Endicott desired help with those living in New England – either at Salem or nearby – and not with seasonal traders. Without uniformity in religion, factions would inevitably emerge in the colony, dashing the hopes of those who hoped to gain profits and spread religion in New England. Even before the company received Endicott’s request, they had initiated a search for ministers willing to tend to their flock across the Atlantic. By the spring of 1629, three individuals – Francis Higginson, Samuel Skelton, and Francis Bright – had been selected to build a church at Salem. The company thought to resolve the initial threats of faction by absorbing the old planters into the civil administration of the colony. But as their experience in England taught them, the struggle for

---

540 During a meeting of the MBC on 28 July 1629, Endicott’s letter was read aloud, followed by the Proclamation of 1622, in which King James prohibited unlawful trading in the colonies. Afterwards, the company petitioned his son Charles to reissue a similar remonstrance. The king complied and a new proclamation appeared under his authority on 24 November 1630. Young, Chronicles, 83-84 n3.
uniformity depended upon the establishment and maintenance of a single ecclesiastical authority. Sending these ministers to New England in the spring of 1629 marked the first step toward achieving this goal. Their founding of a church in Salem, however, sent shockwaves across the Atlantic that threatened to undo the colony before it had even begun.

SALEM COLONY – THE MINISTERS AND AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH

The fleet sent by the company in the spring of 1629 consisted of six ships. The George [Bonaventre], carrying fifty-two passengers, including Samuel Skelton, sailed about a week before the others. The company sent its letters of instruction aboard this vessel, giving the newly appointed Governor Endicott time to prepare for the arrival of the main body. Skelton had seniority, or some other mark of preferment, over the other ministers. He therefore had the honor of first arrival. Not willing to put all of their ministerial eggs in one basket, the company had the other ministers sail on different vessels: Francis Higginson on the Talbot and Francis Bright aboard the Lyon’s Whelp. These two ships departed Gravesend on 25 April 1629. The final three ships, the Four Sisters, the Mayflower and the Pilgrim, left approximately three weeks after that. Francis Higginson kept a journal of his voyage and what we know of this crossing comes from him. On 29 June, after nearly nine weeks at sea, the Talbot and the Lyon’s Whelp sailed into “the large spacious harbor of Naimkecke.” The next morning, Governor Endicott came aboard the

541 These voyages are often referred to collectively as the Higginson Fleet; however, the ships departed England over a span of several weeks. The only reason for such an appellation comes from the survival of Higginson’s Sea Journal which recorded his voyage aboard the Talbot.
Talbot to welcome the new arrivals. He then invited Higginson and his wife to stay in his house until they had built their own.542

When the ministers arrived at Salem that summer, Endicott had already been there ten months; Conant and his small band since 1626. Nevertheless, Salem was a ramshackle settlement, consisting of only a few poorly-made dwellings and some small farms. During the previous winter, disease and hunger took its toll. The planters at Salem devoted all their time and energy just to survive. But what Salem lacked in civic planning it made up for in spiritual development. The ministers had sailed across the Atlantic eager to plant an ecclesiastical seed in New England. In Governor Endicott, they found an eager gardener. Almost immediately, Endicott met with the ministers to establish a church in the colony. Events moved quickly. On July 20, the governor declared “a solemne day of humiliation” to mark the election of a pastor and teacher for their new church. Each candidate addressed the congregation, offering their qualifications for the office. Afterwards, the male members of the church cast their vote on a paper ballot. John Skelton received the most votes and became pastor. Higginson was elected teacher. A few of “the gravest members of the church” laid hands on Skelton and Higginson, consecrating both officers to their respective positions. On August 6, several others were elected and confirmed as elders and deacons. Salem had its church.543

543 The account of these events comes from a letter written by Charles Gott to Governor William Bradford on 30 July 1629. Bradford included it in OPP and again, with minor alterations, in his Letter Book. Gott had been named deacon during the church election on July 20. Hubbard stated that Gott had come over with Endicott on the Abigail. Alexander Young claimed Gott and his wife lived at Plymouth colony prior to Endicott’s arrival but offers scant proof of this. Nevertheless, Gott had some relationship with Bradford. Why else would a deacon-elect communicate with the governor of Plymouth instead of Endicott or one of the church officers? Young, Chronicles, 30 n. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 224-225.
Just as the Pilgrims had done at Plymouth years earlier, the puritans of Salem founded an independent church according to the principles of congregationalism. And like in Plymouth, not everyone in the colony was pleased with the decision. Francis Bright, sent by the company to help construct a “Temple for God’s worship,” quickly found that some “stones would not fit the building.” He soon accompanied the settlers in nearby Charlestown where he served as “minister to the Company’s servants.” A year later, Bright left New England, never to return. Bright chose not to challenge developments in Salem. The brothers John and Samuel Browne proved more troublesome. The Brownes came to Salem that summer and were of some importance in the colony. John Browne appears in the company records as a “gentleman” and elsewhere as “a man experienced in the laws of our kingdom.” The company esteemed them highly, convinced “of their sincere affections to the good of [the] Plantation.” And while the Brownes did not subscribe as adventurers, they nevertheless received a grant of land “as if they had subscribed fifty pounds in the general stock.” Moreover, the company appointed both of them seats on the ruling council in Salem. Thus, when the Brownes gathered a small company together to worship separately from the church at Salem, they had in essence introduced a

---

544 The quote comes from Edward Johnson’s *Wonder-Working Providence* (1654). Writing twenty-five years later, Johnson paired Bright with William Blaxton, a reverend divine who came to New England with Robert Gorges in 1623, as twin opponents to the congregational churches in Massachusetts. Unlike Bright, the reclusive Blaxton remained in Massachusetts, tolerated, if not respected, by Winthrop and the other divines in the colony. It seems unlikely that Bright and Blaxton ever met, making their association by Johnson an odd one. Hubbard remarked simply that Bright was “a godly minister, though not altogether of the same persuasion as to church discipline.” In *New England’s Memorial*, Nathaniel Morton characterized Bright as “a conformist, who, not agreeing in judgment with [Skelton and Higginson], removed to Charlestown, where also, not agreeing with those godly Christians there, that were for reformation, after one year’s stay in the country, he returned for England.” See J. Franklin Jameson, ed. *Johnson’s Wonder-Working Providence, 1628-1651* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 45-46; Hubbard, *A General History of New England*, 112; Morton, *New England’s Memorial*, 98; for a summary of William Braxton, see Young, *Chronicles*, 169 n3.

545 A small number of planters moved to Charlestown soon after landing at Salem. The designation as the servant’s minister certainly speaks to the lack of esteem Bright enjoyed in New England. Young, *Chronicles*, 316 n2.
powerful faction that threatened to undermine the authority of Governor Endicott and his ministers.\textsuperscript{546}

The only surviving account of the dispute between the Brownes and the Salem authorities comes from \textit{New England’s Memorial} (1669). As Nathaniel Morton would have it, several passengers who came to Salem noticed that the ministers – presumably Skelton and Higginson – worshipped according to the principles of the reformed church. Most notably, these divines refused to read from the Book of Common Prayer. They also failed to perform ceremonies sanctioned by the Church of England concerning baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These “transgressions” could not have taken anyone by surprise. Even moderate puritans disliked the Book of Common Prayer and the ceremonial forms of the Anglican Church. Moreover, the Brownes surely knew the company sympathized with puritanism and that the ministers, once they reached New England, would serve God according to puritan beliefs. They did not anticipate, however, that Governor Endicott would ban other forms of public worship, including Anglicanism. Additionally, the governor, with help from Skelton and Higginson, made church membership a prerequisite for civic authority in the colony. This effectively directed power, both civic and ecclesiastical, into the hands of a select few, usurping authority from the company in England and violating their royal charter.\textsuperscript{547}

At some point during the summer – nobody knows exactly when – John and Samuel Browne gathered a company together and read from the Book of Common Prayer. According to Morton, this public display of Anglicanism caused a “disturbance… amongst the people” of Salem.

\textsuperscript{546} For the terms under which John and Samuel Browne shipped to Salem, see Young, \textit{Chronicles}, 61,144. \\
\textsuperscript{547} It has long been known that Morton borrowed a great deal from Bradford’s \textit{History}, but the details of what happened in Salem concerning the Browne brothers can be found only in \textit{New England’s Memorial}. Morton, 94-106.
Governor Endicott, unwilling to allow religious factions tear his nascent colony asunder, summoned the Brownes to answer for their actions. Indignant, the Brownes accused Skelton and Higginson of being separatists. The ministers vehemently denied these charges. Using a line of reasoning that would become a staple of puritan casuistry for New England apologists, the ministers argued that they had not separated from the Anglican Church so much as they had rejected its “corruptions and disorders.” And since they and their non-conforming brethren had suffered greatly in England, they saw no reason to continue obedience to any “sinful corruptions” now that they put a mighty ocean between them and the Church of England. Governor Endicott considered the matter and, not surprisingly, ruled in favor of the ministers.\footnote{Morton claimed the governor, the council and “the generality of the people” rendered this verdict. The Brownes were members of the council and there existed no mechanism to gauge the will of the people. It is possible “the people” in fact meant the members of the Salem church. Morton may have wished to avoid showing Governor Endicott ruling by fiat. Regardless, the decision was Endicott’s to make. All others were compelled to fall in line. Morton, New England’s Memorial, 101.}

He found the Brownes to be possessing “high spirits” and inciting mutiny through “their speeches and practices.” Having only recently resolved a potential crisis involving the old planters, Endicott could ill afford another challenge to his authority. With the Brownes unwilling to yield, Endicott had no choice but to banish them from the colony. In early August, only a few weeks after the brothers arrived at Salem, Governor Endicott sent them back to England.\footnote{The Brownes returned to England aboard either the Talbot or Lyon’s Whelp. Morton, New England’s Memorial, 99-101.}

The events that transpired in Salem during the summer of 1629 have invited countless historians to speculate as to the motivation behind establishing a Congregationalist church at Salem. The debate centers on two issues: the amount of influence Plymouth colony had on Governor Endicott and the intentions of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Until the early twentieth century, scholars believed that Endicott came to Salem without any intention of founding a separated church. All that changed during the winter of 1628/29 as hunger and
disease afflicted the English planters. Their suffering prompted Endicott to request help from Governor Bradford at Plymouth. Bradford obliged, sending his surgeon, Samuel Fuller, to Salem sometime before May. Fuller gave great aid and comfort to Endicott’s charges; however, historians speculated that during this visit, he converted Endicott to separatism such as it was practiced at Plymouth.

This theory rests on the assumption that Endicott, and through him the Massachusetts Bay Company, practiced a form of puritanism markedly different from that of the Plymouth Pilgrims. Then, upon coming under the influence of Samuel Fuller, Endicott shifted gears and established a congregational church on the Plymouth model. Evidence for the similitude between Salem and Plymouth can be found in Endicott’s letter to Bradford, written 11 May 1629. It begins as follows:

It is a thing not usual that servants to one master and of the same household should be strangers… God’s People are all marked with one and the same mark and sealed with one and the same seal, and have for the main, one and the same heart guided by one and same spirit of truth.

Governor Endicott continued by thanking his counterpart in Plymouth for sending Fuller, a passage that purportedly shows a link between this visit and subsequent developments in Salem.

---

550 They “had little left to feed on, and most began to repent when their strong Beere and full cups ran as small as water in a large Land, but little Corne, and the poore Indians so far from relieving them, that they were forced to lengthen out their owne food with Acorns.” Jameson, Johnson’s Wonder-Working Providence, 44.

551 According to Bradford, Endicott knew that someone among the settlers at Plymouth “had cured divers of the scurvy, and others of other disease by letting blood and other means.” Bradford does not reveal how Endicott came by this information, or whether or not he knew Fuller beforehand. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 223.

552 It is unclear exactly when Fuller went to Salem. Bradford, in OPP, mistakenly claimed “an infection” among passengers in the Higginson fleet sparked an outbreak of disease at Salem. Endicott’s letter to Bradford thanking him for sending Fuller is dated 11 May 1629, several weeks before any of these vessels reached Salem. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 223.

553 It is also reasonable to suppose that Bradford sent Fuller to Salem as an ambassador, charged with ascertaining the composition and comportment of the English there and, if appropriate, establishing a relationship with them. As we have already seen, the Pilgrims took a great interest in their neighbors and did not suffer the apostates in their vicinity.

554 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 223.
I acknowledge myself much bound to you for your kind love and care in sending Mr. Fuller among us, and rejoice much that I am by him satisfied touching your judgments of the outward form of God’s worship. It is, as far as I can gather, no other than is warranted by the evidence of truth. And the same which I have professed and maintained ever since the Lord in mercy revealed Himself unto me. Being far from the common report that hath been spread of you touching that particular. 555

Endicott’s letter makes no reference to any change in his religious beliefs; nevertheless, nineteenth-century historians fixed upon his agreement with Fuller’s expositions to conclude that such a change had occurred. The oft-cited champion of this supposition, Williston Walker, characterized this transformation as the “congregationalizing of English Puritanism.” Yet even he acknowledged that the members of the Massachusetts Bay Company embraced, with minor exceptions, the doctrines of the Separatists. This included distaste for the Book of Common Prayer, animosity toward Episcopal authority, belief that the Anglican Church had become fundamentally corrupt, and a shared experience of persecution by that church. Walker identified two practices distinctive to separatists: using a covenant as the basis of an independent church and the election, and subsequent ordination, of its ministers. 556

By virtue of their incorporating a covenant and election into the Salem church, Endicott had, in Walker’s mind, abandoned the principles of moderate non-conformity that supposedly informed the religious platform of the company. Furthermore, since Endicott founded the church shortly after Fuller’s visit to Salem, he assumed this to be the cause. But again, Walker realized his theory forced him to put square pegs into round holes. In addition to the similarities in doctrine between non-conformists and separatists described above, he acknowledged that many of the latter, including members of the company, “were moving in directions hitherto distinctive

555 Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 223-224.
only of English Separatism.” Even John White, the minister frequently cited as the anti-separatist soul of the company, “seems to have had some more definite uniting pledge that was usual in Puritan parishes.”

The apparent similarities between supposedly conflicting parties within the company made it difficult to argue that Endicott left England in 1628 with religious views decidedly different from those he injected into the Church in Salem a year later. Puritans of all stripes wrangled with each other over points of doctrine, but the differences between non-conformists and separatists were often blurred and constantly changing. Indeed, the High Commission’s attack against moderate puritans during the late 1620s was driven, at least in part, by its inability to distinguish them from their more radical brethren. The amorphous nature of English puritanism led Champlin Burrage to challenge the traditional rendering of Plymouth’s influence on Massachusetts Bay. In *The Early English Dissenters* (1912), Burrage traced the origins of New England Congregationalism not to John Robinson via Plymouth, but to the teachings of Henry Jacob and William Bradshaw. The Jacob-Bradshaw model stressed the independence of local congregations, but rejected “rigid separation” from most Protestant churches, including the Church of England. Furthermore, Burrage described Plymouth’s influence on Massachusetts Bay churches as “infinitesimal.” If anything, the reverse was true.

---

557 Walker saw the Massachusetts Bay Company, as well as its colony in New England, as part of English Puritanism’s teleological march toward the principles of strict congregationalism. He argued that “the more advanced Puritans… from the time of Cartwright [believed] that there should be no ministers at large, but that every minister ought to be bound to a particular congregation; and they had been of the opinion also that the local church should be so purified by discipline that practically only persons of Christian character should remain in it.” (Emphasis mine) Walker, *Congregational Churches*, 100-102.

558 Burrage also argued that Plymouth had never embraced rigid separation. When John Robinson left England, he was an avowed separatist. Before the Pilgrims had left for the New World, however, Robinson had come under the influence of Jacob and abandoned rigid separation. As a result, Champlin Burrage claimed that any vestige of separatism in New England could not have possibly originated at Plymouth. See *The Early English Dissenters*, in
Another prominent scholar of early New England, Champlin Burrage, weighed in on this issue. Burrage drew his evidence mainly from the writings of John Cotton and William Bradford, two writers he deemed “as trustworthy as any produced by early New England.” In *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (1648), the influential divine John Cotton identified Robert Parker, Paul Baynes and William Ames (a close friend of Henry Jacob) as the primary influences on New England congregationalism. Furthermore, he categorically denied any influence from Plymouth. In fact, he claimed few in Massachusetts even knew the church polity of that colony. Governor Bradford supported Cotton’s claim, adding “there was no agreement by any solemn or common consultation” between Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay even if they shared “the same spirit of truth and unity… [and] the same model of churches.” Thus, Burrage argued, the similarities between the colonies stemmed from a shared non-separating puritan heritage that emerged in Holland before 1620. The testimony of both Cotton and Bradford came in response to charges of separatism levied against both colonies from England during the 1640s. Two authors in particular, William Rathband and Robert Baillie, sought to discredit congregationalism in New England as a means to advance Presbyterianism in the Westminster Assembly. According to Burrage, Rathband and Baillie falsely accused the Plymouth Pilgrims of separatism, then afterwards convinced Massachusetts puritans to embrace the same. However, the only knock against these English critics offered by Burrage was that they contradicted his “trustworthy” New Englanders.559

Years after Burrage first advanced his theory, Perry Miller used similar arguments in his look into the early church at Salem. Burrage denied Plymouth had any meaningful influence upon

---

559 *Burrage, The Early English Dissenters*, 357-361.
Massachusetts churches, but conspicuously, he gave Salem little consideration. Miller corrected this oversight. Salem had a particular resonance for Miller as it represented a practical application of a heretofore largely theoretical debate. The amorphous nature of English puritanism, he argued, was a product of its suppression by the state. Puritans of all types shared a common antipathy toward the Church of England, albeit to varying degrees, but their inability to worship without restrictions compelled them to dissemble as a matter of course. Those unwilling to compromise fled to the Netherlands, but even there they faced some restrictions. Only in the New World could English puritans worship with relative impunity. Indeed, hundreds braved an ocean crossing and risked death in the wilderness to do just that. For the Massachusetts Bay Company, Salem was their first opportunity to build a church and a community without restraint.

Just as the various offshoots of puritanism changed over time, so too did the religious underpinnings of the company. Its original incarnation as the Dorchester Company had as its spiritual leader John White, a renowned Presbyterian. In 1627, financial difficulties forced White to seek new investors. Some “honest and religious men” from London and “the Eastern counties” joined and quickly took over affairs and renamed the company. The Massachusetts Bay Company became dominated by Congregationalists who saw the likelihood of an independent church thriving in England shrink by the day. They also appreciated the growing threat to their safety from the High Commission. Miller surmised that the company sent Endicott to Salem in 1628 to lay a foundation for a Congregationalist church. He may or may not have received any

---

560 Burrage acknowledged that the Salem asked Plymouth for approval of their church organization, via Endicott’s letter to Bradford, but only after they had already settled upon their congregational model. Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, 363-364.
561 The government of England put considerable diplomatic pressure on the States-General of the Netherlands to make this destination less hospitable for English dissenters. Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts*, 106-107.
562 Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts*, 73-86.
direct instructions about the polity of that church – leaving such matters until the arrival of
trained ministers – but Endicott undoubtedly knew the type of church the company intended.
Miller termed it “utterly inconceivable” that Samuel Fuller converted Endicott to anything he did
already believe.  

Following Burrage, Miller described the supposed transformation at Salem as an illusion
based upon a faulty premise: that Endicott and the ministers strayed from what the
Massachusetts Bay Company intended. In New England, Miller argued, puritans no longer had to
continue the charade of conformity to Anglicanism. The dominant faction in Salem summarily
built a church following the tenets of congregationalism. In England and Holland, non-separating
Congregationalists differed from their separatist brethren mainly in that the former considered
the Church of England a true church, while the latter did not. The practical value of this
divergence utterly disappeared in New England. While puritans in Massachusetts (and in the
company) continued to denounce separation, their church polity nevertheless resembled that of
their Plymouth neighbors.

Over the last fifty years or so, historians have challenged Miller’s interpretation. Some, such
as Larzer Ziff and David D. Hall, argued that Endicott did in fact break faith with the
Massachusetts Bay Company. As proof, they cite two sources: a letter written on 2 October 1630
by John Cotton to Samuel Skelton, and the continual friction between Salem and the General
Court after John Winthrop reached New England. Upon his arrival at Salem in 1630, John
Winthrop, elected governor by the company before departing England, assumed leadership of the
colony. Nevertheless, the suddenly former Governor Endicott denied the sacraments to Winthrop

563 Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts*, 127-135.
564 Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts*, 102-147.
and others on the basis that they did not belong to a covenanted church. Prior membership, he asserted, in the Church of England meant nothing. In refusing the governor, the church at Salem proved itself a truly independent congregation. When John Cotton, back in England, learned of what happened, he immediately sent a letter to Skelton. He accused Salem’s pastor of converting his beliefs, writing

….you went hence of another judgment, & I am afraid your change hath sprung from new-Plimouth-men, whom though I much esteeme as godly & loving Christians, yet their grounds which they received for this tenant from Mr. Robinson, do not satisfye mee; though the man I evidence as godly & learned.  

Not only did Cotton rebuke Skelton for embracing Robinson’s teachings, but he also placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the separatists at Plymouth. Cotton later sang a different tune after he relocated to New England; however, Salem continued to assert its independence from Winthrop and the General Court. Armed with this evidence, revisionist historians argued that Plymouth did in fact play a role in the type of church founded at Salem. But this version of events fails to adequately explain how so many at Salem suddenly transformed into strict congregationalists. Even if Dr. Fuller managed to convert Endicott, the ministers from England had to sign off on this as well. And since church officers needed approval of the congregation,

---

565 This passage was first used by Robert Baillie in A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time (London, 1645). Baillie used it to connect New England Congregationalists, and through them Independents in England, to the separatist tradition. The letter itself remained hidden until 1830, when the minister of the First Church in Dorchester, Thaddeus Mason Harris, discovered a copy written by Richard Mather in 1631. The letter received little attention until the mid-nineteenth century. See David D. Hall, “John Cotton’s Letter to Samuel Skelton,” The William and Mary Quarterly 22, no. 3 (1965): 478-485.

566 Though certainly a man of principle, John Cotton always knew which way the wind blew. He vehemently opposed independent churches while in England, as his letter indicates. Once in New England, however, he embraced a de facto separation from the Church of England. Cotton later supported Anne Hutchinson until her trial, when the General Court banished her from the colony. Cotton abandoned her cause during the trial and again chose a path of obedience to authority. In the years following 1630, the congregation at Salem would continually trouble the governors of Massachusetts Bay. Their streak of independence emerged many times, most notably when they welcomed Roger Williams to their town in defiance of Governor Winthrop.
the residents of that community— or at least a goodly number of them— also had to abandon the faith of their fathers.

***************

In the debate over what happened at Salem in the summer of 1629, the pendulum continues to swing, but Plymouth’s impact is always expressed as an inverse to the intentions of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Historians who cast congregationalism in Salem as an extemporaneous deviation from the MBC’s true purpose stress Plymouth’s influence, particularly Fuller’s on Endicott. Those who trace congregationalism in Salem to theorists in England and Holland contend the company anticipated the establishment of that type of church, even if things did not always go as planned. In this model, the Salem church owed next to nothing to Plymouth. Either way, the argument presumes Plymouth and the company were rivals, having conflicting interests in the affairs of Salem. Moreover, it reduces the relationship Salem had with Plymouth and the company to mere exchanges of ecclesiastical theory and polity. Historians have tended to look at early Salem as an ideological battleground between conflicting parties. But the puritans at Plymouth and in the MBC (including those at Salem) had a great deal in common, in their religious beliefs and in their circumstances. Indeed, the evidence clearly indicates they saw each other as kindred spirits.

Whether or not Fuller converted Endicott to congregationalism, the planters at Salem and the members of the company saw in Plymouth a model for them to follow. The Pilgrims had an uncertain reputation in England. Endicott’s letter to Governor Bradford, quoted earlier, reveals as much. The captain (Endicott had yet to be named governor) expressed his relief upon learning of Plymouth’s form of worship, adding that it was “far from the common report that hath been
spread of you touching that particular.” This passage (and the letter itself) is open for interpretation concerning religious polity, but it proves the company knew of the Pilgrims’ efforts in New England prior to Endicott’s arrival at Salem. Additionally, it provides a concrete example of the colony’s reputation circulating throughout England. The puritans in the Massachusetts Bay Company came from the same literary tradition that informed the Pilgrims’ efforts to use the printed word. It comes as no surprise then that the Massachusetts Bay Company followed in the Pilgrims’ footsteps.

---

As I discussed in Chapter Five, historians have mainly focused on the relationship between Salem and Plymouth, with particular emphasis on the issue of church polity. The four MBC tracts, published in 1630, provide a substantial amount of the evidence used to advance a variety of historiographical interpretations. But these tracts were not intended for posterity. The company printed them in order to cultivate a particular reality of New England life for its readers in and about London. What transpired at Salem in the summer of 1629 set in motion a host of developments that eventually led to the publication of the four tracts. Nevertheless, their respective authors made their arguments to an English public who had only a vague notion of what was really happening across the Atlantic. The dispute between the authorities at Salem and the Brownes eventually led Governor Endicott sending the brothers back to England. An event that is greatly underappreciated by scholars, particularly in respect to the production of the MBC tracts, the return of John and Samuel Browne to England sparked a significant public backlash against the company and their colony in New England. A close reading of these works reveals how the authors attempted to reconcile the conflicts of a transatlantic English community.
A TRANSATLANTIC CRISIS

During his visit to Salem in the spring of 1630, Fuller and Endicott undoubtedly discussed the issue of popular opinion in England and the steps the Pilgrims took to cultivate it. Historians frequently mark the swift formation of a congregational church soon after the ministers arrived at Salem. Few however appreciate the speed in which one such minister, Francis Higginson, sent an account of their experiences back to England. It is customary to give Higginson credit for writing two accounts – his Sea Journal, a log of his voyage across the Atlantic, and New Englands Plantation, largely a description of the New England environment – but they are essentially two parts of a single story. Higginson surely saw them as such. The unpublished manuscript of his Sea Journal promises in its title a description of the country and its inhabitants, both Indian and English. Yet only in New Englands Plantation does he fulfill this promise. Furthermore, NEP opens with a line found also in the concluding paragraph of the Sea Journal: “Letting pass our Voyage by Sea, we will now begin our discourse on the shore of New-England.” Higginson dispatched his account in two parts with only the second published by the company. Thus the bifurcation of Higginson’s writings seems natural enough. But the motivations for writing his Sea Journal were similar to those that led Higginson to write New Englands Plantation. Furthermore, each of these bear striking resemblances to the Pilgrim tracts printed years earlier. Thus, any consideration of literary influences and the historical impact on Higginson’s writings cannot simply ignore the unprinted manuscript.

568 The manuscript of Higginson’s voyage is more properly titled A True Relation of the last Voyage to New-England, though it is often referred to informally as his “Sea Journal.” See Francis Higginson, New Englands Plantation with the Sea Journal and Other Writings. (Salem, MA: The Essex Book and Print Club, 1908).
569 Higginson, New Englands Plantation, 89.
Francis Higginson may or may not have written his *Sea Journal* for publication, but he certainly intended it for a wide audience. On the title page, he declared to write “for the satisfaction of very many of my loving friends.” Higginson’s “loving friends” may have been his former parishioners in Leicester, where he had served since 1615. He may also have recorded his voyage at the behest of Mr. Meare and Captain Borely, two men he met during his brief stay in Yarmouth, who “earnestly desired to be certified of our safe arrival in New-England, and of the state of the country.” Higginson certainly meant to depict the efforts to colonize New England in a positive light. He prefaced his journal by describing the members of the company as “worthy gentlemen” who desired to propagate the Gospel in that part of the world. He also mentioned the royal patents that established the company as the lawful authority in New England. After briefly establishing the spiritual objectives of the company and their legal claim, Higginson offered a detailed summary of the five ships sailing to New England, including the number of settlers and their provisions. This was no humble affair. Not only had the MBC sent roughly three hundred men and women to New England, they had adequately provisioned them as well. Undoubtedly, Higginson provided a detailed inventory of persons and material sent on these ships in order to impress upon his readers that this was a different type of endeavor.

570 In 1615, Higginson settled in Claybrooke, a parish in Leicester. He began as a conformist, following the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. Eventually, he fell in with Arthur Hildersham and Thomas Hooker, influential theologians who led Higginson to embrace non-conformity. Sometime in 1627, Higginson’s new beliefs cost him his parish, but he remained popular with the people. In a sensationalist panegyric to Salem’s first teacher, Joseph Felt provided several anecdotes attesting to Higginson’s popularity in Leicester. Joseph B. Felt, *Memoir of the Rev. Francis Higginson* (Boston: Thomas Prince, 1852), 1-4, http://archive.org/stream/memoirofrevfranc00felm#page/n7/mode/2up.

571 Alexander Young was the first to make this suggestion. The *Talbot* made several stops along the southern coast of England as it made its way westward through the English Channel. See Young, *Chronicles*, 220n2.

572 Higginson provides the most detailed account of these ships. The fleet, however, actually consisted of six ships. The Pilgrim sailed on 24 April 1629. Higginson may have been unaware of this sixth ship before leaving England but he learned of it when it arrived at Salem. For whatever reason, he did not update his journal. Higginson, *New Englands Plantation*, 60.

After this brief preamble, Higginson continued his *Sea Journal* with daily entries of a voyage that lasted just over six weeks. Many of these consist of banal observations about the weather, birds and sea creatures encountered along the way. Higginson also described the miseries of a long voyage: contrary winds, frequent storms, seasickness, smallpox, insolent sailors, even the impressment of some crewmembers by the English navy. All in all, a typical voyage. But few, if any, of the passengers had ever before confronted such hardships. Neither had many of Higginson’s “friends” in England. A few years earlier, the Pilgrim authors of *Mourt’s Relation* omitted the details of the Mayflower voyage so as not to discourage potential investors. The terrors of the voyage, recounted here by Higginson, may have likewise discouraged the Massachusetts Bay Company from printing the *Sea Journal*.

But the religious sentiments expressed by Higginson gave the company an even greater incentive not to publish. In the journal entries, Higginson records the religious practices of the passengers in general terms. They kept the Sabbath, prayed often and held the occasional fast — the last perhaps inspired by sickness and the quality of food as much as religious devotion. But in a postscript summarizing the voyage, Higginson described how they “constantly served God morning and evening by reading and expounding a chapter, singing, and prayer.” The description resembles the proceedings of a private (and often secret) meeting of puritans in England. Throughout the country, puritans who outwardly conformed to the tenets of the Anglican Church oftentimes worshipped according to their true beliefs at such gatherings. Aboard the *Talbot*, even

---

574 At the end of the journal, Higginson remarked that the voyage lasted six weeks, three days. He marked the time from 13 May 1629, when the *Talbot* sailed past the Isles of Scilly into “ye maine ocean.” The ship in fact left Gravesend over two weeks earlier, but since they made several stops in England in between, they had not truly departed England until the aforementioned date. Higginson, *New Englands Plantation*, 64-65, 80.

575 The outbreak of smallpox amid the close quarters of a sailing vessel must have been terrifying. Higginson claimed a “Mr. Browne” brought it on board at Gravesend. Higginson’s daughter Mary died from it en route. In true puritan fashion, Higginson saw the disease as a chastisement from God to be met with prayer and fasting. Higginson, *New England’s Plantation*, 65-66.
the sailors, notoriously profane as a rule, supposedly conformed to puritan principles. Higginson asserted that the ship’s master set two watches “with singing a psalme and prayer that was not read out of a booke.” These behaviors exposed the passengers – and apparently the crew – as ardent puritans. While many in the company likely shared Higginson’s beliefs concerning psalms and extemporaneous prayer, they had little incentive to flaunt them in the face of the Anglican establishment.

A certain duality exists within the pages of the *Sea Journal*. The log entries written at sea contain little that would draw the attention of a critical eye in England. The colonists displayed enthusiasm for religion, but nowhere do we see anything that would distinguish them as puritans. Higginson also remarked upon their sufferings during the voyage and the wickedness of some of the crew. Yet in the postscript, Higginson sings a different tune. Not only did he expose the colonists as puritans, but he reputed several of his earlier characterizations. He described their passage as “comfortable and easie for the most part.” They benefitted from a “moderate wind” and encountered only one storm. Through “God’s great goodness,” the passengers also enjoyed a healthy voyage. They avoided “the great contagion of scurvie,” and the smallpox took but one soul, a “wicked fellow that scorned at fasting and prayer.” This last claim is most surprising seeing that his own daughter Mary died soon after contracting smallpox. Higginson, however, put the cause of her death, and that of another child, to their sickly constitutions instead of disease.

---

576 The master of the *Talbot* may have been sympathetic to the puritan cause, but this did not mean the crew shared his feelings. Many of his assertions in this postscript, including the piety of the sailors, contradict his log entries. 577 Higginson, *New Englands Plantation*, 80-83. 578 Higginson’s claim of a “pious and Christian-like passage” contrasts most conspicuously with his entry for June 23 in which they discovered no less than five “beastly Sodomiticall boyes” who were to be immediately returned to England for punishment. Higginson, *New Englands Plantation*, 76-82.
The change in Higginson’s account has an apparent explanation. He dated the *Sea Journal* 24 July 1629, more than three weeks after he arrived at Salem. Higginson likely penned his postscript sometime after he reached the New England shore. The terrors of the open ocean, intense enough to landlubbers while on board ship, may have seemed less threatening upon reflection from the safety of dry land. But the puritanical overtones in the postscript have a different explanation. As already discussed, Governor Endicott and the ministers (including Higginson) established a congregational church at Salem within a few weeks of the latters’ arrival. Only a few days before Higginson dated his *Sea Journal*, Endicott ordered a day of humiliation to honor the election of a pastor and teacher of their new church. Higginson himself filled the former position. Clearly, Higginson wrote his postscript concurrently with his efforts to build Salem’s church. Historians have long speculated upon the apparent change in religious principles among those newly arrived at Salem, but here we see a different sort of transformation. Higginson, emboldened by the unfettered congregationalism that took root in Salem, expressed his true feelings in writing at the end of his journal. In abandoning the cautious tone of his journal entries, he essentially nixed any chance of his *Sea Journal* reaching a printer’s office in England.

Higginson sent the manuscript copy of his journal to the company in England a few weeks after he finished the postscript. Very likely, he entrusted it to the master of the *Talbot*, who apparently shared Higginson’s religious proclivities. That ship, along with the *Lyon’s Whelp*, returned to England sometime around mid-September. The company certainly esteemed

---

579 The company instructed Governor Endicott to pack this vessel with saleable goods and send it back with all possible speed. Time was money, even for puritans. The MBC had leased the Talbot at £150 per month. They also preferred that the *Lyon’s Whelp*, owned by the company, return with the *Talbot*, but gave Endicott leave to employ that ship to best effect. Both ships left for England together, but we do not know when. Per the company’s records, we know they reached London no later than 19 September 1629. Young guessed that the ships left Salem soon after

310
Higginson’s account, but its value diminished considerably amid more pressing issues. The same voyage that brought the *Sea Journal* back to England also returned two colonists, John and Samuel Browne. The Brownes had not only refused to join the congregational church at Salem, but attempted to plant Anglicanism – or at least conformity to its practices – in the colony. Unfortunately for the Brownes, Salem puritans embraced orthodoxy as much as their brethren in Plymouth. Captain Endicott banished them from Salem, forcing them, after a stay of only a few weeks, back across the Atlantic to England. The Brownes, of course, railed against what transpired at Salem and promised to raise trouble about it. For the Massachusetts Bay Company, the timing could not have been worse.

Since at least the spring of 1629, many in the company began to consider in earnest relocating to New England. Surely, some had given this some thought even earlier, but the dissolution of Parliament by Charles in March injected new life into the idea. In its battle against the king, Parliament had evolved into a champion of puritanism. In dissolving it, Charles effectively gave the Church of England authorization to root out opposition to his church-state. Even wealthy puritans, such as those in the company, now had cause to fear a better familiarity with the High Commission. In a meeting of the company on July 29, the governor of the MBC, Mathew Cradock, proposed to transfer their seat of government from London to New England. Officially, he desired only to encourage “persons of worth and quality” to relocate, but the desire to escape persecution in England was the primary motive. It was a bold and unprecedented plan. Although some colonial charters, including their own, did not specify a residency requirement for the governing corporation, no one had ever considered taking the charter with them to the New

---

the installation of the ministers on August 6, but he offers no evidence to support the claim. Young, *Chronicles*, 162-164; 287n2.
World. Understandably, Cradock’s proposal sparked a debate among the members. Given “the many great and considerable consequences” of their decision, they agreed to delay a final determination until the next meeting. In the meantime, the members were charged to consider the pros and cons of the plan. Of course, the nature of the proposal required the utmost secrecy. One month later, the company gathered again to decide the issue. Just prior to this meeting, several members had pledged to leave for New England by the following March provided the government for the company (and thus the colony) came with them. Arguments for and against this proposal were made followed by a vote. By a show of hands, the Massachusetts Bay Company agreed to relocate in New England.

While nothing in their charter specifically prohibited the company from taking it – and thus the government – to New England, nobody knew if the plan could survive a legal challenge. All charters required crown approval. Thus the company had the unenviable task of convincing the king, in the midst of his conflict with Parliament, to allow a group of puritans unprecedented authority and freedom in New England. Almost immediately, things took a turn for the worse. Just three weeks after the company committed themselves to this plan, the Talbot and Lyon’s Whelp returned with news from Salem. Undoubtedly, the company did not expect to see John and Samuel Browne again less than five months from when they departed England. The reason for their quick turnaround surprised them even more. When they granted Governor Endicott authority to expel anyone who threatened to undermine the colony, the company never expected

---

581 Young, Chronicles, 80-83.
the Brownes to fall under this category. After all, they had specifically recommended them to Endicott and appointed the Brownes to the ruling council at Salem. But more problematic than the return of two esteemed colonists were the reports they had to tell of what transpired across the Atlantic.

Given the company’s need to stay in the king’s good graces, the news that their colony had established an independent church and persecuted Anglicans had the potential to derail the entire operation. In fact, this last item violated their royal charter. Naturally, the Brownes had their own agenda. They demanded from the company “recompense for loss and damage sustained by them in New-England.” Furthermore, the shocking developments in Salem gave them considerable leverage. As puritans, the Brownes appreciated the risks of running afoul the Church of England. When they registered their complaint to the company on September 19, the Brownes surely made clear their willingness to expose the scandalous “innovations” undertaken by the company’s agents in Salem. The Brownes’ testimony undoubtedly threw the members for a loop. Only three weeks earlier after they officially launched their plan to take the charter to New England and the first news from Salem threatens to color their endeavor as a separatist conspiracy tantamount to treason. Whether or not this news surprised the company – or at least certain members – can never be determined with certainty. Regardless, they all

---

582 In its General Letter of Instruction, the company gave Endicott the power to send back to England anyone who proved “incorrigible.” Of course, they assumed such persons would come from the ranks of servants and not members of the ruling council of the colony. Young, Chronicles, 158-159.
583 This line comes from the minutes of the 10 February 1629/30 meeting of the company. The Brownes made their initial complaint months earlier in mid-September. Young, Chronicles, 123.
584 I infer the religious proclivities of John and Samuel Browne from the scant evidence cited above. It seems extremely unlikely that the Brownes were ardent Anglicans. Puritans had taken control of the company and surely no member of consequence would recommend devout Anglicans to a leadership position in their colony. The Brownes’ reading from the Book of Prayer in Salem identifies them as conforming puritans, but puritans nonetheless.
585 We do not know when the Brownes learned of the company’s plans to relocate. They unlikely knew about it during their first meeting with the MBC. Given their interest in the matter, they surely discovered the plan within a short time of their return.
appreciated the need to keep these reports under wraps. To buy time, they directed a committee to investigate the Brownes’ claim. First, they read aloud letters from Governor Endicott and “others from New-England,” presumably Skelton and Higginson. The company then created a committee, comprised of individuals selected jointly by themselves and the Brownes, to decide the matter.\textsuperscript{586}

Historians have greatly undervalued the importance of the Browne affair, especially as it pertains to the four tracts published at the behest of the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1630. As is well known, the MBC printed these tracts to refute accusations that they were separatists. However, the historiographical debate over the origins of congregationalism in Salem, discussed earlier, has obscured the manner in which this accusation became known in England. Focusing almost exclusively on church polity, historians have connected congregationalism in Salem to the denials of separatism by the company in haphazard and anachronistic ways. Prior to the Brownes return, nobody in England accused the company of separatism for one simple reason: nobody in England yet knew what had happened in Salem. Nevertheless, historians rarely fail to cite a speech, supposedly delivered months earlier by Francis Higginson from the deck of the \textit{Talbot} on the outward voyage, as proof that the MBC had no intentions to establish an Independent church in New England. As England disappeared over the eastern horizon, Higginson is said to have addressed his “children” as follows:

\begin{quote}
We will not say as the Separatists were wont to say at their leaving of England, Farewell Bablyon, farewell Rome! but we will say, farewell dear England! farewell the Church of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{586} It would seem the company allowed the Brownes to select their own representatives in order to forestall any attempt by them to seek justice elsewhere. Young praised the fairness of this arrangement, but the company certainly had its own best interests in mind. The Brownes selected Samuel Vassall, William Vassal, Symon Whetcombe and William Pynchon for the committee. The company chose John White, John Davenport, Isaac Johnson and John Winthrop. The letters read aloud at this meeting from Endicott and the ministers have not survived. Young, \textit{Chronicles}, 89-90.
God in England, and all the Christian friends there! We do not go to New England as Separatists from the Church of England, though we cannot but separate from the corruptions in it, but we go to practice the positive part of church reformation, and propagate the gospel in America.  

This speech first appears in Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana*, printed decades later in 1702 and is certainly apocryphal. Mather, seeking to deify the founders of puritan New England, extolled Higginson as an incontrovertible defender of non-separating congregationalism. Except Higginson, when he supposedly delivered this address, had yet to establish any congregation, separated or otherwise. As a result, no one in England knew enough to accuse him and his fellow passengers of separatism. Generations of historians, however, uncritically accept Mather’s account of Higginson delivering a fiery speech in defense of a non-existent charge for a transgression he had yet to commit. It comes as no surprise to find Higginson made no reference to separatism in his *Sea Journal*. He did make two speeches on the Sabbath, one each in the morning and afternoon, as the ship anchored off Yarmouth, but he failed to note anything special about them. Three days later, on May 13, they at last parted “with ould England and sailed “into ye maine ocean.” Higginson, by Mather’s measure, greatly undersold this historic event, writing only that his wife and few others became “very sea-sicke.”

During the summer of 1629, Salem established an independent church around the same time the Massachusetts Bay Company decided to relocate in New England. However, these events

---

588 As discussed in earlier chapters, contemporaries and posterity felt free to mythologize the founding of New England. It is probable that Cotton Mather did not invent this myth, though he may have imparted healthy dose of poetic license to the story when he committed it to print.
589 The *Sea Journal* also contradicts Mather’s timeline of events. Mather dated their departure from the Isle of Wight on May 1, but Higginson records this for May 11. Cotton Mather did not have access to Higginson’s Journal. Higginson, *New Englands Plantation*, 63-64. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 328.
had nothing to do with one another until the Brownes returned to England in mid-September. At that point, the company and its colony became associated with the more radical elements of English puritanism. While many of its members embraced a strict interpretation of Calvinism, they managed to keep their beliefs from publically defining the company. The Browne affair now made this impossible. Furthermore, those already familiar with Plymouth colony had good reason to suspect a connection between the Pilgrims there and the colonists in Salem.\footnote{A great deal of uncertainty surrounded the Pilgrims at Plymouth. At least some speculated that their presence would be a detriment to the MBC. Endicot, in his letter to Governor Bradford, rejoiced upon learning that the Pilgrims did not practice separatism. He claimed the “common report” in England suggested otherwise. Morison, Of Plymouth Plantation, 223-224.} As a result, the company immediately circled the wagons to minimize the damage. Creating the committee bought them some time to consider the Brownes’ complaint, but the spread of news could not be so easily bottled up. On September 29, the company gathered together to consider what to do.

The record for this meeting reveals the tension between their attempt to transfer the government to New England and the Brown affair. They renewed their pledge to relocate across the Atlantic, but then deferred the business in order to discuss the matter further with several members then absent.\footnote{The company committed itself to the plan due to a deadline given to them in August by several members who volunteered to go to New England. Only two of the absent members were mentioned by name: Sir Richard Saltonstall and Isaac Johnson. Both men were present to vote on the matter in the August 29 meeting. The records contain nothing to indicate why these men should be consulted again. Young, Chronicles, 86-91.} The company then turned their attention to the Brownes, specifically letters written by the brothers to “private friends” in England. The company faced a dilemma remarkably similar to the one confronted by Governor William Bradford years earlier during the incident with John Lyford. Then, Bradford intercepted letters highly critical of the Pilgrims and their colony. He made copies in order to confront Lyford and John Oldham with their treachery; nevertheless, the governor permitted the letters to continue on to England. Bradford was surely...
tempted to seize the letters, but he also knew reports critical of his colony already circulated in England. Therefore, he acted as a man innocent of any wrongdoing. He chose transparency over censure, forwarding the letters on to England while also sending a written defense against the criticisms they contained.  

The Massachusetts Bay Company took a different course of action. They naturally suspected that the Brownes had disparaged the colony and its government in their letters. And like Governor Bradford, they thought it fit to ascertain their contents. Instead of forwarding the letters to their intended parties, however, the company confiscated them. Those penned by Samuel Browne contained aspersions which they deemed unfit to see the light of day. The others, written by his brother John, apparently passed muster. The company held on to these as well, but notified the recipients and granted them permission to read them in the presence of witnesses. The attempts by the MBC to censure the slanderous reports seems asinine given the fact that the Brownes prowled London, free to communicate with whomever they wished. Their reaction – or rather overreaction – to the news suggests that the members agonized over the potential fallout. Unfortunately, we have no evidence to explain how the MBC obtained the Brownes’ letters – many, if not all, were written during the return voyage – nor do we know if the Brownes objected to having their private correspondence unlawfully seized. Regardless, the appropriation of the letters marks the first steps made by the MBC to counter the dissemination of reports critical of the company and its colony in New England.

592 I discuss the Lyford affair in Chapter Two.
593 The company did not read every letter. They took examples and found some that did not disabuse the colony. Still, they anticipated some letters might be prejudicial to them and wanted to be present when the recipients read them. The stratagem also allowed the company to meet with those connected with the Brownes. The records do not indicate if anyone came to the home of one Mr. Goff, where the letters were held, to read them. Young, Chronicles, 91-94.
Over the next few months, the MBC moved with remarkable speed to execute their plan, transporting not only the government of the company but hundreds of colonists to New England. The records of the MBC for the late fall and winter of 1629/30 contain numerous entries concerning the preparations for what would become known as the Winthrop Fleet. Most of these concerned issues of finance, but we also catch glimpses of a continuing public relations crisis vis-à-vis the Browne affair. In mid-October, the MBC issued letters to Governor Endicott, John Skelton and Francis Higginson. In the missive to the governor – the only one to survive – the company reveals the fallout from the Brownes’ return to England. Religion, of course, stood at the heart of the matter. The Brownes, wrote the company, had testified about “some rash innovations begun and practiced” at Salem. More importantly, they informed Governor Endicott “that the Brownes are likely to make the worst of any thing they have observed in New-England, by reason of your sending them back, against their will.”

One can debate whether or not the company shared the same religious principles that informed the “innovations” at Salem, but no confusion exists over what they thought of Endicott’s decision to send the Brownes back to England. Bad enough that he had precipitously established a civic and ecclesiastical government repugnant to the laws of England, but he followed that up by sending hostile witnesses to these transgressions on the first ship back. The members of the company must have wondered if Endicott had taken leave of his senses. Granted, the governor had no knowledge of their intent to transfer the charter to New England, but he must have anticipated the trouble the Brownes would cause once back in England. In the letter, they reminded the governor how his actions had made them “obnoxious to any adversary” and

594 Young, Chronicles, 290-291.
“distasteful to the state here.” They also made known their intention, now and in the future, to “have an obsequious eye” toward the king and his church.\textsuperscript{595}

Unlike Governor Endicott, the MBC appreciated the importance of maintaining good relations with King Charles and the Church of England. The Brownes offered eye-witness testimony damaging to the company’s ambitions. Surely, the MBC wished to refute or counter their claims, but they lacked any first-hand account sufficient to the task. Letters from Endicott and the ministers have not survived, but these likely served only to verify the Brownes’ tale.\textsuperscript{596}

They also had the manuscript of Higginson’s \textit{Sea Journal}. Of course, the majority of this depicted events prior to their arrival at Salem and the last two pages, written from the colony, expressed religious sentiments unfavorable to the company’s purpose. Around mid-November, they received another letter from Endicott, dated the 5\textsuperscript{th} of September, in which the governor advised the MBC about “certain testimonies” by William Rovell, master of a ship come to Salem. The shipmaster, reported governor Endicott, made “some insolent and misbeseeming speeches… in contempt of the Company’s privileges and government.” Since Rovell apparently made no complaint against the type of church at Salem, he probably served a rival (e.g. Ferdinando Gorges) of the MBC over rights to territory in New England.\textsuperscript{597}

As Endicott’s report concerning Master Rovell proves, the MBC had enemies in England eager to exploit any opportunity to discredit their colony. The Governor’s report surely related other news from Salem. That the company included this item alone in its records indicates the

\textsuperscript{595} In several ways, the friction between Endicott and the MBC foreshadows the same between Salem and Winthrop’s government after 1630. Young, \textit{Chronicles,} 290-291.

\textsuperscript{596} We can never know for sure the content of these letters, but they likely described their reasons for expelling the Brownes from Salem. In several entries in the company records, the Brownes are depicted as defendants against charges made against them by Endicott and the ministers. The governor certainly had an obligation to explain their actions against the Brownes to the company. Given what we know about what happened in Salem, it seems reasonable to conclude these reports would not help repudiate the Brownes’ account.

\textsuperscript{597} Young, \textit{Chronicles,} 109.
extent to which they worried about opposition to their plans. The need to counteract the negative reports circulating in England had become even more urgent. Help came in the form of another manuscript from Salem. Around the same time Governor Endicott’s report reached the company, they also received the second part of Francis Higginson’s chronicle.\(^{598}\) This latest report featured observations of the New England environment and the Indians in and around Salem. It also included a brief summary of events in the colony. We cannot know exactly when the MBC struck upon the idea of using the press to counterbalance the Brownes’ account, but Higginson’s manuscript surely inspired them to execute the plan.

Over the winter, the MBC, amid other preparations for the Winthrop Fleet, moved forward with their print campaign. Unfortunately, we have no records for that time period describing the relationship between the company and the printing houses in London. But if members did not already have direct contact with printers and/or booksellers, they nonetheless participated in the puritan print network that stretched throughout England and into the Continent.\(^{599}\) Their connection to this print network may have changed significantly during the winter of 1629/1630. In addition to the four works printed in 1630, several from the company, over the next few years, joined other wealthy puritans to form a syndicate pledged to underwrite the printing and distribution of polemical tracts. Provoked by “the bleeding estates of our brethren in other reformed Churches,” this group sought to provide intellectual nourishment to English puritans suffering from persecution and privation. Such persons included men and women in England,

\(^{598}\) The records do not indicate exactly when Higginson’s manuscript reached England, but it was likely sent in the same vessel as Endicott’s September 5\(^{th}\) report. Higginson’s account includes a brief summary of events during the summer and no evidence exists of any other report reaching the company from Salem.

\(^{599}\) In previous chapters, I described how the puritans in Leyden communicated with their fellow brethren in the Netherlands and in England. The members of the MBC, living in and around London, surely participated in this network as well.
Continental Europe and, of course, the colonists in New England. It is easy then to trace the origins of this more expansive project to the efforts by the MBC to defend itself and their colony against accusations of separatism. The accusations began shortly after the Brownes returned to England in the fall of 1629. The following April, eleven ships that comprised the Winthrop fleet departed for New England, carrying the charter, a new government, and seven hundred colonists across the Atlantic. The MBC printed four different tracts in support of this mission: *New Englands Plantation, The Humble Request, Gods Promise to His Plantation, and The Planters Plea.*

**NEW ENGLANDS PLANTATION**

We can only guess when each title first appeared in London bookshops, but the MBC likely printed Higginson’s account, titled *New Englands Plantation*, before the others. Most scholars accept this based on the concluding sentence in the preface: “And so I rest a well-wisher to all the good designes both of them which are gone, and of them that are to go.” The verb usage suggests the author wrote this line as the Winthrop Fleet prepared to leave England. However, the identities of those already gone and those yet to go are far from certain. Those already

---

600 This group, which came together in 1632 or 1633, resembled a joint-stock company. Each member promised a certain sum of money to achieve their objective. By then, the scope of their efforts expanded from the support of a single company or colony to a more general defense against Arminism and the growing corruptions in the Church of England. See J.T. Peacey, “Seasonable Treatises: A Godly Project of the 1630s,” *The English Historical Review* 113, no. 452 (1998): 667-679.


602 Alexander Young was the first to draw attention to this line as a means to date NEP’s publication. He assumed the author of the preface, Michael Sparke, referred to those already in Salem (e.g. Endicott, Higginson, Skelton) as those “which are gone” and the colonists in Winthrop’s Fleet as those “that are to go.” Young, *Chronicles*, 241.
departed could refer to the colonists in Salem (e.g. Endicott, Higginson, Skelton) or the first wave of Winthrop’s fleet. The eleven ships set sail over a span of two to three weeks, beginning on 7 April 1630; therefore, other interpretations are also possible. But evidence exists to support *New Englands Plantation*’s printing before mid-April. First, the company had the draft for *NEP* months in advance, sent from Salem by Francis Higginson the previous fall, and received by the company in November. The sermons that would become *The Humble Request* and *Gods Promise to His Plantation* were delivered in mid-April, and likely printed shortly thereafter. *The Planters Plea*, as we shall see, most likely came last. Second, *New Englands Plantation* was the only one of the four titles written from New England. Since the accusations of separatism stemmed from events that occurred the previous summer in Salem, it stands to reason that the MBC would begin its defense with an eye-witness account. Third, three editions of *NEP* appeared in 1630. This attests to the popularity of the tract, but also suggests the first print run occurred early in the year. In England, the year began on Lady Day, March 25. Thus, the company almost certainly printed *NEP* sometime between late March and mid-April.

*New Englands Plantation* features several of the same literary tropes already demonstrated in the Pilgrim tracts. It begins, as so many puritan tracts do, by grounding its authenticity in contrast to the more established literary forms. The subtitle of *NEP* promised “A Short and True Description of the Commodities and Discommodities of that Country [New England].” It opposed the comprehensive discourse of traditional intellectualism (read: Catholic) in favor of a clear and concise testament. And by including both the “Commodities” and “Discommodities” of New England, it offered readers an honest appraisal of the country without the dubious hyperbole typically found in travel and promotional literature. The title page on the first edition identified the author only as “a reverend Divine now there resident.” For the general reader, an
eye-witness account shaped by first-hand experience carried considerable weight. Of course, as a principal agent of the innovations in Salem, Higginson was hardly the most objective author. He had also lost his parish in Leicester for non-conformity before leaving England, a fact that did not help the company’s efforts to prove its loyalty to the English church-state. For these reasons, the MBC may have initially withheld Higginson’s name as author.  

Turning to the first page, the prefatory address expanded upon the themes introduced on the title page. The reader, it began, should not expect “a full-stuffed Title with no matter,” but an honest account “without any frothy bumbasted words, or any quaint new-devised additions.” Moreover, the work is said to have been for a private audience, and not something written for the press. As with the Pilgrim tracts, depicting the tract as an unpremeditated publication of a private correspondence added to its authenticity and significance. The preface concludes with a request that the MBC would revisit again in its subsequent prints. It asked of those unwilling to participate directly to the enterprise to nonetheless “lend thy good Prayers for the furtherance of it.” This last part speaks to the company’s desire to cultivate goodwill among the general populace. The preface was signed “M.S.” for Michael Sparke, a popular bookseller, printer and some-time author of polemical attacks against popery.  

---

603 The second and third editions did however identify Higginson as the author by name. This may have been in response to the popularity of the tract. Additionally, the need to play it so close to the vest diminished somewhat after the Winthrop Fleet departed England with the charter. Higginson, New Englands Plantation, 17.  
604 Sparke’s name appears on the title page, thus his initials appear as a convention and not any true attempt to hide his authorship of the preface. Michael Sparke worked as a bookseller in London for over thirty years, beginning in 1616. He wrote and published several works on his own, most notably Crumms for Comfort (1627), a comprehensive weekly schedule of prayer for the godly to follow. Sparke also printed books for famous authors such as Henry Burton and William Prynne. All three would eventually become notorious to the crown and Church of England. Unlike Burton and Prynne, Sparke never had his ears cut off for his literary efforts, though he was fined £500 for publishing Prynne’s Histriomastix in 1632. But in 1630, Sparke had yet to attract any significant attention from the Church. Other authors he printed for include Sir Edwin Sandys and John Smith, the latter especially the very essence of “bumbasted words” he decries in New Englands Plantation. See Henry R. Plomer, A Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers who were at Work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1641 to 1667 (London: Printed
Despite Sparke’s claim that *New Englands Plantation* consisted of the reverend author’s private and unadulterated words, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that at least some editorial process took place. As noted earlier, *NEP* continued the story Higginson begun in the *Sea Journal*. The manuscript for the *Sea Journal* concludes with the following passage:

> So letting pass our passage by sea, we will now bring our discourse to land on the shore of New England, and I shall be God’s assistance endeavor to speake nothing but the naked truth, and both acquaint you with the commodities and discommodities of the country.\(^{605}\)

The last phrase, concerning the “commodities and discommodities of the country,” repeats on the title page of *New Englands Plantation*. Furthermore, the opening sentence of *NEP* begins with the line that closes the *Sea Journal*: “Letting pass our Voyage by Sea, we will now begin our discourse on the shore of New England.”\(^{606}\) Clearly, Higginson wrote both accounts as two parts of a single story. Those responsible for publishing *NEP* knew this as well. They borrowed the phrase highlighted above for the subtitle of *NEP* even though it appears nowhere in the text. Obviously, someone from the MBC directed the printer to use the phrase from the *Sea Journal* for the title page of *NEP*.

Although *New Englands Plantation* picks up the story at the end of the *Sea Journal*, the differences between these accounts further proves the published second half (*NEP*) underwent revisions of some sort. A comparison between Higginson’s *Sea Journal* and *NEP* reveals a stark change in format, from a daily journal recording the mundane of their voyage to a synopsis of observations organized by theme. In truth, this transformation occurs at the end of the *Sea

---

\(^{605}\) Higginson, *New Englands Plantation*, 83.

Journal after Higginson arrives on land. But whereas he freely expressed controversial points of religion (e.g. vilifying the Book of Common Prayer) at the end of the Sea Journal, Higginson steered clear of any religious topic in NEP. Thus we have a godly divine who not only braved an ocean crossing on the strength of his faith, but wrote the very covenant for the Independent congregation at Salem, suddenly refrain from any discussion of religion midway through his alleged private writings to friends in England. Higginson had no knowledge of the MBC’s plan to take the charter to New England. He also wrote and sent the manuscript prior to receiving the company’s admonishment from England. Either Higginson had uncanny intuition or the MBC altered his manuscript to fit their specific needs.

New Englands Plantation seems suspiciously designed to draw attention away from the controversial “innovations” implemented at Salem by its own author. The vast majority of its twenty-one pages are devoted to descriptions of the environment and Indians in and around Salem. Though Higginson promised a truthful account of both the good and the bad in New England, he nonetheless accentuated the positive to an extent similar to the exaggerated literature promoting Virginia. He wrote of the “fat blacke Earth” of the soil and the abundance of food available. The air of New England he considered particularly healthy for “English Bodyes.” Many, he claimed, who departed England lacking vigor found it on this side of the Atlantic. Higginson himself suffered from “an extraordinarie weaknesse of my Stomacke, and aboundance of Melancholick humors” only to find perfect health in New England. The air in Salem also cured his son of the King’s Evil (scrofula), a condition traditionally alleviated by the touch of

---

607 The first edition comprised twenty-one unnumbered pages. The second contained twenty-seven pages; the third had twenty-four. Higginson, New Englands Plantation, 8-9.

608 One can trace similarities to many tracts; however, Higginson’s categorization of the New England environment into four parts – Earth, Air, Fire and Water – bears a striking resemblance to William Morrell’s New-England, or A Briefe Narration of the Ayre, Earth, Water, Fish and Fowles of that Country (1625).
royalty. Even the water was safe to drink in New England. As with the Pilgrim authors who omitted references to their sufferings from hunger and illness, Higginson obscured the same in *NEP*. The miseries endured by the colonists prior to his arrival – which prompted Endicott to request assistance from Governor Bradford at Plymouth – failed to register in Higginson’s report. Additionally, when he reached Salem the following summer, John Winthrop found little to corroborate Higginson’s boastful claims of health and largesse. And lastly, the ultimate refutation: Higginson died from consumption shortly after sending his manuscript to England.

No evidence exists to prove Higginson (or anyone else) knowingly misrepresented or altered his manuscript description of New England’s environment. He was naturally eager to promote the colony. In recycling the familiar tropes about English America as a land of plenty, Higginson’s errors and exaggerations resembled those of many other chroniclers of the New World. All of this served the company’s purpose: to focus the attention of English readers away from what was different and controversial about Salem: the independent church. *New Englands Plantation* also provided a summary of what happened at Salem during the summer of 1629. This account appears at the end of the tract, lasts about a page and makes no reference to the new church. Instead, readers learned that the colonists created a “Body Politicke,” directed by an anonymous governor. They also read about the establishment of “true Religion” at Salem.

---

609 As previously mentioned, Europeans greatly mistrusted their water supply and with good reason. Thus, Higginson’s comment is meant to designate New England as exceptional in this regard. The author also noted, “... a sup of New-England’s Aire is better than a whole draft of old England’s Ale.” Higginson, *New Englands Plantation*, 98-100.

610 Not everything was perfect in New England. Higginson did make several small notes about the “discommodities” of the country. Mosquitos plagued the English during the months of June, July and August. Snakes also posed a threat. And during the winter, snow covered the ground for two months and sharp frosts could damage crops. These items, according to Higginson, comprised the only negatives about New England. Higginson, *New Englands Plantation*, 103-104.

611 The second and third editions of *NEP* included a brief letter from Thomas Graves, an engineer sent to Salem by the company in 1629. In the letter, Graves offers a rosy picture of the environment similar to Higginson. Higginson, *New Englands Plantation*, 109-110.
and how the preservation of the holy ordinances defended the plantation against any calamity. “And thus,” the author reasoned, “if God be with us, who can be against us?”

In a tract promising nothing but “the naked truth” and written for the benefit of private friends, Higginson’s failure to mention the church at Salem is difficult to explain. The omission is even more peculiar considering the author was one of its principal architects. Higginson crossed the Atlantic to establish a church devoid of corruptions. Is it reasonable to accept that after fulfilling his life’s ambition, Higginson would not share this triumph with like-minded friends in England? Yet in New Englands Plantation, he delivered only a prosaic report about “true Religion” and the “commendable orders” of the government. In fact, Higginson’s brief account of Salem seems nothing more than an addendum to his more robust description of the environment and the commercial opportunities available in New England. As with Mourt’s Relation, matters of faith appear in NEP as an ambiguous backdrop to the more worldly concerns of the colony. And like Mourt, NEP avoids any discussion of internal strife among the English settlers, stating only that Salem enjoyed the blessings of righteous authority, strong and unopposed. If Higginson did indeed write for a private audience, the evidence heretofore considered indicates that the MBC edited and/or redacted his manuscript prior to sending it to the printing office.

With the publication of New Englands Plantation, the MBC dealt with the controversy of the Salem church by ignoring it. We cannot know if the company took the Pilgrim tracts as a model for this literary defense, but many of its members had certainly read, and perhaps owned, a copy of Mourt or Good News. The same could be said for Higginson and others at Salem. While the

---

Pilgrims did not pioneer the strategy of omitting news contrary to a writer’s interest, they did however launch the first literary campaign to advance the interests of a colony over those in England. In printing *New Englands Plantation*, the MBC essentially followed in their footsteps. The company saw the move to New England as permanent. And like the Pilgrims, they knew success depended upon maintaining a positive relationship with England. The Atlantic Ocean proved a formidable barrier, but not an insurmountable one. They could take the charter with them to New England, but the king, church and possibly others could undermine their efforts any number of ways. But while the Pilgrims enjoyed a measure of protection by virtue of their insignificance, the MBC’s planned to send around seven hundred English men and women to New England on eleven ships. Nothing like it had ever been attempted in English America. The company could afford to play coy about the doings of their humble colony in Salem, but the sheer size of the Winthrop Fleet required a different approach.

**GODS PROMISE TO HIS PLANTATION**

*New Englands Plantation* hit London bookshops just as the Massachusetts Bay Company made their final preparations for the voyage. On 23 March 1629/30, the members gathered together for the last time on board the *Arbella*, then riding at anchor off the coast of the Isle of Wight. They swore in three new Assistants and chose Thomas Dudley as Deputy Governor, replacing John Humphrey, who was to remain in England. A few days later, John Cotton, the renowned preacher from Lincolnshire, gave a sermon at Southampton, just a few miles to the north from where the *Arbella* lay at anchor. Cotton was a great supporter of the MBC and probably an investor in the enterprise. He would in 1633, at the age of forty-eight, move to

---

613 The new Assistants were William Coddington, Simon Bradstreet and Thomas Sharpe. Young, *Chronicles*, 126.
Massachusetts Bay, where he became one of that colony’s most esteemed citizens. But on that
day in Southampton, Cotton used his voice in support of MBC’s colonies in New England. A
gifted public speaker, Cotton urged listeners to support the enterprise, for it fulfilled a mandate
from God. Citing the Old Testament, he likened the covenant between English puritans and God
to that of King David. God instructed David to build a house in His name which would then
receive the Lord’s blessing. Now, according to Cotton, God ordered English puritans to build
their own Israel in the New World. But there was a problem. Clergymen across the entire
ecclesiastical spectrum agreed that God had bestowed His special favor upon England. If He
indeed smiled upon England, who among the godly would abandon the land of their birth and
risk His displeasure? Cotton attempted to resolve this dilemma by identifying the circumstances
in which God permitted individuals to leave. He split them into two categories: those determined
to do good by their removal and those looking to avoid evil by the same.614

Cotton identified “five good things” that legitimized one’s removal to New England. These
“good things” referred to ambitions English men and women could pursue across the Atlantic
without incurring God’s wrath. First, one could leave to pursue knowledge. Cotton proved this
by citing example from scripture; specifically, the Queen of Sheba’s journey seeking the wisdom
of Solomon.615 One could also leave “for merchandize and gaine-sake.” Again, Cotton reasoned
from the bible, recalling how Christ compared Christians to merchantmen travelling far and wide
seeking pearls.616 Third, any group desiring to plant a commonwealth elsewhere, such as when

---

614 John Cotton, Gods Promise to His Plantations, Old South Leaflets, Twelfth Series, No. 6 (Boston: Old South
meeting house, 1894), 4-6, http://archive.org/stream/godspromisetohis00cott#page/n5/mode/2up.
615 Cotton named his text, Matthew 12:42. Cotton added that the queen would have continued the pursuit of wisdom
at Solomon’s side had not a “personal calling” recalled her home. Cotton, Gods Promise, 8.
616 From Mathew 13:45-46. Cotton also mentioned Proverbs 31:14 – “Daily bread may be sought from farre.”
Paul led the early Christians to Philippi, could do so.\footnote{See Acts 12:16.} Cotton also reasoned from nature. When a hive becomes too full, a few bees search elsewhere for a new location. Just so, an overcrowded commonwealth must send persons abroad lest “Tradesmen… eate up one another.” Next, God permitted anyone to leave if they could better employ their talents elsewhere. For He sent Joseph, who possessed wisdom and spirit otherwise wasted as a shepherd, to Egypt as a counselor of state.\footnote{“To whom much is given of him God will require the more.” From “Luke 12:48, (Geneva).} Finally, one could leave England for the sake of the ordinances. Cotton described how Jeroboam erected golden calves in Judah, forcing the godly to sell their possessions and move to Jerusalem to preserve the ordinances.\footnote{See Young, Chronicles, 11:13-15.} Drawing another parallel to English history, Cotton reminded listeners that their forebears made a similar exodus after Queen Mary briefly reimposed Catholicism to the realm.\footnote{Cotton, Gods Promise, 8-9.}

In addition to the positive actions described above, God also allowed men to leave England in order to avoid certain evils. For example, when “grievous sinnes overspread a Country that threaten desolation,” God granted permission to move. Of course, few ministers failed to bemoan the wickedness they saw all around them. Cotton quoted the prophet Micah who, upon witnessing rampant corruption and idolatry consume Jerusalem, predicted the city’s destruction. Though not a commandment, Micah’s prophecy allowed the godly and wise to abandon the sinful land before God meted out his punishment. Cotton cited the present disturbances in the Palatinate as a contemporary example of this situation. Many in England considered the Palatinate a symbol of Protestant resistance against the Catholic powers in Europe. Puritans especially had wanted King James – and afterwards his son Charles – to intervene. Their
reluctance to help restore Protestant rule in the Palatinate helped fuel speculation that either king secretly embraced Catholicism. Alluding to a similar calamity striking England, Cotton provided grounds for the faithful to leave before it was too late. Cotton then warned his audience to avoid the evil of debt. Like the followers of David, men could leave their country in order to find the means to pay their financial obligations. Lastly, men could follow the example of the Apostles and leave to avoid persecution.621

During his sermon, Cotton expatiated upon these themes in more detail, but the preceding paragraphs accurately summarize his justifications for removing to New England. His arguments were not terribly original. Cotton recycled several established arguments in favor of colonization, but he gave new emphasis to the perspective of those leaving England behind. Instead of viewing the New World as a dumping ground for England’s undesirables, Cotton depicted it as a land of Canaan promised to God’s chosen. Instead of castigating émigrés to New England as deserters turning their collective backs on God and country, Cotton recast them as spiritual crusaders determined to save the faith from the corruptions that plagued England. More than simply shining a favorable light on the MBC’s endeavor, his sermon provided succor for those who doubted the appropriateness for leaving England. Of course, Cotton was preaching to the choir. Those listening to him as the Winthrop Fleet rode nearby at anchor had already considered the evidence and made their decision. This address has been labeled Cotton’s Farewell Address, with obvious comparisons to Robinson’s speech to the departing Pilgrims at Delfthaven.622 Strange,

621 Cotton, Gods Promise, 9-12.
622 Joshua Scottow, writing from New England near the end of the seventeenth century was the first to characterize Cotton’s sermon as a Farewell Address. Joshua Scottow, in A Narrative of the Planting of the Massachusetts Colony (1694), http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=scottow.
however, that a sermon, ostensibly intended to comfort nervous passengers on the eve of their voyage, would focus on issues the soon-to-be colonists had already reconciled.

The company may have invited Cotton to deliver his sermon as a final blessing to those about to undertake a voyage across the Atlantic. But they may have had another motive in mind as well. Several weeks later, after the Winthrop Fleet at last set sail for New England, the MBC published Cotton’s sermon as *Gods Promise to His Plantation*. At first blush, it seems odd that the company would go through the trouble of printing a tract designed to assuage the doubts of those who already left England. However, accusations of separatism remained even after the departure of the Winthrop Fleet. The arguments Cotton used to justify leaving England proved useful in defending the MBC and its colony against these charges. Indeed, the sermon seems more appropriate for this purpose than the one for which it was supposedly given. In providing spiritual and historical validation for leaving England, Cotton had addressed both dimensions of the separatist charge. For the most part, English puritans agreed on points of doctrine. Separatists differed from non-conformists in that they did not recognize the Church of England as a true church. For this reason, they refused to join in spiritual congregation with their English brethren. Most everyone in England, puritans included, saw this as an act of disloyalty, even subversion. In his sermon, Cotton used biblical and historical examples to convince his listeners that God approved of their decision to remove to New England. With Gods Promise, the MBC hoped to convince English readers that they and their colonists, in spite of their physical separation from England, remained true to the faith and to their country.

As with *New Englands Plantation*, *Gods Promise* contains nothing controversial in terms of doctrine or polity. Cotton’s citing of scripture to support his arguments marked him as a puritan,
but nothing that would identify him as a radical. So while the tract exudes religiosity, the secular overtones of the work did most of the heavy lifting. Four out of the five “good things” that justified removal fulfilled worldly ambitions: pursuing knowledge, relieving the overcrowded marketplace, repaying debts, and utilizing natural talents. More importantly, in bettering themselves, the colonists also served the interests of those they left behind in England. Even the fifth “good thing,” keeping God’s ordinances, derived from a desire to preserve the true English faith from foreign (i.e. Catholic) influences. Near the end of Gods Promise, Cotton punctuates the loyalty of the colonists by connecting their well-being with that of England. “Be not unmindful of our Jerusalem at home,” he warned. “Stay with us in spirit, if absent in body.” He then equated their relationship with England to that between a mother and her child. “Forget not the wombe that bare you and the breast that gave you sucke.”

In reminding the departing colonists of their blood ties to England, Cotton in effect denied the company’s intent to foster separatism abroad. The MBC published his sermon to advertise this point. So as to leave no doubt, John Humphrey wrote the prefatory address to the reader emphasizing the inseparable bond between the colony and England. Humphrey held the post of Deputy Governor of the company until a few days before the Winthrop Fleet set sail. He almost certainly heard Cotton deliver his sermon in Southampton and may have then struck upon the idea of printing it. In the preface, Humphrey solicited the prayers of readers in support of the colony in New England. He asked readers to suspend their suspicions and judge the company’s efforts on their compatibility with God’s word. Indeed, Cotton’s sermon illustrated that the MBC did everything in accordance to God’s divine will. Under circumstances that required many in England to hide their true beliefs, Humphrey understood that some would have doubts about

---

their intentions. In response, he turned the issue of doubt on its head, asking readers if they would risk condemning an action God had approved. Moreover, those who cared to examine the company’s objectives in New England would find them no less worthy than those in Virginia, St. Christopher’s or Bermuda. How then, he asked, could fair-minded individuals lend their support to those enterprises, but not one designed to spread the Gospel to those parts? In essence, Humphrey twisted the original purpose of Cotton’s sermon to combat ill reports circulating in England. *Gods Promise*, the sermon, sought to assuage the doubts of those leaving England, *Gods Promise*, the printed tract, sought to assuage the doubts of those they left behind.\(^{624}\)

### THE HUMBLE REQUEST

The two works examined thus far represent attempts by the MBC to offset charges of separatism laid against them and their colony in New England. However, neither *New Englands Plantation* nor *Gods Promise to His Plantation* offered a direct response to these accusations. Each author originally composed their respective works for different reasons. Francis Higginson composed his manuscript before the Brownes had returned to England to start these rumors. John Cotton may have been aware of these defamations, but he merely intended his sermon to quiet the doubts of English puritans about colonization. The company appropriated their writings for their own purposes, but the published versions offered only an oblique rejoinder to their critics. They needed something more direct. Final preparations for the Winthrop Fleet undoubtedly attracted attention, much of it unwanted. Several days they waited at Yarmouth for a favorable wind, growing more anxious with each delay. In the meanwhile, the company decided to issue a public statement in response to the controversy. On the morning of April 7, the wind shifted and

the vessels made ready to set sail. On board the *Arbella*, John Winthrop and the other prominent
members of the company gathered together to read and sign their names to a brief declaration
entitled *The Humble Request*. Those remaining behind in England then said their final good-
byes, returned to shore and watched the ships that carried their brothers and sisters sail into the
western horizon. A short time later, *The Humble Request* appeared for sale in the bookshop of
John Bellamy, the same printer who years earlier printed the Pilgrim tracts.

Whereas *Gods Promise* justified colonization of in a general sense, *The Humble Request*
appealed directly to the English public to support the company’s endeavor specifically. From the
title page, they addressed “their Brethren, in and of the Church of England” as loyal subjects of
the king. In the subtitle, the company declared its intent: obtaining the prayers of their brethren
and removing the “suspicions and misconstructions” that had poisoned their colony’s reputation.
To achieve this end, the MBC adopted tones of conciliation and humility. Highlighting the
union between them and their Anglican critics, the company characterized the former’s hostility
against them as a simple misunderstanding between members of the same family.

And howsoever your charitie may have met with some occasion of discouragement
through the misreport of our intentions… yet we desire you would be pleased to take
notice of the principals, and body of our company, as those who esteeme it our honour, to
call the Church of England, from whence wee rise, our deare Mother.625

As we saw in Cotton’s sermon, the rhetoric of family centered on the metaphorical relationship
between mother and offspring. The company cast itself as the child of the Anglican Church,
raised to love and respect its mother in the bonds of a “common salvation.”

625 George Parker Winship, ed. *The Puritans’ Farewell to England, being The Humble Request of the Governor and
Company of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England about to depart upon the Great Emigration, April 7, 1630*
00wins#page/n3/mode/2up.
[W]e have received in her bosome, and suckt it from her breasts: wee leave it not therefore, as loathing that milk wherewith we were nourished there, but blessing God for the parentage and… sincerely desire and endeavor the continuance & abundance of her welfare, with the enlargement of her bounds in the kingdome of Christ Jesus.\textsuperscript{626}

As much as they love their parents, children must one day leave the family nest. Thus, the MBC did not spurn their relationship with England, they merely sought to build a house of their own. At its core, \textit{The Humble Request} was a pledge of kinship and fidelity to Protestant England.

The dynamic between England and its colonies naturally lent itself to comparisons between mother and child. Many writers/speakers availed themselves to this metaphor, including John Cotton. But \textit{The Humble Request} pursued this relationship further than most. Instead of merely casting themselves as dutiful children in defense of their Englishness, the MBC also sketched the obligations of mother England to her colonial offspring. In what amounts to a guilt trip, the company through \textit{THR} tacitly implied that the Church of England neglected their parental duties. Significantly, they directed this charge against rank-and-file Anglicans, not the church hierarchy. They also made no reference in \textit{THR} to the abuses forcing them to leave England. Instead, the MBC denounced the lack of charity and compassion allotted by the laity toward the colonists and those who wished to join them. “It is an usuall and laudable exercise of your charity to commend to the prayers of your Congregations the necessities and straights of your private neighbours.” \textit{The Humble Request} continued along this line, using, as did John Cotton, the example of the Apostle Paul to make its case. “You are not ignorant, that the Spirit of God stirred up the Apostle Paul to make continuall mention of the Church of Philippi (which was a Colonie from Rome) let the same Spirit, we beseech you… to pray for us without ceasing.”\textsuperscript{627}

\textsuperscript{626} Winship, \textit{The Puritans Farewell to England}, 4.
\textsuperscript{627} Winship, \textit{The Puritans Farewell to England}, 4-7.
Throughout *The Humble Request*, the company presented itself as a loyal subordinate to the Anglican establishment. Few, if any, of the puritans who left for New England felt they were spiritually inferior to their Anglican brethren, but they fully appreciated being on the short end of the political spectrum. In this, their humility was genuine. Expressing this sentiment also gave them an opportunity to shift the burden of expectations upon their critics. As described above, the company used *The Humble Request* to shame Anglicans (and perhaps some conforming Puritans) into supporting their efforts in New England. Toward the end of the tract, they took it a step further, addressing those who remained unaffected by their supplication.

If there be [any], who through want of cleare intelligence of our course, or tendernesse of affection towards us, cannot conceive so well of our way as we could desire, we would entreat such not to despise us, nor to desert us in their prayers & affections.628

The passage equates ignorance with impiety, and tied uncertainty about information concerning New England with anxiety over one’s soul. The MBC made considerable efforts to provide “cleare intelligence” to English readers; however, they anticipated some would continue to doubt the company’s pious intent. The company, therefore, appealed to their obligations as Christians. After all, “… both Nature and Grace, doth ever binde us to relieve and rescue with our utmost & speediest power, such as are deare unto us, when wee conceive them to be running uncomfortable hazards.” If the company and its colony should stumble, their detractors should nonetheless pray for them. Like a good Christian. Like a good parent. In any event, the company promised to pray for the wellbeing of their mother England – as a devoted child should – even if they did so from their “poor cottages” in the New England wilderness.629

The nature of the company’s appeal in *The Humble Request* indicates that significant opposition to their endeavor came from the middling ranks, those likely to read and circulate news from printed works as well as other sources. The MBC would not have published any of these tracts had it been otherwise. This strata of society included ministers who exerted considerable influence over their congregations. Not every member of the Church fully embraced the Anglican canon. Indeed, the seven hundred or so passengers who sailed crossed the Atlantic in the Winthrop Fleet were not the only ones unhappy about the state of religion in England. English puritans, conforming and non-conforming alike, disliked the corruptions in the Church of England only slightly less than disobedience to the same. The stigma toward separatism stemmed from its implied disloyalty more so than any religious scruple. With *The Humble Request*, the company pledged its devotion to England and its church. Additionally, the it redirected misgivings about religion toward their critics by shaming them for their lack of Christian charity.

The company’s public appeal contrasts with that of the Pilgrims insomuch that the MBC had considerably more resources at its disposal. The Pilgrims lacked money and required the support of Adventurers, a situation that compelled them to accept ignominious terms. When they sailed across the Atlantic to avoid an unjust alteration to their original agreement, Robert Cushman chased them across the Atlantic to settle the matter. The MBC had no such issues. Over the winter of 1629/30, they raised funds sufficient to send and supply hundreds of colonists on eleven ships. Compared to those packed aboard the *Mayflower*, the colonists heading to Massachusetts sailed as part of an armada. However, the company’s largesse had a drawback. The size of their expedition prevented them from escaping the notice of unfriendly eyes. Indeed, the rush to print shortly after its departure suggests their preparations attracted considerable
attention. They were also taking an unprecedented step in removing the charter from England. The company had friends in high places, but even a ripple of controversy could quickly become a tidal wave, especially given the heightened tensions between King Charles and Parliament. Significantly, *The Humble Request* omits why they had to leave England in the first place: persecution from the High Commission. Instead, the MBC set its sights lower, hoping to stem the tide of opposition by appealing directly to England’s rank and file.

Scholars have treated *The Humble Request* as a manifesto describing the colonization efforts of the MBC. The tract’s robust disavowal of separatism has prompted historians to read it as either an honest expression of intent or a deliberately manipulative piece of propaganda. Those who stress the influence of Plymouth colony, especially on John Endicott at Salem, lean toward the former interpretation while those who deny any great change in church polity occurred in Massachusetts argue the latter. Many have likened *The Humble Request* as a reprise of the farewell address delivered years earlier to the Pilgrims at Delftshaven by John Robinson. Scholars have also devoted significant attention to the question of authorship. Hubbard first identified John White, minister from Dorchester, as the author and most scholars tend to agree. Alexander Young thought otherwise, believing John Winthrop to be the most likely candidate. Others contend George Phillips, the future first minister of Watertown, contributed his pen to the task. Regardless of who wrote *The Humble Request*, its author likely took inspiration from Cotton’s sermon at Southampton, employing several metaphors found also in *Gods Promise to His Plantations*. Given the short time between that sermon and the departure of the *Arbella*,

---

630 I provide a sampling of this historiographical debate in Chapter Five.
631 Fittingly, the only stand-alone reprint of *The Humble Request*, printed by the New England Society of New York in 1912, used *The Puritans’ Farewell to England* as its title. See note 57 above.
whoever composed The Humble Request must have done so to meet an immediate need, one that required a more direct response to the controversy surrounding New England.  

THE PLANTERS PLEA

The three tracts examined thus far represent complimentary attempts by the MBC to offset the disparaging rumors about New England. Each advanced a particular set of arguments in support of the colony. The authors (and others involved in production) utilized arguments advanced by earlier promoters, including our Pilgrim writers, and placed them in the context of New England colonization. New Englands Plantation included an eyewitness account of the region, but featured a well-known discussion about the physical environment. Like Mourt’s Relation and Good News from New England, NEP obscured as much as it revealed. Additionally, the published work represents a significantly edited version of the original manuscript. Higginson, with the help of the company’s editors, omitted any reference to Salem’s church nor to the dissent aroused by its establishment. In Gods Promise to His Plantation, Cotton drew upon typological examples from scripture and antiquity to legitimize colonization in general and to solicit support for the MBC’s efforts in New England. He touched upon other familiar themes, such as the unreliability of information from abroad and the duty of English Christians to support one another. Cotton also drew comparisons between New England and other English colonies. The Humble Request directly addressed the rumors about separatists in New England. It amounted to a public declaration of loyalty signed by the officers of the colony. It also placed the

632 Most scholars attribute The Humble Request to the pen of John White. Hubbard wrote: “It is commonly said, that the Declaration was drawn up by Mr. White, that famous minister of Dorchester,... if so, it had a reverend, learned, and holy man for its author.” Young disagreed, but offered nothing substantive: “It seems more probable, however, that it was written by Winthrop, or [Isaac] Johnson, or some other one of those who signed it.” Henry Wilder Foote believed George Phillips, one of the signers, authored the work. See Hubbard, A General History of New England, 126; Young, Chronicles, 299 n5; Henry Wilder Foote, “May Meeting. Gifts to the Society; George Phillips, Minister of Watertown; Letter of James Abram Garfield,” Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 3rd series, vol. 63 (Oct., 1929 – Jun., 1930), 191-230.
blame for any friction between the colony and England on the shoulders of critics who forgot their Christian and patriotic duty.

The ink had barely dried upon the copies of *The Humble Request* when another tract sponsored by the Massachusetts Bay Company appeared in London. *The Planters Plea* represented the company’s most comprehensive defense of their enterprise. Whereas the MBC rushed the printing of both *Gods Promise* and *The Humble Request* to coincide with the departure of the Winthrop Fleet, *The Planters Plea* was a more deliberate effort. In terms of both length and scope, it greatly surpassed the other three works. The author left not a single arrow in his quiver. He put to work traditional arguments promoting colonies as well as those chiefly suited to puritan New England. A close reading of *The Planters Plea* reveals many literary inheritances that make up the bulk of the work. In particular, White drew upon the tropes used in the three works discussed above in addition to those introduced years earlier by Bradford and Winslow. Nevertheless, the founding of Massachusetts Bay involved circumstances different from any previous attempt to colonize the New World. In response White improvised, advancing an argument designed to challenge assumptions about the relationship between England and its colonies across the Atlantic.

In his preface to *The Humble Request*, John Humphrey advised readers about an impending work that would more thoroughly vindicate the company and their ambitions in New England.

Ere long (if God will) thou shalt see a larger declaration of the first rise and ends of this enterprise, and so cleare and full a justification of this designe, both in respect of the warrant it hath from Gods word, & also in respect of any other ground and circumstance
of weight, that is considerable in the warrant of such a worke, as (I hope) there will easily be removed any scruple of moment, which hitherto hath beene moved about it.\(^{633}\)

This “larger declaration” appeared in London in the form of *The Planters Plea*. The MBC again chose William Jones, the same who just a few weeks earlier published *Gods Promise*, as printer. Jones issued two editions of *The Planters Plea* in 1630. Published anonymously, the work has been universally attributed to John White, though the word of Increase Mather shoulders almost the entire weight of this supposition.\(^{634}\) Fear of drawing the ire of the Church may have played a role in White withholding his name, but the settling of Massachusetts was a conspicuous affair. Years earlier, the Leyden Pilgrims slinked away from England largely, and deliberately, unnoticed. The MBC, on the other hand, dispatched a small armada, impossible to keep under wraps. Furthermore, White wrote in order to convince readers that the company had nothing to hide. If so, why withhold his name? We will never know for certain. The convention of Puritan humility concealed a variety of motives, and nearly every puritan author, anonymous or not, expressed reluctance to having his compositions printed. *The Planters Plea* was no exception. In the prefatory address to the “Courteous Reader,” the writer – not White, but also anonymous – claimed to have wrested “this rude draught” out of the author’s hand “hardly overlooked, much lesse filed and smoothed for the Presse.” This claim, of course, contradicts Humphrey’s earlier forecast in *The Humble Request* of “a larger declaration” coming soon. For English puritan writers, sincerity begat convention, and one can never fully disentangle the two.\(^{635}\)

---

\(^{633}\) Cotton, 2.

\(^{634}\) This verdict is far from certain. Increase Mather probably learned of this from his father, Richard, a man who knew many of the main actors in the founding of Massachusetts. While historians have offered plausible challenges to White’s authorship of *The Humble Request*, none have questioned him as the source of *The Planters Plea*. See Young, *Chronicles*, 16n.

\(^{635}\) John Humphrey may in fact have wrote the preface in *The Planters Plea*. He know he was aware of its contents and impending publication from *The Humble Request*. This scant evidence, however, allows only an educated guess as to who prefaced *The Planters Plea*. White, *The Planters Plea*, “Preface.”
Issues of authorship notwithstanding, the ethic of humility served another purpose. For months, whispers about religious impropriety at Salem had fueled growing rumors that the company harbored separatist beliefs. The company sought to counter these reports by casting doubt upon their reliability. Humility proved an effective, and subtle, way of doing this. In New Englands Plantation, Francis Higginson quoted the well-known proverb, “Travellers may lye by authoritie,” as a preamble to establishing his own trustworthiness. The author of The Planters Plea, however, made no pretense at having travelled at all. Like virtually everyone else in England, he relied upon the reports from a variety of sources. Thus, his text consisted of “matters of fact …[and matters] of opinion.” The former included statements known to be true by the author. The latter consisted of things he believed most probable, but “not what he dares warrant as certaine and infallible.” More than just an expression of humility, the admission was designed to put the untrustworthiness of information, especially concerning distant affairs, front and center. The author also invited anyone with “better or more solid judgment” to advise him by “some private intimation,” rather than “by publicke opposition.” Wild speculation, he continued, served no purpose other than to further agitate controversies concerning the fundamentals of religion.  

After casting doubt upon those who would claim to know the incontrovertible truth of things, the preface concludes with an unmitigated testament as to the honor of the company’s intentions.

Howsoever the Author’s intention and opinion be construed and approved; if it may be believed that the Gentlemen that are lately issued out from us, to lay the foundation of a Colony in New-England, have not beene thrust forward by unadvised precipitation, but

---

led on by such probable grounds of reason and religion, as might be likely to prevaile with men that desire to keepe a good conscience in all things.  

At its core, the argument made in *The Planters Plea* rested on the issue of trust. White confessed uncertainty over his own information about the colony in order to undermine the trustworthiness of other accounts (e.g. those of John and Samuel Browne). Instead, he offered the honorable reputations of the company’s governors as security against the rise of separatism in New England. In *The Humble Request*, White – assuming he, in fact, penned that work – shifted the critical gaze away from the company and toward those who would doubt its good faith. He doubled down on this strategy in *The Planters Plea*, expanding its scope to defend not only the MBC, but puritan non-conformity in general against an increasingly hostile establishment.

John White divided the main text of *The Planters Plea* into ten chapters, but from a strategic point of view, the work can be broken down into two parts. He began with a detailed examination of the religious and civic arguments in favor of colonization. This part greatly resembles Cotton’s sermon insomuch that White cites several examples from scripture and antiquity to show God and history approved, and in some cases demanded, English efforts to expand its influence to the New World. In the second – and significantly shorter – part, White provided a narrative history of the colony. He submitted it in order to prove New England was not “a Nursery of Schismatickes.” Significantly, he began with a brief summary of Plymouth, then continued with the Dorchester Company, who in 1623, attempted to establish a settlement at Cape Anne. Their efforts largely failed and the Massachusetts Bay Company replaced it a few years later. Though it comprises only about fifteen of the tract’s eighty-four pages, White’s history dominates scholarly consideration of *The Planters Plea*. Many of the details in *The

---

Planters Plea cannot be found anywhere else, making the tract a popular source for scholars of early New England. Most historians completely ignore the White’s generic statements in support of colonization, largely because they can be found in other works. But in 1630, the MBC desired to show English readers the rectitude of their efforts in New England. So while scholars regard the first part of the book with a diffident eye, these arguments gave English readers a comprehensive rationalization for England to establish a presence across the Atlantic.

The first part of The Planters Plea serves as a veritable anthology of literary tropes used by English authors to promote colonization of the New World. Some of these, such as the “safety valve” argument and God’s directive for man to fill the empty spaces of the earth, are ubiquitous in English promotional literature. White used them along with several other common lines of reasoning. He cited examples from ancient Rome, charging English men and women to emulate the “heroicall spirits” of antiquity who braved unknown shores. White also recycled the oft-used salute to the New England environment, especially its salubrious effect on ailing English bodies. “Manie of our people,” he wrote, “that have found themselves alway[s] weake and sickly at home, have become strong and healthy there.” Additionally, he noted the abundance of the region. The seas teemed with fish and in the wilderness, fowl and venison were there for the taking. White added that a great plague had conveniently removed most of the native population, an event taken as a sign that God wished the English to occupy the now vacated land. Finally, White followed other promotional writers in employing familial metaphors to make his case for colonization. Like Cotton, he compared the relationship between England and its colonies to a

---

638 Alexander Young provides an excellent example that historians have followed almost without exception. Young used The Planters Plea as the opening chapter in his Chronicles of Massachusetts Bay. However, he redacted the tract, using only White’s narrative history. Young, Chronicles, 3-16.
mother and her daughters. White also likened families begun by newly married persons to “pettie Colonies,” natural extensions of the households of their respective parents.639

The tracts printed earlier by the MBC contained arguments similar to those discussed above. They can also be found in several other works promoting colonies in the New World. *The Planters Plea*, however, advanced arguments customized to meet the specific needs of the company. White’s claims were not original per se, but he placed them in a new context by comparing New England with settlements in places such as Virginia, the West Indies and Ireland. Efforts to establish an English presence in these locales met with considerable difficulties. Through a dialectic of objections and answers, he explained how the company’s vision for New England differed from these other attempts. Not surprisingly, the main degree of separation concerned religion. With few exceptions, anyone promoting an English colony in the Americas claimed the advancement of religion as the primary motive behind their efforts. This righteous rhetoric fooled no one. Nearly everyone who had crossed the Atlantic did so for military glory and/or economic opportunity. Even in Ireland, religion served as means to an economic end, though the political ramifications of countless Irish Catholics on England’s doorstep cannot be ignored. But the difference, White explained in *The Planters Plea*, was that the colonists of New England took their Christian mandate seriously.

White did not mince words. In what can be only described as puritan-style bombast, he cast the New England colonists as the vanguard of an ancient tradition of Christian expansion. Moving from east to west for thousands of years, Christianity had reached every corner of Europe. After Columbus’ discovery in 1492, Spain carried the faith to the New World, and

---

remained unchallenged there for nearly a century. By the end of the sixteenth century, several European rivals managed to establish a presence, though by 1630, this still amounted to a few scattered settlements in North America and the Caribbean. Protestantism remained woefully insignificant across the Atlantic. English attempts to correct this situation had largely failed. White claimed that the MBC’s efforts in New England represented a new era in English colonization, one that would eventually lead to the victory of the true faith on both sides of the Atlantic. Rivals across the spectrum of Christianity routinely identified themselves as a direct descendant of the ancient church. Needing the high moral ground for the controversial religious dispute to come, White appropriated this lineage for the MBC and its colony in New England.  

According to White, New England differed from all other attempts in that the MBC enlisted only the most pious men and women to settle the colony. Previous champions of colonization touted New World settlements as emunctories of the state, whereby England could rid itself of its undesirables. However, stocking colonies with persons of questionable character created its own problems. This arrangement not only doomed the colony, but conditioned those in England to ignore their former countrymen once they left. Significantly, White identified this lack of transatlantic communal spirit as the source of England’s colonial failures.

This fundamentall errour hath beene the occasion of the miscarriage of most of our Colonies, and the chargeable destruction of many of our Countrymen, whom when we have once issued out from us we cast off as we say to the wide world, leaving them to themselves either to sinke or swimme.  

Essentially, White reconfigured the “safety valve” argument from a zero-sum game between colony and mother country to one of mutual obligation. Instead of viewing colonies as a

---

640 White, The Planters Plea, 10-32.
641 White, The Planters Plea, 33-34.
dumping ground, he obliged English readers to see these settlements as extensions of themselves. The company, he assured them, operated under this principle. In selecting godly persons as colonists, the MBC sought to preserve the spiritual integrity that made England special in God’s eyes. Thus, anyone condemning New England as a haven for separatists in fact cultivated the very divisiveness they railed against.

White assured his readers that the men and women sent to New England had the right stuff, worthy of support. The extraordinary work of building a colony from scratch required persons of ability and character. Vulgar persons seeking only personal gain inevitably brooked lawful authority, undermining the entire operation. This, in fact, was what doomed colonies in Virginia and elsewhere. White’s argument resembles that of Edward Winslow in *Good News from New England* insomuch as he discouraged anyone opposed to a life of toil and sacrifice from coming there. Those who desired to increase their estates would find only disappointment in New England while those who “aime at the propagation of the Gospell” would prosper. Of course, during such troubling times, England had a great need for individuals committed to hard work, piety and an orderly society. White responded, asserting that England enjoyed a surfeit of such persons and could spare a few for such a noble purpose.642

In characterizing New England as a place where England’s best went to serve the interests of God and country, White repudiated accusations that the company secretly harbored separatist beliefs. He devoted nearly sixty pages to arguments in defense against all types of objections, to colonization in general, to New England as a suitable location and to the character of the colonists residing there. Only then did White directly address the separatist controversy. The

question turned on the true intentions of the MBC. Its detractors claimed the company renounced
the Church “as a limbe of Antichrist” and used the language of religion as a cover to secretly
plant “a nursery of faction and rebellion” in New England. Of course, White denied this,
submitting as evidence the honor and reputation of the company’s leaders. He referred the reader
to their oath given on board the Arbella and printed as The Humble Request.643

A man might justly hope that the letter subscribed with the hands of the Governour and
his associates, wherein they acknowledge the grace they have received, unto this Church;
professe their resolution to sympathize and share with her in good and evill, and desire
heartily her prayers: would sway and beare downe the balance against all groundlesse
surmises and guesses at men’s intentions.644

Only a jealous and uncharitable mind, insisted White, would doubt “the joint asservation of so
many godly men of good estimation.” But as further proof, he offered “the carriage of these
persons in their owne Country.” Nothing in their respective histories, he argued, indicated that
they wished to undermine or abandon the Church of England.645

All but the most recalcitrant English puritans hung their hat on their obedience to lawful
authority. Their willingness to submit, at least publically, to the Church of England in fact
separated them from the separatists. They disagreed, but they also obeyed. As puritans, the
leaders of the MBC naturally disagreed with certain practices of the Anglican Church. However,
one of them had ever challenged the authority of the Church in word or deed. White’s defense
centered on the company’s commitment to proper authority. If its leaders had demonstrated
unwavering loyalty while in England, why then, asked White, would “they become factious upon
a sodaine?” With so many colonists in New England, White acknowledged the possibility that a

643 White does not refer to The Humble Request by this title.
644 This passage certainly bolsters arguments for White as author of The Humble Request. White, The Planters Plea, 60–61.
645 White, The Planters Plea, 60.
small number may indeed wish to separate from the Church. After all, he argued, “it is not easie
to finde twelve Disciples without one Judas.” But he declared it “hard measure” to condemn an
entire society for the transgressions of wayward few. Under such circumstances, White charged
his readers to lend their support to the MBC who had already proven their allegiance to England
and its Church. Earlier in *The Planters Plea*, White described colonies as a joint enterprise
requiring cooperation between those undertaking the affair in the New World and those who
remained behind. He called up this motif again, citing the need to support the governors in the
colony as the best hope for maintaining discipline in New England.646

White’s defense on behalf of New England against charges of separatism sets the stage for the
second part of *The Planters Plea*. Indeed, he mobilized his brief history of New England as part
of this defense. Thus it must be viewed from this context. As with William Bradford and Edward
Winslow, White (via the MBC) published his account, not to preserve a record for future
generations, but to influence popular opinion in England. Needing to defend the MBC against
disparaging rumors circulating throughout England, White used literary strategies implemented a
few years earlier by these same Pilgrim authors. Having spent the previous seven years (at least)
engaged in the business of settling New England, White had certainly read *Mourt’s Relation* and
*Good News from New England*.647 He likely had other sources of information (e.g. letters, verbal
accounts) concerning Plymouth colony. These sources undoubtedly painted a slightly different
picture than the one offered in the Pilgrim tracts, something not lost on White or the MBC. At
any rate, White had a readymade blueprint for promoting a controversial puritan colony in New

---

647 White made an oblique reference to *Mourt and Good News* in a brief panegyric to the Plymouth Pilgrims: “And
after a yeares experience or two of the Soyle and Inhabitants, [the Pilgrims] sent home tydings of both, and of their
well-being there, which occasioned other men to take knowledge of the place, and to take it into consideration.”
England. Just as he drew upon a number of established arguments for his general defense of English colonization (i.e. what I have designated “the first part”), White borrowed from Bradford and Winslow to refute charges of separatism levied against the MBC and its New England colony.

In both *Mourt* and *Good News*, the authors portrayed the Pilgrim government as agents of lawful authority at Plymouth. White did the same for the governors of Massachusetts. As we have already seen, White differentiated this colony from other English plantations – conspicuously avoiding Plymouth in these comparisons – via the character of its settlers. Not only were the governors paragons of loyalty and virtue, but the common sort who came over with them embodied this same ethic. Essentially, White informed English readers that the MBC led a perfectly English orthodox community that just so happened to be on the other side of the Atlantic. In earlier chapters, I discussed how *Mourt's Relation* failed to reveal divisions among the English colonists. Nobody in England, with the exception of a few untrustworthy sailors, could gainsay this characterization. But when the Wessagusset colonists returned to England, the illusion of harmonious orthodoxy could no longer be maintained. Thus, in *Good News from New England*, Edward Winslow changed the narrative, casting the Pilgrims as a proxy for lawful and just authority and pitting them against unruly dissenters who cared for nothing but material gain. A similar dynamic occurs in *The Planters Plea*. At first, White presented the colony as a united force determined to spread the Gospel. This, in fact, was what separated New England different from the other English colonies. The return of John and Samuel Browne in the fall of 1629, however, compelled White to directly address the factionalism that had already reared its ugly head at Salem. Thus, his image of a homogenous community serving as the proselytizing
vanguard of the true faith quickly yields to a more accurate representation: that of a colony plagued by intractable dissenters.

Everyone in England well understood the threat of faction to peace and prosperity. The remedy, also well understood, was a strong church-state determined to root out any opposition to the officially sanctioned orthodoxy. In *The Planters Plea*, White offered the MBC as the only viable authority willing and able to carry out this duty in New England. But to cast the company and its governors in this light, he had to identify an antagonist equally determined to thwart its orthodox mandate. The Pilgrims, of course, faced this very same issue. Bradford and Winslow solved this problem by reconfiguring their own experience as enemies of the state, describing Weston’s men as intractable factionalists – essentially using the same language many in England directed toward them – while also rendering themselves as defenders of the orthodox establishment. White employed a similar strategy in *The Planters Plea*. However, as nonconforming puritans, the collective experience of the MBC differed from those of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Almost everyone in England, including most puritans, equated separatism with subversion. Nonconformists, on the other hand, believed their disagreements with the Church of England amounted to loyal dissent. By 1630, the Church had become less likely to recognize the difference and many nonconformists, namely those who sailed as part of the Winthrop Fleet, found themselves on the wrong side of the law. Indeed, the Church’s persecution of nonconformists accelerated and expanded the MBC’s plans for New England.

These circumstances presented a problem for White. Most of the colonists left England because the Church had increasingly thought of them as religious dissenters. Himself a nonconformist, White certainly did not see himself, nor the New England colonists, in this light.
But many in England did. And some who did not were, nevertheless, willing to exploit the notion for their own purposes. White’s task then was to cast a group of dissenters as proxies of the same authority that persecuted them. Of course, the Pilgrims had to overcome this stigma as well. Bradford and Winslow dealt with this issue by omitting any pointed discussion of their religious beliefs in their tracts. The strategy made sense since the ravages of time, in this case at least, worked to their advantage. Though they originally fled from England as avowed separatists, their exodus from Scrooby occurred roughly fifteen years before Mourt and Good News appeared in print. Few, if any, readers had memories of their wrongdoings in England, and Bradford and Winslow were not about to remind them. John White had none of these advantages. The scope of the MBC’s efforts, vis-à-vis the Winthrop Fleet, made it impossible for him to obscure the religious dimension of its efforts in New England. Anyone concerned with the business knew the company embraced the ethic of nonconforming puritanism. Furthermore, readers of The Planters Plea would not forget their mass exodus from England after only a few weeks. He could not effectively hide the religious convictions of the company. Any attempt to do so would undermine his integrity as an author. In order to defend the MBC in New England, therefore, White had to defend nonconforming puritanism.

Puritan objections to Anglican practices derived from a strict reading of scripture, but White did not launch a theological debate. Instead of dwelling on the doctrinal differences between nonconformity and Anglicanism, White essentially dismissed them as inconsequential. An ardent puritan, the reverend author of The Planters Plea in fact considered matters of faith extremely important. He muffled this sentiment in print, however, taking a page out of the Pilgrim playbook, and substituted a different standard by which the nonconformists should be judged: their commitment to orthodoxy. In fact, White claimed the colonists left England because they
could not in good conscience practice their faith without causing divisions in England. Knowing “that their contrary practice gives disturbance unto the Church’s peace,” they chose to brave the dangers of the New World “for quietnesse sake.” White described this “great tendernesse” toward their brethren in England as a demonstration of the company’s loyalty and continued sense civil responsibility. White objected to the notion that the MBC harbored separatists, but he never denied the danger separatism presented. In fact, this great evil threatened to undo English communities on both sides of the Atlantic. He hoped that the shared danger of separatism would encourage readers to see the MBC as part of a shared solution. Conspicuously, White left out any reference to the High Commission’s campaign to harry nonconformists out of the land. The majority of those who became New England colonists, in fact, did so reluctantly. 

Nevertheless, in *The Planters Plea*, White characterized the company’s efforts as a voluntarily migration conducted for the common good. They crossed the Atlantic, not to escape the authority of the Church of England, but to extend it overseas.

Naturally, some had their doubts. The MBC’s critics whispered that beneath the veneer of nonconformity, the company secretly embraced separatist beliefs, and desired only to worship as they pleased. This amounted to separation in all but name. Undoubtedly, there was a great deal of truth in this, but White categorically denied it. He acknowledged that New England churches prohibited certain ceremonies, but dismissed this as necessary to preserve order amid chaotic circumstances. Despite the MBC’s best efforts to screen them out, a few “men of fiery and turbulent spirits” found their way to New England. Even among “the most and most sincere and godly part,” White called it “absurd to conceive they have all one minde.” The governors even

---

648 This supposition is supported by the number of colonists who returned to England in the 1640s once persecutions by the Church of England stopped.
649 White, *The Planters Plea*, 63-64.
had to accommodate “some Germans” who, not surprisingly, worshipped differently from English protestants. Toss into this mix a goodly number of “heathen” Indians, and the English reader could appreciate that the social dynamics in New England differed considerably from those in Old England. So, even those colonists who did not hope for religious liberty, might “consent to some variation from the forms & customes of our Church.” What critics interpreted as a separatist conspiracy was, White explained, merely the practical response of a loyal colonial government determined to keep “peace and unitie.” That government, consisting of nonconforming puritans, naturally implemented an orthodox establishment consistent with their beliefs. The MBC did not consider Anglican ceremonies “simply evill.” Rather, they believed the practicing of it was “joyned with some contempt to [their] authority.”

To further prove that the MBC did not intend to establish in New England “a Nursery of Schismatickes,” White offered a “faithfull and unpartiall Narration of the first occasions, beginning, and progresse of the whole worke.” The vast majority of attention given to The Planters Plea by scholars has gone to this historical summary of early New England. A sketch of attempts to establish the first English colonies in the region, mainly from an investor’s point of view, the narrative has served countless historians as fodder for their own New England story. It is also the preeminent source for what has become the opening chapter of the history of Massachusetts Bay. This interest stems from White’s inclusive (and exclusive) record of the Dorchester Company and, beginning in 1623, its attempt to establish a settlement at Cape Anne.

---


651 Alexander Young began his Chronicles of Massachusetts Bay with this history in The Planters Plea. Much of the Introduction in Chapter Five comes from this source as well.
After several years of failure, the company split. Those still undaunted by the initial setbacks joined with “some gentlemen of London” to create, in 1627, the Massachusetts Bay Company. White characterized the Dorchester Company’s failures at Cape Anne as the invisible foundation upon which subsequent attempts would succeed. Writing before the Winthrop Fleet even reached its destination, White’s conviction was, in several ways, a leap of faith. Nevertheless, the Bay colony fulfilled his prophecy, and history has rewarded his prescience by rendering the Dorchester Company as the antecedent of this effort.652

None of this, of course, was White’s intent. He composed this brief account to disprove accusations that the MBC meant to establish Independent churches in New England. Therefore, we must consider his narrative in this context. The Dorchester Company may have laid the foundation for colonies in Massachusetts Bay, but White opened his New England tale with the settlement at Plymouth.

About ten yeares since a company of English, part out of the Low-Countryes, and some out of London, and other parts, associating themselves into one body, with an intention to plant in Virginia: in their passage thither being taken short by the winde, in the depth of Winter the whole ground being under Snow, were forced with their provisions to land themselves in New-England upon a small Bay beyond [Massachusetts], in the place which they now inhabit and call by the name of New-Plimouth.653

White went on to describe the difficult conditions these colonists overcame, marveling that any of them survived that first winter. Remarkably, the passage above articulated a version of events in stark contrast to what William Bradford composed in Mourt’s Relation. White clearly had alternative sources of information. More importantly, he exposed the harsh truth of that first year at Plymouth without fear of souring its prospects, nor those of other colonies in New England.

---

652 White, The Planters Plea, 74-75.
Edward Winslow, with his publication of *Good News* in 1624, had already discarded the image of a New England idyll as an effective literary tool. He did this in order to discourage intemperate, materialistic men from seeking their fortune in New England. White concurred with this vision. He too saw New England as an exclusive preserve for worshippers of the true faith and used descriptions of hardship in the colonies as a way to sift the wheat from the chaff.

Nevertheless, White had motives beyond keeping worldly men out of New England. The author wrote true when he confessed that the MBC could not screen out every troublesome soul from their plantation. But the company could also boast that they knew and approved of the vast majority of the settlers in or on their way to New England. White began his narrative with Plymouth in order to render Massachusetts Bay as its direct descendent. He looked upon the Pilgrim colony as an unmitigated success story. Ten years after a providential wind directed them to the shores of New England, the colonists at Plymouth endured and even thrived in their wilderness community. However, instead of a testament to their determination, or even God’s blessing, White attributed their success to support from “friends in London.” These words, had he read them, may have induced even the habitually stolid Governor Bradford to laugh out loud. The Pilgrims had friends in England sympathetic to their cause, but few of them, particularly the Adventurers, helped them in any material sense. Bradford refers to this neglect repeatedly in his writings. In fact, the lack of support from England prompted the governor to send Edward Winslow back in 1623 to procure much needed supplies. Given his familiarity with the unpleasant details of those first few years at Plymouth, White surely knew those colonists

---

654 White claimed that about “three in four” of the colonists knew one another. He cited, for example, those from Plymouth (England) as an example. “There passed away about 140 persons out of the western parts from Plimmouth, of which I conceive there were not sixe knowne either by face or fame to any of the rest.” White, *The Planters Plea*, 62.
received little support from England. So while he provided a more accurate version of events in some respects, White nevertheless altered this history when it served his purpose. Wishing to cultivate good will toward the MBC’s colonies in New England, he greatly exaggerated its importance years earlier to the survival of Plymouth.

White dwelt upon Plymouth just long enough to establish the colony as a success story. He concluded with an allusion to the to the Pilgrim tracts.

And after a yeares experience or two of the Soyle and Inhabitants, [the Pilgrims] sent home tydings of both, and of their well-being there, which occasioned other men to take knowledge of the place, and to take it into consideration.

In 1623, a group of “Westerne merchants” heard the Pilgrim summons and moved to plant a colony “on the Coast.” These merchants (a.k.a. the Dorchester Company) regularly sent ships throughout the North Atlantic on fishing and trading expeditions. The rich fishing grounds in the North Atlantic provided a tremendous opportunity; however, the logistics involved required a substantial commitment of capital and labor. Naturally, the English concentrated their initial efforts closest to their own shores. Since at least the mid-sixteenth century, English vessels had fished off the coast of Newfoundland. The fleets grew in number and every year pushed further west then south, hugging the coast of Maine and into Massachusetts. It took several weeks for ships to reach these grounds and several weeks to return. All this while, sailors did the

655 White may have met with Winslow during the latter’s return visit to in 1623/24. Since we lack many details of Winslow’s visit, some in England may indeed have contributed to the colony, but only after Winslow made a personal appeal. For the most part, Plymouth survived from a combination of hard work and luck.


658 White never refers to the merchants as the Dorchester Company.

659 The patent given to the Earl of Northampton for Newfoundland in 1610 claimed that the English had fished that coast for fifty years. Charles Levi Woodbury, The Relation of the Fisheries to the Discovery and Settlement of North America (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1880), 10, http://archive.org/stream/relationfisheri00woodgoog#page/n8/mode/2up.
work while the fishermen were idle. The distances involved caused additional problems. Fish caught at sea spoiled within a couple of days. Therefore, fishermen had to quickly land their catch on shore, process it, then load it back on board ship for the return trip to Europe. All of this required considerable effort. Due to the absence of a permanent settlement near the prime fishing grounds, laborers brought temporarily from England had to do this work. The expense of a working crew of sailors, fishermen and general laborers, cut significantly into the profits of the business. Colonization gave investors an opportunity to streamline the operation. A permanent settlement along the coast would permit residents to fish nearly year round. They could also work the larger fishing vessels sent from England, thereby providing the company a ready supply of labor without the expense of transporting them across the Atlantic and back. When not at sea, these same colonists could devote their time farming and trading with the Indians. In time, the settlement would become able to feed itself and possibly create new opportunities for trade, especially with the Indians.660

By 1623, the few prior attempts by the English to colonize along the North Atlantic coast had failed. Undaunted, the “Western merchants” managed to raise a stock of over £3000 for the business. White acknowledged a profit motive, but the investors, he explained, had the good of the nation foremost in their minds. In particular, a permanent settlement would allow fishermen and others access to a minister, whereas at present they spent months at sea “without many means of instruction at all.” A minister himself, White understandably privileged the religious dimensions of the enterprise, but he certainly knew the investors had more worldly priorities. In fact, he devoted an entire chapter describing the commercial aspects of the Dorchester Company.

White provided a detailed accounting of three separate attempts to settle Cape Anne between 1623 and 1625. Much of this centered on the financial and logistical problems faced by the merchants. When the third attempt failed, the Dorchester Company liquidated their assets and quit the business.\(^{661}\)

White labeled this section “a digression,” but it nevertheless plays an important function in his argument. He gave a strictly commercial accounting of the merchants’ efforts at Cape Anne; this immediately after declaring that the religious imperatives were paramount. The contradiction emerges as a consequence of White’s strained attempt to link the Dorchester Company to Plymouth colony. From the passage above, he claimed the good “tydings” sent back to England by the Pilgrims sparked interest among the merchants to follow in their footsteps. This is highly unlikely. While the merchants may have known about Plymouth, their scheme had much more in common with commercial fishing operations throughout the North Atlantic. Naturally, they saw the colony as an extension of the business in which they were already engaged. White argued that the Pilgrims inspired the Dorchester Company, but the neither the merchants nor the colonists at Cape Anne made any attempt to contact them at Plymouth. Moreover, the friction between the settlers at Cape Anne and the visiting Pilgrims, described at the beginning of this chapter, belies the supposed esteem the company had for them. White manufactured the religious impulse of the Dorchester Company in order to establish a hereditary link to Plymouth. But the prevailing commercialism of Cape Anne served his purpose as well. Near the end of this section, White explained why the company failed. Problems such as the location of Cape Anne (too far away from the primary fishing grounds) and a declining market in Europe were partly to blame. However, the most significant factor White traced to the lack of order and proper authority at

\(^{661}\) White, The Planters Plea, 67-74.
Cape Anne. The “Land-men,” as he called them, “who being ill chosen and ill commanded, fell into many disorders and did the Company little service.” This lack of proper authority proved decisive. In the end, White demonstrated to the reader how commercial interests overwhelmed religious objectives to the detriment of all.662

The collapse of the Dorchester Company, though disappointing, nevertheless set the stage for the third, and for White, critical stage of New England colonization. The company disbanded, but a few of the “Adventurers” refused to admit defeat.663 White characterized the failures at Cape Anne as a blessing in disguise. For while the colony proved financially unsound for the investors, it scared away a significant number of worldly men from the business. Free from any commercial shackles, the Adventurers could now pursue their spiritual objectives in New England. For White, the merchant’s loss was the minister’s gain. The author used the metaphor of a house, fittingly enough, to describe the unseen benefits of the failed attempts.

...that as in building houses, the first stones of the foundation are buried under ground, and are not seen, so in planting Colonies, the first stockes employed that way are consumed, although they serve for a foundation to the worke.664

In truth, the foundations White described existed on both sides of the Atlantic. While the Adventurers had rid themselves of the irreligious spirit of self-gain, a similar development occurred in New England. Most of the “Land-men” at Cape Anne returned to England after the Dorchester Company folded. However, “a few of the most honest and industrious resolved to stay behind… and not liking their seate at Cape Anne chosen especially for the supposed

663 White uses the term “Adventurer” for those former members of the Dorchester Company who still hoped to build a colony in New England. Before this, he called them “merchants.” These terms were mostly interchangeable in the early seventeenth century, but William Bradford used “Adventurer” as well. It should be noted that White coins the term only after the mercantile interest is supposedly eliminated from the enterprise.
664 White, The Planters Plea, 74.
commoditie of fishing, they transported themselves to Nahum-keike [Naumkeag]” a few leagues to the south. White displayed the move from Cape Anne to the future site of Salem as a conscience shift away from commercial imperatives. He also marked the resumption of his historical narrative with this event, effectively ending the “digression” once the profit motive no longer applied. Hence this term carries a double meaning: a temporary deviation in the author’s story to describe a momentary lapse in their mission to bring the Gospel to New England.665

The Cape Anne colonists were not the only ones on the move. The Adventurers, after conferring with “some Gentlemen of London,” gravitated to that city where “the businesse came to agitation afresh.” With this, White introduced the reader to the Massachusetts Bay Company.666 However, instead of celebrating this development as a reincarnation of an earlier puritan mandate, White provided only a matter-of-fact summary of events leading up to the departure of the Winthrop Fleet. In fact, his account resembles the terse entries found in the company’s records.667 The new men from London and the Adventurers from the now defunct Dorchester Company gathered to discuss plans for New England. Several men of financial means showed “some good affection to the worke,” but desired one of their own to “engage their persons in the Voyage.” This stipulation reflects the concern these men had toward the conduct of affairs in the colony. They knew of several colonies, including Cape Anne, that failed due to a lack of any proper authority. Eventually, John Endicott, “a man well knowne to divers persons of good note,” stepped forward and agreed to oversee the operation. The plan for the colony could

665 White, The Planters Plea, 74-75.
666 Curiously, White fails to mention either company name in his text. He uses “Western merchants” instead of the Dorchester Company and “some Gentlemen from London” for the MBC. Perhaps he did this to avoid confusion between the two. Certainly, gentlemen had more respectability than merchants.
667 Of course, few, if any, outside of the MBC’s officers had access to the minutes of their meetings. Thus, White’s relation conveyed new information to its readers.
now move forward. The company raised the necessary funds and obtained a patent from “his most Excellent Majestie.”

Governor Endicott and several others reached their destination – White never used the word “Salem” – in September 1628. He immediately united his men with those of the former Cape Anne colony “into one body.” Eager to promote the endeavor as an orthodox affair, White naturally featured a theme of unification. The new governor sent back word of “his prosperous Journey and safe arrival” which encouraged others in the company to follow up on this initial success. The next year, roughly three hundred more settlers, along with “a convenient proportion of other Beasts,” joined Endicott in New England. The colony continued to prosper and this:

… began to awaken the Spirits of some Persons of competent estates, not formerly engaged, considering that they lived either without any usefull employment at home, and might be more serviceable in assisting the planting of a Colony in New-England, tooke a last a resolution to unite themselves for the prosecution of that worke.

White then notes how the example of these men of “competent estates” encouraged others to follow their example. Together, these persons “made up a competent number” and sailed for New England, where the author hoped “they are long since safely arrived.”

In his summary of the MBC’s activities, from its inception in 1628 to the departure of the Winthrop fleet, White omitted a great deal. First, he made no mention of any spiritual motive. Earlier in *The Planters Plea*, White claimed that religion motivated the company to prosecute its affairs across the Atlantic. The absence of this in his synopsis then is especially surprising given his desire to differentiate the MBC from the commercially-driven Dorchester Company. White

---

668 White, *The Planters Plea*, 75-76.
669 The “Beasts” included horses and “kine” (i.e. cows and/or cattle). Many of the horse perished during the voyage but the kine arrived “safe for the most part.” White, *The Planters Plea*, 76-77.
also neglected to mention anything about the church at Salem, contact with the Plymouth Pilgrims, or the expulsion of John and Samuel Browne. These events would seem to be of direct interest to readers in England; nevertheless, the author glossed over these details. This lacuna greatly resembles what we find in the Pilgrim tracts. White, well aware of the difference between what occurred at Plymouth and what the Pilgrim authors reported, followed this blueprint in *The Planters Plea*. He waxed poetically about the spiritual rectitude of the New England colonists when it served his purpose, but employed a strategy of deliberate ambiguity and oversight in order to cover up events at Salem.

White concluded his brief history of New England and *The Planters Plea* itself with a summary of the main arguments. He categorically denied “the suspicious and scandalous reports” that claimed the MBC intended to establish “a seminary of faction and separation” in New England. Turning a critical gaze upon their accusers, the author noted how those “generally swayed and carried on by private interests” suspected others to behave in kind. These skeptics, he continued, simply projected their own doubts and weaknesses upon the honorable undertakers of this enterprise. White then claimed the authors of these reports, presumably persons with experience in New England, were guilty of similar embellishments. These did not represent things “as they are really done and intended, but as they apprehend them in their fantasies.” To underline this point, he provided examples that contradicted one another. Some accused the government in New England (i.e. Salem) of weakness, claiming it yielded to “men of hot and fiery spirits” and implemented “changes and alterations’ in religion to appease them. Others, he claimed, reported expectations of liberty, “and finding the restraint of Authority,” complained about the excesses of a severe and arbitrary government. Each of these objections, White argued,
missed the mark. While men “of divers tempers” did reside in New England, the government did everything it could for the sake of “preserving unitie and love.”

Pursuant to the fundamental theme of a transatlantic English community, White argued that the success of orthodoxy in the colony depended upon support from England. He solicited both the prayers and purses of his readers. In requesting prayers for the welfare of New England, White asked for more than just an unthinking supplication to God. He appealed to his readers’ ability to reason and, in the tradition of English puritans, to interpret the textual evidence for themselves. White was confident that “men of more indifferent and better tempered mindes” would conclude that New England presented no threat to religion or England’s peace. In addition to their prayers, White also asked for money. The sincerity of this request is uncertain. Certainly, the MBC would never turn down anyone willing to advance their purse to the colony, but the company did not lack for resources. And as White made clear, they did not strive to make a quick profit from their colony. This suggests that White’s request for monetary donations may in fact have been a subtle way to underline the spiritual nature of New England. The company itself, argued White, would never openly request donations. They were too humble and honest for such a thing. However, he assured the reader that the colonists were in great need of their support. A merchant or gentlemen, White reasoned, could easily spare £25 or £50 for such a worthy cause. He then confessed that this investment would not likely make a profitable return. White did mention the possibility that the king might grant 100 to 200 acres of land in New England for such a gift, a purchase that their progeny may in time come to appreciate. In the final analysis, however, White argued that any support given to New England was in effect an act in

---

support of the faith. Quoting from Luke, White explained, “he is no loser, that hath made God his debtor.”

673 White, The Planters Plea, 78-84.
Conclusion

When the *Mayflower* passengers landed at Cape Cod in the winter of 1620, they had taken the first step toward establishing a different type of colony in English America. Their settlement at Plymouth marked the first time a group of English puritans could live and worship without interference from the Anglican Church. Nevertheless, their years of exile in the Netherlands taught them that they could never completely sever their connections to England. Even with thousands of miles ocean between them, Plymouth and England remained inextricably linked. That great distance, however, gave the puritan settlers an opportunity to determine the nature of this transatlantic relationship. The Pilgrim leaders of Plymouth colony published two tracts in 1622 and 1624 respectively. They did this in order to manipulate public opinion in support of their colony. A few years later, a larger group of like-minded colonists established their own colony in Massachusetts Bay. The historiographical debate concerning Plymouth’s influence on the Bay colony’s first settlement at Salem has focused exclusively upon church polity. As I have shown in this study, the Pilgrims established a tradition of using print to advance colonial objectives. In 1630, the Massachusetts Bay Company published four tracts in London in an attempt to establish their own version of events. The company used the literary blueprint established years earlier by the Pilgrims in order to advance their own colonial agenda.

My research shows significant connections between the Pilgrim tracts and those printed by the MBC. Differences certainly existed between the puritans in Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, and each author adapted their literary strategies in response to historical circumstances. However, the godly residents in both colonies had common cause in that they each sought to establish puritan communities in New England that were at odds with the authorities in England.
The six tracts I examine in this study – *Mourt’s Relation, Good News from New England, New Englands Plantation, God’s Promise to His Plantation, The Humble Request and The Planters Plea* – represent the rise of New England literature. The producers of these works successfully fused the language of the English Reformation with the literary tropes found in literature promoting English colonies in the New World. Beginning with *Mourt’s Relation*, in which William Bradford and Edward Winslow did their best to obscure their religious affiliation, the puritan overtones become more explicit, culminating in *The Planters Plea*, a work in which John White openly defended the religious practices of the independent church at Salem. This transition, from promotional tract to puritan polemic, marks a crucial evolution in the literature of the English Atlantic and the rise of New England literature.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Primary Sources


**Published Secondary Sources**


Beard, Charles. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*. New York:
The MacMillan Company, 1921.


DeVoto, Bernard. “That Southern Inferiority Complex.” *Saturday Evening Post*, January 16,


Gomes, Peter J. “Pilgrims and Puritans: ‘Heroes and Villains’ in the Creation of the American


Spengemann, William C. “American Writers and English Literature.” *English Literary History* 378


