

When John Winthrop was considering emigration to America, one of his first arguments was that divine judgment on England was imminent.¹ He had already written to his wife that a “heavye Squorge and Judgment” could be expected. Like so many others around him, he drew the obvious parallel, arguing that those who were considering emigration should take care not to “imytayte Sodom.”² In response to Winthrop’s arguments, his neighbor Robert Ryece used the same analogy: “[in England] where every place mourneth for wante of Justice, where the cryenge synnes goe unponished, or unreproved . . . and what so ever is evyll is cowntenanced, even the leaste of these, is enowghe, and enowghe to make haste owte of Babylon, and to seeke to dye rather in the wyldernes then styll to dwelle in Sodome.”³ Thomas Hooker wrote that England had become “literally *Babel*, and so consequently *Ægypt* and *Sodome*,” ready to be “abased and brought down to hell.”⁴ Talking about Sodom in this way became one of the telltale signs that a Puritan was on the verge of migration. Puritans referred to Sodom as an example of judgment and a warning for England; they referred to themselves as a possible “saving remnant” of the kind that Abraham bargained for with God; and they referred to the American migration as the journey of Lot into Zoar (“If the Lord seeth it wilbe good for us,” Winthrop wrote in 1629, “he will provide a shelter and a hidinge place for us and ours as Zoar for Lott”).⁵ The language was familiar even to the unsympathetic but shrewd Thomas Morton, who has a jab at it in *New English Canaan*: “in gods name,” he writes, “let the people have their desire, who write to their friends to come out of Sodome to the land of Canaan, a land that flowes with Milke and Hony.”⁶

The Puritans of the Great Migration relied on the myth of Sodom in their self-understanding to a degree that is probably without parallel in history. The fable of Sodom had, however, a familiar element that is not clearly integrated in this rhetoric. In the standard exegesis of the time, Sodom had been destroyed primarily because its male citizens were disposed to have sex with each other, a taste they showed when they demanded to “know” the undercover angels who were Lot’s guests. The Anglo-American rhetoric of Sodom clearly derived its force from the scandal attached to this shared anecdote about anathematized sexuality—“the filthy lustes of the Sodomites,” as the Geneva Bible has it.⁷ Yet no matter how much this common lore was drawn upon in Puritan rhetoric, sexual proscription was not the overt content of the language about Sodom. Although many Puritans remained visibly if inadmissibly interested in sodomy, as we shall see, and although they could also be lethally explicit about the connection between their idea of Sodom and their idea of sodomy, the main—or at least most explicit—source of their interest lay in a different line.

The Puritan rhetoric of Sodom had begun as a language about polity and discipline. As early as 1583, a petition from Northampton had called for new church discipline and had cautioned the queen about divine retribution: “We can not see how the Lord should holde his revenging hand from punishing this slackenes in the rulers and most horrible and grievous sinne in the subjects, which aboundeth infinite waies more then it should doe, if we had this discipline.”⁸ Because Sodom was the most prominent example of judgment passed upon a polis in all the lore of Christendom, this call for discipline soon made Sodom a commonplace. In 1609, for example, one English preacher declared, “If God once visit this land and citie, for the sinnes of the inhabitants thereof, . . . neither the largeness of their territories, nor their beauty, excellence, riches, or multitude of people shall excuse them, but he will make them as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrha.”⁹ Presumably “as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrha” means destroyed, not sodomitical. It is an argument not for what we would call heterosexuality but for public regulation. The fable of Sodom represented, in a way that no other image could, an entire society open to discipline and in need of saving.¹⁰

In modern culture the fable of Sodom and the term “sodomy” have come to be directly linked in the public imagination with the topic of sexuality per se; sodomy is understood as a quasi-technical term with no necessary relation to the eponymous city.¹¹ In seventeenth-century New

England, by contrast, the topic of sodomy was linked primarily to the topic of national judgment. Sodomy could not be securely distinguished from its notorious precedent—especially in the discourse culture of Puritanism, which tended anyway to collapse the collective and the individual, the literal and the metaphoric. The anathematized sexuality of Sodom was therefore never quite irrelevant, only held in reserve as an ambiguous referent.

It is of course impossible to know how much sexual activity was going on among New England males—one scholar claims that the court records are “statistically insignificant”¹²—but where records do exist they show that Puritan officialdom took a keener interest than usual.¹³ Sexual bodies had been redefined by Puritan thought as social bodies in a way that required public collective management, and many of the earliest complaints about the English church becoming a Sodom were backed up with complaints about unmanaged and unofficial sex—not because of a theory about sex per se but because the management of the body had been made publicly indicative in a spiritual order.¹⁴ As the Geneva Bible put it, in a significant marginal note to the Sodom episode, endlessly elaborated in Puritan sermons, “Nothing is more dangerous, then to dwel where sinne reigneth: for it corrupteth all.”

It must be added, however, that it would be easy to overdraw the contrast between Puritan and modern usages. Like the much later coinage “lesbianism,” “sodomy” still implies, at however fantasmatic a level, a map of sexual knowledges and exotic origins. No other terms in the language of sexuality have a comparable etymology, as though unlike all other sexual acts—if they even *are* acts—these two were practiced not by individuals but by cities, islands, or nations.¹⁵ This hidden fantasy about the geography of sex continues to exert some influence, primarily in the assumption that sodomitical and lesbian sex are more germane to public politics than other kinds of sex. The prominence of the term “sodomy” in the discussions around *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986), for example, helped to legitimate the state’s regulation of sex between consenting same-sex adults. The Supreme Court was able to point to a long tradition of defining sodomy as a uniquely public concern, a tradition in which fantasy geographies have often been invested with apocalyptic vehemence.¹⁶ The public imagination of sex brought about in Puritanism continues to mark national discourse.

The Sodom on the Hill

Collective destiny and discipline seemed throughout the seventeenth century to be the most relevant aspects of Sodom. “When I read the story of *Sodom’s overthrow*,” wrote Samuel Willard in 1673, “me thinks I see the Son rising in glorious brightness, the *Sodomites* sporting and pleasing themselves in their *opulence and security*; when on a sudden, me thinks I see the heavens covered with those sable clouds, and hear the great Cannon of heaven thundring down tempests upon them, and the streams of fire with horror and dread, till I behold a proud City, on a sudden become a *desolate heap*.”¹⁷ Willard uses “Sodomite” to mean both “resident of Sodom” and “performer of sodomy,” and the difference hardly seems relevant to him. When the Sodomites are said to be “sporting” about, they may or may not be having sex. The connection between private act and public judgment is so close that the gap need not be mentioned.

By the time of Willard’s writing, it had become clear that such language could refer to sex—even in New England. But unlike the emigrants of the 1620s and 1630s, Willard does not simply oppose Sodom to New England. His point is to stir New England into a renewed sense of mission. He writes in the high style of the late-seventeenth-century jeremiad, as his title suggests: *Useful Instructions for a professing People in Times of great Security and Degeneracy*. Willard’s pamphlet does not ostensibly describe sexual practice and makes no reference to any instance of what we would call sodomy. It relies on the commonplace claim that New England was a site of “degeneracy,” a claim that, regardless of how undegenerate people might in fact have been, gave the rhetoric of Sodom a somewhat different emphasis after the beginning of the English civil wars. It presented Sodom as a shadow-image within New England rather than as a point of contrast between old England and New.

One consequence of this imagery of place, however, is to give the sexual content of the Sodom story a relevance uncannily close to home. Willard’s imaginary vision of Sodom is given in present tense, with no Atlantic distance of recollection: “Sion affords no more security to sinners then Sodom, Shiloh is as dangerous a place to sin in, as any in the world; if a people in covenant with God, be found rebellious, he will spare them no more then any other people, nay he will begin with them” (16). Sodom, in other words, is we.¹⁸

In 1674 Samuel Danforth, who a few years earlier had preached his

famous jeremiad on the “errand into the wilderness,” took up the same theme in a sermon published as *The Cry of Sodom*. Where Willard’s sermon had taken up questions of national judgment in theory, Danforth’s responded to a case of sexuality in practice. The occasion for *The Cry of Sodom* was the execution of one Benjamin Goad, not for sodomy per se but for bestiality. Even bestiality, however, does not seem to worry Danforth as much as masturbation. After commenting at length on the vileness of Goad’s habits, he turns aggressively toward the audience, announcing that onanism was widespread among them: “What, art thou a compleat Sensualist? Thou withholdest thy heart from no carnal joy, or fleshly delight. Thou hast two eyes, and two hands, and two feet; thou canst not endure to maim and mangle the body of sin, and render thy self absurd and ridiculous to the world: Verily, thou hadst better go a Creeple to Heaven, then being a perfect Epicure to be cast into Hell.”¹⁹ Rather brilliantly, Danforth seems to recognize the crippling effects of what we would call heterosexuality, achieved only by those willing to “maim and mangle” the body. The proliferating pleasure he worries about here finds its simplest version in onanism, but Danforth claims that onanism leads to all the other forms of “sodomitical uncleanness,” among which he lists “self-pollution,” “nocturnal Pollutions,” “impure thoughts and fancies in the day-time,” “whoredome,” adultery, incest, sodomy, and “Bestiality, or Buggery.”

Sodomy is nevertheless singled out as a representative term for all such sins, both in Danforth’s title and in phrases such as “sodomitical uncleanness.” One reason for this, I would suggest, is that the geographical reference embedded in the term “sodomy” lends itself to Danforth’s communalist rhetoric, authorizing the publicity of sexual practice. He defines sodomy, in a quasi-technical gesture, as “filthiness committed between parties of the same sex: when Males with Males, and Females with Females work wickedness”; and in the next sentence he says, “This sin raged amongst the Sodomites, and to their perpetual Infamy, it is called Sodomy.” The civic significance of sodomy, he goes on to say, is more than etymological: “Repentance it self cannot so thoroughly heal this Wound, but some Scar will remain in this world . . . Yea, it pollutes and defiles the Land where it is committed, and causeth it to spue out its Inhabitants” (7). Only after making this point does Danforth address the secret uncleanness that he supposes to be general among the audience, revealing that he is, in fact, rather uninterested in the hapless individual standing

on the scaffold. As in his jeremiad four years earlier, he wants to purify the collectivity. “Do not linger nor defer thy Repentance,” Danforth tells his hearers, “but hasten out of Sodom” (20).

Hasten where? Surely the analogy with Sodom must have been partly uncomfortable at this point. For if his audience dwells in a degenerate and onanistic New English Sodom, how shall they hasten out of it but by leaving New England itself? They had come there because old England, as they called it, was becoming Sodom. The figurative spatialization of sodomy and its knowledge only protects the local community if Sodom is somewhere else. To speak of sodomy in New England is to create a confusion of inside and outside. Thus, according to the preface to *The Cry of Sodom*—which is subscribed by John Sherman, Urian Oakes, and Thomas Shepard—“Amongst many other [things], this might have been looked at as astonishingly strange, that the worst of sins should be perpetrated, in some, the best of Places and Societies; that Enormities not so much as named amongst Gentiles, should be found among Christians.” If the character of a society is indicated in large part by the presence or absence of such enormities, then the best and worst of societies interpenetrate.

The boundary between them can only be marked by a marvelling rhetoric. Astonishingly strange, as the ministers say. Or just strange, as Samuel Whiting puts it over and over in *Abraham’s Humble Intercession for Sodom*, a treatise on prayer in which the rhetoric of Sodom is all the more remarkable in that it does not seem to have been occasioned by any specific case of sodomy or bestiality:

Unnatural Uncleaness: Strange flesh, as it is called, *Jude* ver. 7. when *men with men commit filthiness, and women with women*, as the Apostle expresseth it, *Rom.* 1.26, 27. and this makes men ripe for ruine. *Strange lusts bring strange punishment; strange fire* kindled upon earth, brings *strange fire* from heaven. Fire naturally *ascends*, but the fire that destroyed the Sodomites *descended*, *Gen.* 19.24. the *sin* was strange, and the *destruction* strange: God proportions the *punishment* to the *sin*, payes men in their *own coin*; they have *fire* for *fire*, and not onely so, but *strange fire*, for *strange fiery lusts*.²⁰

Like Danforth and Willard, Whiting uses “sodomite” to mean resident of Sodom as well as men of strange flesh, and strange partly means foreign. Like Danforth and Willard, he also believes that sex and urban geography are connected in this case: God only punishes an entire community, he tells us, “When their sins are universal: so were the sins of Sodom. . . .

General sins bring general destruction with them” (44). Whiting’s conclusion from this lesson is that old England, which had recently restored monarchy and the episcopate, is ripe for destruction and in need of intercession (66–67). But he also suggests that New England, which he like Danforth believed was in declension, stood at risk of becoming Sodom itself. Hence Whiting recognizes the same hazard of interpenetration with Sodom that his fellow ministers worried about. “The most excellent of Saints have been found amongst the most wicked sinners: their black makes the godlies white more conspicuous. How eminent was Lot in Sodom” (34).

Late in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford’s account of some trials and executions for sodomy and bestiality in Plymouth begins on the same note of an interpenetration between Sodom and Canaan. The only protection is shock: “Marvelous it may be to see and consider how some kind of wickedness did grow and break forth here, in a land where the same was so much witnessed against and so narrowly looked unto, and severely punished when it was known, as in no place more, or so much, that I have known or heard of.” Puritan society, defined so fundamentally by its comparison with other “Places and Societies,” loses its own rationale more completely than any other society if it turns out to be like them. And sodomy, of all practices, most conjures the image of the other societies that this one has willed itself not to be. Confronted with a bugger and a sodomite, the Plymouth authorities worry about the inside/outside boundary of their colony. Their first response is to demand of the men “how they came first to the knowledge and practice of such wickedness.” Luckily, “one confessed he had long used it in old England”; the other claimed to have heard through the grapevine “of such things from some in England.” “By which it appears,” Bradford remarks, “how one wicked person may infect many.”²¹ In his version of the scapegoating hunt for Patient Zero—mastered in our own day by Randy Shilts—Bradford rests content not with an original sinner but with old England as a site of knowledge.²² Yet he still thinks it “may be marvelled at” that wicked persons should come to New England from old, and another five paragraphs are devoted to explaining how this penetration could have come about.

Bradford has difficulty explaining the presence of wickedness in general in New England, but no other kind of wickedness had posed this problem in his text until this chapter, which he begins by marvelling: “Even sodomy and buggery (things fearful to name) have broke forth in this land oftener than once” (316). In this relatively brief paragraph at the

opening of the chapter, Bradford uses the same verb three times, changing only the tense: wickedness is said to “break forth,” to be “breaking out,” and to have “broke forth.” If this hammering repetition suggests a too-penetrable boundary, made even more spatially troublesome by its confusing temporality, it also echoes the breaking forth of the separatist church itself, in the opening sentence of the first chapter, where Satan is said to have attacked the church since its “first breaking out.” Indeed, the chapter on sodomy and bestiality contains the book’s most sustained reflection, at least in part two, on New England’s world-historical position. Aside from an afterthought about the final bargain with Plymouth’s English shareholders, the breaking forth of sodomy and bestiality is the only event that Bradford records for the entire year of 1642—a year in which civil war broke out in England, in which New England consequently ceased to be the vanguard of Puritan reform, and in which immigration dwindled to a trickle, making the entire colonial venture of doubtful purpose and success.

Bradford’s anxieties about these developments are not exactly absent from the chapter. But they are expressed only in his discussion of sodomy. “The Devil may carry a greater spite against the churches of Christ and the gospel here,” he speculates, again echoing his opening chapter, “by how much the more they endeavour to preserve holiness and purity amongst them and strictly punisheth the contrary when it ariseth either in church or commonwealth; that he might cast a blemish and stain upon them in the eyes of [the] world, who use to be rash in judgment” (316). Besides, he adds, in New England “the churches look narrowly to their members” (317).²³

New England’s nervousness about the eyes of the world on its stained members can be read either as an anxiety about becoming a Sodom or as an echo of Winthrop’s famous image of the city on the hill. For Winthrop’s city-on-the-hill paragraph is dominated by the same creepy erotics of visibility. He tells the other men on his ship to go about “allwayes haveing before our eyes . . . our Community as members of the same body,” and to consider themselves as a city upon a hill *because* “the eies of all people are uppon us.” Under so global an inspection, any blemish or stain almost gives off a sulphuric odor: “wee shall be made a story and a by-word through the world, wee shall open the mouthes of enemies to speake evill of the wayes of god and all professours for Gods sake; wee shall shame the faces of many of gods worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into Cursses upon us till wee be consumed out of the good land whether wee are going.”²⁴

Sodom is a ghostly anxiety here in Winthrop's 1630 text; it would only gain pertinence for Bradford in 1642. In fact, it seems to make regular appearances in texts that deploy the city-on-a-hill theme. Peter Bulkeley makes the connection almost explicit when he tells New England, "Take heed . . . lest being now as a *Citie upon an hill*, which many seek unto, thou be left like a *Beacon upon the top of a mountaine*, desolate and forsaken"; only a few paragraphs earlier, he had reminded New Englanders of those other exemplary cities: "The filthinesse of *Sodome* and *Gomorrah* is known, they were *exceeding* sinners against the Lord, *Gen* 13.13. their sins were not of the common sort, but exceeded; and therefore they perished not by the common visitation of all men, but their judgement was exemplary, to stand as a warning to all ages; a *fire not blowne by man* (as it is in *Job* 20.26.) consumed them, the fire of God fell upon them from heaven."²⁵ Likewise, in 1673 Urian Oakes would repeat the "City upon an Hill" theme in a pamphlet that also cautions against becoming like Sodom.²⁶

In a recent essay on the homopanic of Puritan poets whose meditations bring them, desirably and undesirably, into too great a proximity to God's Rod (as Wigglesworth always says), Walter Hughes makes a joke about the uncanny resemblance between the New England mission and Sodom. "The city on the hill," Hughes writes, "had become the city on the plain."²⁷ Hughes actually does not seem to have in mind the sodomitic overtones in Winthrop's sermon or its successors, so the joke may be more telling even than he intended. But even more tellingly, the connection is made (or nearly made) in Bradford's account itself. Having just remarked his stain in the eyes of the world, Bradford continues: "Besides, here the people are but few in comparison of other places which are full and populous and lie hid, as it were, in a wood or thicket and many horrible evils by that means are never seen nor known; whereas here they are, as it were, brought into the light and set in the plain field, or rather on a hill, made conspicuous to the view of all" (317). Bradford's notion of being set conspicuously on a hill probably echoes Winthrop's sermon, which had long circulated in manuscript. But he does not arrive at that image without first going through a rhetorical stammer, imagining that the colonial city is set not on a hill but, conspicuously, "in the plain field." The image stands out all the more since Bradford has passed over the obvious analogy between the New World wilderness and the "wood or thicket" in which something may be hid. In the context of a) sodomy in its "literal" sense; and b) the making of a people into a byword, can the reference to the cities on the plain not be audible here? Only maybe.

Bradford's mid-sentence indecision makes the city on the hill only more notorious than the city on the plain.

A Modell of Christian Sodomy

In Winthrop's "Modell of Christian Charity," the reference to Sodom seems to be relevant in another way as well. The new colony threatens to resemble Sodom not only because of its global notoriety but also because of the intensity of its affective bonds among males. When Winthrop speaks of "allwayes haveing before our eyes . . . our Community as members of the same body," he is not primarily speaking of or to women. The burden of his argument is that society has been so constituted "That every man might have need of other, and from hence they might be all knitt more nearly together in the Bond of brotherly affeccion" (283). By "brotherly" he means male; the women aboard the *Arbella* are not specifically addressed by this social vision, and in fact Winthrop's language here derives almost unchanged from an earlier text in which he addressed an expressly all-male audience. On that occasion, in his first address to the Massachusetts corporation as its governor, he laid the same emphasis on male affection: "my speeche leads cheifly to this end, that being assured of eache others sincerity in our intentions in this worke, and duely considering in what new relations we stand, we might be knit together in a most firm bond of love and frindshippe."²⁸ Both in that speech and in the more famous sermon aboard the *Arbella*, the theme of "love and frindshippe" among men is linked to the need for a visible solidarity under the inspection of the world: "Consider your reputation, the eyes of all the godly are upon you, what can you doe more honorable for this Cytie" (176). The community defined in both texts is a male one—despite the presence of women on the *Arbella*—formed in affection and in a hazardous specularly.

Of course brotherly affection is not always the same as sex, especially given the complex ways in which, as Alan Bray has shown so well, such language did not in this period conform to modern patterns of sexualization.²⁹ The Sodomites were notorious for something much more particular than mere "love and frindshippe," which can be thought of in relatively general, nonaffective, and nonerotic ways. Winthrop in fact contrasts Christian charity with the desires of the Sodomites by saying it "was practised by Abraham and Lott in entertaineing the Angells" (284). And critics have certainly never seen anything remarkable about Winthrop's

affective community. Yet if Winthrop seems unquestionably to have in mind only such sanitized and nonerotic bonds, his text also tends to invoke bonds and attractions between men on a much more literal level than he would seem prepared to avow.

It is certainly very peculiar that he goes on, in “Modell of Christian Charity,” to explain his “Bond of brotherly affeccion” by means of a theory of erotic attraction. In a passage that has received almost no commentary by critics—especially when compared to the ubiquitously cited “city on the hill” paragraph—Winthrop derives the social impulse from attraction.³⁰ And the attraction at the heart of the social is based on likeness:

Simile simili gaudet or like will to like; for as it is things which are carved with disafeccion to eache other, the ground of it is from a dissimilitude or [blank] arising from the contrary or different nature of the things themselves, soe the ground of love is an apprehension of some resemblance in the things loved to that which affectes it, this is the cause why the Lord loves the Creature, soe farre as it hath any of his Image in it, he loves his electe because they are like himselfe, he beholds them in his beloved sonne: soe a mother loves her childe, because shee throughly conceives a resemblance of herselfe in it. Thus it is betweene the members of Christ, each discernes by the worke of the spirit his owne Image and resemblance in another, and therefore cannot but love him as he loves himselfe. (290)

Here Winthrop goes farther than his Latin proverb, farther than medieval notions of analogy, asserting that the similitude of things not only underlies social order but also creates the very bonds of the social by acting as a force of desire.³¹ He even implies that Christian charity, like social attraction in general, will typically be a same-sex bond. Each member of Christ will be drawn to another and will “love him as he loves himselfe.”

Of course one might still object that this theory of social attraction is not necessarily erotic. Winthrop’s examples, after all, come from (same-sex) parent-child relations. But again the way he continues is surprising:

Now when the soule which is of a sociable nature findes any thing like to it selfe, it is like Adam when Eve was brought to him, shee must have it one with herselfe this is fleshe of my fleshe (saith shee) and bone of my bone shee conceives a greate delighe in it, therefore shee desires nearenes and familiarity with it: shee hath a greate propensity to doe it good and receives such content in it, as feareing the miscarriage of her beloved shee bestowes it in the inmost closett of her heart, . . . shee

setts noe boundes of her affections, nor hath any thought of reward,
 shee findes recompence enoughe in the exercise of her love towardes
 it. (290–91)

By this point, the boundless affection Winthrop describes as the fundamental social passion has an unmistakably erotic cast. That much would be clear from the choice of Adam and Eve as examples; only more striking is the consistent reference to the desirable body as “it,” the desiring soul as “shee,” especially since the latter pronoun is introduced immediately after the introduction of Eve. Though Winthrop ostensibly describes Adam’s desire when Eve was brought to him, his language seems to concretize Adam’s body, through Eve’s point of view, as an object of desire.

In any case, how does this example illustrate the origins of love in resemblance? It would seem to suggest that Winthrop finds the attraction of likes best exemplified in male/female marriage. This expectation would fit with the idea, tirelessly repeated in the historical scholarship at least since Morgan’s *The Puritan Family*, that Puritan ideas of society are based in the model of the family.³² It would further seem likely, given the premise at the beginning of Winthrop’s sermon, that God has ordained hierarchical relations among humankind, “some highe and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subjeccion” (282). The erotic relations of the sexes could have been interpreted as such a natural relation of attraction in subjection. That at least would be Milton’s strategy, almost forty years later; he deliberately and sharply *contrasts* Eve’s desire for Adam with her desire for her own image. Adam’s entrance disturbs her narcissistic reflection in what Milton understands as a progress toward divine intention.³³

But that is not the argument in Winthrop’s text. Far from it. Not only is Eve’s attraction to her own image in Adam’s body unpathologized by Winthrop; he also continues the same sentence that concludes the account of Eve by showing that the purest example of attraction would in fact not be Adam and Eve at all, but rather a same-sex bond: “wee may see this Acted to life in Jonathan and David.” Again, we might be tempted to think that a sanitized, nonphysical, and nonerotic understanding of Jonathan’s love for David is what allows him to use this example. But Winthrop does not hesitate to offer enthusiastic detail, considerably elaborating his scriptural sources in a passage that all but the most complete modern editions omit:

Jonathan a valiant man endued with the spirit of Christ, soe soone as hee Discovers the same spirit in David had presently his hearte knitt to him by this linement of love, soe that it is said he loved him as his owne soule, he takes soe great pleasure in him that hee stripps himselfe to adorne his beloved, his fathers kingdome was not soe precious to him as his beloved David, David shall have it with all his hearte, himselfe desires noe more but that hee may be neare to him to reioyce in his good hee chooseth to converse with him in the wilderness even to the hazzard of his owne life, rather then with the greate Courtiers in his fathers Pallace; when hee sees danger towards him, hee spares neither care paines, nor perill to divert it, when Injury was offered his beloved David, hee could not beare it, though from his owne father, and when they must parte for a Season onely, they thought their heartes would have broake for sorrowe, had not their affections found vent by abundance of Teares: other instances might be brought to shewe the nature of this affection as of Ruthe and Naomi [!] and many others, but this truthe is cleared enough.

The verb that Winthrop uses here for Jonathan's love of David, "knitt," is always his favorite verb for the operation of Christian charity, endlessly repeated in the *Arbella* sermon as well as in the earlier address to the corporation. The source of the phrase is in fact the account of David and Jonathan in I Samuel 18.³⁴ And in the biblical assertion that Jonathan loved David "as his own soule," Winthrop might have found confirmation that love is based in reference to the self-image.

But Winthrop's interest in I Samuel is more than theoretical. As he later says, "This love among Christians is a reall thing not Imaginarie" (292). And indeed we might surmise that while describing David and Jonathan aboard the *Arbella* Winthrop was thinking back to a letter that he had written to his friend Sir William Springe before departing from England:

I loved you truely before I could think that you took any notice of me: but now I embrace you and rest in your love: and delight to solace my first thoughts in these sweet affections of so deare a friend. The apprehension of your love and worth together hath overcome my heart, and removed the veil of modestye, that I must needes tell you, my soule is knitt to you, as the soule of Jonathan to David: were I now with you, I should bedewe that sweet bosome with the tears of affection:

O what a pinche will it be to me, to parte with such a freinde! if any Embleme may expresse our Condition in heaven, it is this Communion in love: I could, (nay I shall) envye the happinesse of your deare brother B[arnardiston] that he shall enjoye what I desire. nay (I will once let love drive me into an extacye) I must repine at the felicity of that good Lady (to whom in all love and due respecte I desire to be remembered) as one that should have more parte then my selfe in that honest heart of my deare freinde.³⁵

There is, as far as I can discern, not a single remark in the Winthrop criticism about this letter or its relation to the *Arbella* sermon.³⁶ Many writers have commented on the affectionate letters between Winthrop and his wife, but Winthrop seldom if ever lets love drive him “into an extacye” in those letters as he does here, going so far as to express envy toward Springe’s wife in her proximity to the “sweet bosome” that Winthrop wants to bedew.

The letter to Springe is the source not only for the Jonathan and David passage of the *Arbella* sermon but also for the bond of brotherly affection in general. The letter concludes with an ecstatic appeal to Christ, in which Winthrop uses the language of seduction, possession, and marriage to describe once again how he wants to be “knitt,” perhaps even bodily, to Springe:

It is tyme to conclude, but I knowe not how to leave you, yet since I must, I will putt my beloved into his arms, who loves him best, and is a faithfull keeper of all that is Committed to him. Now thou the hope of Israell, and the sure helpe of all that come to thee, knitt the heartes of thy servantes to thy selfe, in faith and puritye: Drawe us with the sweetnesste of thine odours, that we may runne after thee, allure us, and speak kindly to thy servantes, that thou maist possesse us as thine owne, in the kindnesse of youthe and the love of mariage: sealle us up by that holy spirit of promise, that we may not feare to trust in thee: Carrye us into thy Garden, that we may eate and be filled with those pleasures, which the world knows not: let us heare that sweet voyce of thine, my love my dove, my undefiled: spread thy skirt over us and cover our deformitye, make us sicke with thy love: let us sleep in thine armes, and awake in thy kingdome: the soules of thy servantes, thus united to thee, make as one in the bonde of brotherly Affection. (206)

My love, my dove, my undefiled—only by an elaborate displacement of rhetorical address does this text manage to avoid being in explicitness

the love letter that it continually implies, diverting its erotic language (here derived from Song of Solomon) from the addressee of the letter, to whom it nevertheless addresses itself. Christ's arms become prostheses for Winthrop's caresses. Christ's skirts become a cover for the physical union of the two men, knit together in that nether space, rapt and allured by the odors there, "possessed" and "filled" in nothing less than "the love of marriage."

Despite the intensity of this language I do not mean to speculate on Winthrop's physical relations to Springe, much less to suggest that he would have understood the letter as advocating sodomy. The point is rather that Winthrop's bond with Springe, the "bonde of brotherly Affection" upon which he would later base the social vision of "Modell of Christian Charity," involves broadly erotic possibilities that he violently repudiates in any other context. When William Plaine was executed for sodomy in 1646, for example, Winthrop could not voice his approval too strongly, calling Plaine "a monster in human shape."³⁷ Perhaps Plaine had not enough skirts to cover his deformity. At any rate Christian charity, with its affective/erotic knitting of males, can be voiced by Winthrop only on the condition that he repudiate or displace its resemblance to Sodom and sodomy. This is pathetic enough on its own, but it should also be remembered that the violence of the contradiction was unleashed on the bodies of William Plaine and others like him.

Some of those others may have been closer to hand as a context for "Modell of Christian Charity": at the moment of delivering the *Arbella* sermon, Winthrop might have been thinking not only of the sweet bosom of William Springe but also of the "5 beastly Sodomiticall boyes" detected aboard the *Talbot* in the previous June.³⁸ The *Talbot*, like the *Arbella*, had been carrying emigrants in service of the Massachusetts Bay corporation. Five "boys" of unknown age were detected in acts of charity and were remanded "to the company to bee punished in ould England, as the crime deserved." When the boys returned to England in September, the company was evidently uncertain what the crime deserved, for they voted twice—on 19 September and again on 29 September—to seek legal advice on "what punishm^t may bee inflicted upon them, and how the Comp^y may bee legally discharged of them."³⁹ Winthrop was present at both of these meetings. Three weeks later, with the matter still evidently unresolved, Winthrop was himself elected governor and so became responsible for the administration of their punishment. Thereafter the boys disappear from the official record, perhaps because their fate was still in

doubt when Winthrop took the records with him to Massachusetts in the following spring.

The *Arbella* sermon was thus delivered in the very space of the repudiation of sodomy, en route to the New Canaan. When Winthrop worries aloud to his shipmates that the world's prayers will "be turned into Curses upon us till wee be consumed out of the good land whether wee are going," shall we not hear his own curses on those who were consumed out of this good land—or, in the case of those five boys, never made it to the good land whither they were going? And shall we not also hear those curses at the very moment when, in the conclusion of the letter to Springe, they become prayers?

The Covenant of Sodom

It may seem that we have moved, in these considerations of Winthrop's sermon and the letter to Springe, into a private realm fundamentally different from the rhetoric of Sodom. For the latter is, after all, essentially a function of official discourse and public consumption, while Winthrop's texts suggest a more personal arena of meaning for the erotic. These two levels are brought together in the *Arbella* sermon, joined in the theoretical claim that affectionate male-male bonds can sustain a disciplined public body. In Winthrop, in Bradford, and in Puritan culture more generally, discipline and attraction—the national judgment of Sodom and the private bonds of fraternal men—were two sides of the same coin, twin aspects of the formation of the church. Winthrop's rhetoric about the English Sodom is meant to develop an ideal of a true church as a disciplined church, keeping its covenant with God; his rhetoric about brotherly affection is meant to develop an ideal of a true church as a quasi-voluntary association, its members keeping covenant with each other. "A Modell of Christian Charity" is above all else a Congregationalist performance, describing and enacting the formation of a contractual society; and its contradictory investments on the topic of male-male desire have much to do with that context.

From its beginnings in the Elizabethan period, English Puritanism had been centrally a struggle over patterns of association: conventicling, the classis, the congregation. This is especially true of the branch of Puritanism that came to be dominant in New England, with the fundamental role that the doctrine of the covenant played there. The American Puritans believed that God had entered into a quasi-contractual agreement,

not just with individuals but with a people, and that a church was formed by a similar quasi-contractual covenant among its members. This latter strand came to be institutionalized in the federative practices of Congregationalism, especially in the years following the *Arbella* sermon.

The Puritans were anything but voluntarists at the level of the individual. At the level of the social, however, covenant theory pioneered the legitimacy of elective ties modeled in contract relations and merging to form a society of affinity and common purpose, subject to collective self-reflection and self-direction under divine judgment. From the perspective of modernity, this “inadvertent” liberalism is the most significant and compelling feature of American Puritanism, as Perry Miller and Edmund Morgan long ago argued.⁴⁰ In the words of a more recent historian, “Gradually, a discovery was being made: quite apart from polity, the culture of the age offered a multitude of means to draw people voluntarily into a disciplined life and a purposive society.”⁴¹

This discovery occasioned deep ambivalence. In Winthrop’s sermon, the male erotics of Christian charity produces a model of the social based on affection, likeness, and affinity; the erotics of that model was therefore in tension with another model of the social equally important in the Puritan imagination—one based on natural order, hierarchy, the family, and reproduction. The two models tended to be interwoven in practice, but their tendencies conflicted: the one toward voluntarism in the formation of social groups, the other toward the rightness of the given, humanly unwilling order as the expression of divine will.

Alan Bray has recently argued that sodomy became the subject of tension in English culture during Winthrop’s day precisely because the Elizabethan conventions of intense affection between male bedfellows were less and less stabilized by class and rank hierarchies; male-male affective relations were stigmatized as sodomitical, as in the case of Francis Bacon, not when they seemed too intimate but when they seemed to take precedence over status relations.⁴² Bray’s evidence suggests that Winthrop’s relation to Springe, with all its apparent erotic intensity, may nevertheless have been acceptably conventional in this Elizabethan context of male friendship and unthreatening within the status hierarchy that the *Arbella* sermon nominally justifies. In that context it would have found a protected place within the economy of favor and allegiance among gentlemen.

But the associative practices of Puritanism, as elaborated in Winthrop’s theory of charity and attraction, could be seen as placing society on a

footing other than given status. Winthrop is able to single out attraction and similitude as a basis for social life in large part because the social relation of covenanting parties has been made the basis of the church and of God's relation to a people. Jonathan, after all, is said in I Samuel to "covenant" with David. Implicitly male contract relations—for that is what covenant theology was modeled on—were becoming paradigmatic of God's own behavior.⁴³ At least in part, mutuality and interest were becoming the principles of the social bond, not hierarchy and divine command. The conventions of male friendship took on different meanings in this changing context, as a system of status-based personal service gave way to systems of voluntary and contractual association.⁴⁴

Puritan public rhetoric about Sodom also derived from covenant theology and its contractarian premises. In the words of Sacvan Bercovitch, "God's national judgments, bringing temporal, material blessings or disasters, followed from certain contractual agreements."⁴⁵ The social group defined in that contract is available to reflection as an object, amenable to theory, corrigible in practice. It is in this sense that Sodom serves as the great object lesson for the constitution of a society. In Peter Bulkeley's *The Gospel-Covenant*, for example, Sodom is the example of a society offered a covenant and destroyed for refusing it. Abraham's intercession for Sodom, in Whiting's sermon, is presented as an example of the contractual negotiation involved in the covenant, as Abraham bargains with God for the conditions of Sodom's redemption. In these readings of Genesis, Sodom primarily represented a people held responsible for its disposition as a people, a disposition of which sexual behavior was indicative. What stands out in Puritan exegesis is the fateful voluntarism implied at the social level by God's covenant. It could hardly have seemed accidental that the story of Sodom embeds, in the text of Genesis 13 through 19, the story of the covenant with Abraham and his seed in chapters 17 and 18.

That so much of Puritan theology and social theory boiled down to exegesis of Genesis 17 and 18 no doubt helps to explain further why the Puritans were so well versed in the story of Sodom. Like many others, Thomas Shepard first began to hear the call of Puritan preaching when, as a student at Cambridge, he says, "I heard Mr. Dickinson commonplace in the chapel upon those words—I will not destroy it for ten's sake (Genesis 19)." Shepard, however, here makes a not insignificant slip. The passage he has in mind is Genesis 18:32. Genesis 19 describes the Sodomites' demand for the angels and consequent destruction.⁴⁶ I say the slip may not be insignificant because two paragraphs earlier he has remarked

“what a woeful estate I had been left in if the Lord had left me in that profane, ignorant town of Towcester where I was born, that the Lord should pluck me out of that sink and Sodom.” And in the same paragraph that mistakenly cites Genesis 19, he goes on to describe the crisis in his own degeneracy, the turning point in his life:

I drank so much one day that I was dead drunk, and that upon a Saturday night, and so was carried from the place I had drink at and did feast at unto a scholar’s chamber, one Basset of Christ’s College, and knew not where I was until I awakened late on that Sabbath and sick with my beastly carriage. And when I awakened I went from him in shame and confusion, and went out into the fields and there spent that Sabbath lying hid in the cornfields where the Lord, who might justly have cut me off in the midst of my sin, did meet me with much sadness of heart and troubled my soul for this and other my sins which then I had cause and leisure to think of.

Of course there is little ground for speculation about this evening in Basset’s room, since Shepard covers it so thoroughly with conspicuous oblivion and satisfying shame, though the phrase “I went from him in shame” seems to suggest that Shepard had more than drunkenness to think about in his “beastly carriage.” He later adds an interesting gloss to his own manuscript; referring to the same period at Cambridge, he says, “I was once or twice dead drunk and lived in unnatural uncleanness not to be named and in speculative wantonness and filthiness with all sorts of persons which pleased my eye” (72). Though he does not say just how “unnatural” those “uncleanesses not to be named” were, nor which “sorts of persons” pleased his eye, his language has an unmistakable tendency to frame his conversion against the background of Sodom and sodomy. At any rate, he does tell us that it was the proximity of these pleasures to Genesis 18—or was it 19?—that induced him to leave that sink and Sodom where he was born and migrate westward, to that city on a hill in New England, never looking back. In *The Sincere Convert* of 1641, moreover, Shepard tells the reader that sodomy is latent in every sinner: “thy heart is a foul sink of all atheism, sodomy, blasphemy, murder, whoredom, adultery, witchcraft, buggery; so that, if thou hast any good thing in thee, it is but as a drop of rosewater in a bowl of poison; where fallen it is all corrupted. It is true thou feelest not all these things stirring in thee at one time . . . but they are in thee like a nest of snakes in an old hedge. Although they break not out into thy life, they lie lurking in thy heart.”⁴⁷

The temptation to read Shepard’s autobiography, like Winthrop’s ser-

mon, as indicating in its gaps something like a repressed desire raises once more the question of the personal and subjective dimension to the Puritan imagination of sodomy. Yet even here the corporate context of covenant theology must have helped in more ways than one to give Sodom and sodomy such a powerful charge. Private anxieties about affinitive male relations could only have been intensified within this strand of Puritanism, as the personal relations of the covenant and of Winthrop's charity were generalized to a theory of social bonds. What Shepard calls the pleasures of the eye, after all, Winthrop calls the elemental form of Christian charity: *simile simili gaudet*. The same theology, however, allowed any private anxieties about the affinitive character of male relations to be played out in public anxieties about the world-historical standing of the community, directly indexed in Puritan culture by the bearing of the body.

Winthrop's "Modell of Christian Charity" also shows how the federal strand in Puritan theology could throw into relief, as a paradigm for social bonds in general, nonreproductive erotics unmoored from natural hierarchy—even in a sermon ostensibly dedicated to justifying natural hierarchy and patriarchal familialism. Covenant theology doubtless did not bring about for anybody a conscious legitimation of alternative sexualities. But it did move into a central ideological role elements of social life that could not fully be squared with the ideology of patriarchal-familial sexuality—so much so that one of the deepest tensions in colonial New England was that between the covenant and the traditional rhetoric of generational transmission, or what Philip Gura has called "the intricate genetics of salvation."⁴⁸

Thomas Lechford noted this potential as early as 1642. In a pamphlet critical of the New Englanders, he argues that given congregational practice—which he beautifully describes—the Puritans "in short time shall have their children for the most part remain unbaptized: and so have little more priviledge then Heathens, unlesse the discipline be amended and moderated."⁴⁹ The problem was that if church membership were contractual in nature it could not be passed along within a family. Thus the contractual side of covenant theology conflicted with its national promise, rooted in Genesis 17 and 18 where God covenants with Abraham and his "seed." Lechford cites a controversy surrounding a parishioner named Doughty, who claimed that the covenant being with Abraham and his seed, children of church members should be baptized. But such a reading of the language in Genesis seemed to do away with the covenant itself, than which few things could have been more important to Ameri-

can Puritans. Doughty was physically dragged out of the church and was then “forced to goe away from thence, with his wife and children” (41).

Puritan theologians differed on what to make of Abraham’s seed. Peter Bulkeley argues that just as the old covenant “did include the seed,” so also the new covenant “belongs to the seed.” He distinguishes between the literal and figurative seed of Abraham: “not onely that many Nations should spring from his loyns by naturall generation, but that the Nations of the world (though not springing from him by naturall meanes,) should be counted to him as his children, and that he should be called *their Father*.”⁵⁰ In short, children of church members were covered in their parents’ covenant. But John Cotton, and many with him, took the other emphasis in the covenant to be supreme, arguing that it applies only to those who are “confederate,” who bring themselves in agreement with its terms.⁵¹ Eventually, of course, this tension within the concept of the covenant would result in the compromise of the “Half-Way Covenant.”

In its radical implications contractarian theology provoked deep anxieties. Cotton himself had warned the first emigrants to “have a tender care that you looke well to the plants that spring from you, that is, to your children, that they doe not degenerate as the Israelites did; after which they were vexed with afflictions on every hand. . . . Your Ancestours were of a noble divine spirit, but if they suffer their children to degenerate, to take loose courses, then God will surely plucke you up.”⁵² It was the very importance of the covenant, requiring new acceptance and compliance, that brought the specter of Sodom and its judgment between any two generations.

The tension in covenant theology was never resolved, and was at any rate no mere dispute over church doctrine. There was a contradiction between the two models of society implicit in these two aspects of covenant theory, a contradiction that continues to be a fundamental site of conflict to the present day. In *Bowers v. Hardwick*, for example, Justice White’s majority opinion dismisses the relevance of precedents that prevent the state from interfering in decisions about whether or not to reproduce. With truly ghoulis disingenuousness the court declares, “No connection between family, marriage, or procreation on the one hand and homosexual activity on the other has been demonstrated, either by the Court of Appeals or by respondent.” In our time such claims become more and more fraudulent and vindictive because people have fought so long for the ability *not* to make such a connection; the institutions of generational transmission are no longer everywhere necessary in order

to legitimate either sexual pleasure or social affinity. In seventeenth-century New England the possibility of this separation could only be uncertainly glimpsed—in Winthrop’s erotics of affinitive society or in the vexed destiny of Abraham’s seed.

The possibility of a society no longer imagining itself through familial and reproductive institutions has been lost from view not only in law but in much American literary criticism. Critics have instead been content to produce untiring enthusiasm for the rhetoric of the city on the hill—an enthusiasm obligingly taken up in speeches over the past four decades by the same president, appropriately enough, under whose administration *Bowers v. Hardwick* was prosecuted. Although the deployment of New England’s legendary history in support of a homophobic and heterosexist agenda has been powerful in recent years—even overwhelmingly so—it nevertheless scarcely remains the only possible use of Puritan history, as I have tried to show. Could we make more familiar a history of American Puritanism that clarified rather than obscured the critical possibilities glimpsed in the social erotics that the Puritans, despite their best intentions, began to imagine?

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Notes

- 1 “All other Churches of Europe are brought to desolation, and it cannot be, but the like Judgment is comming upon us.” From the texts known variously as “Arguments,” “General Observations,” and “Considerations” “for the Plantation of New England,” in the variant called version “B” by the editors of the Winthrop papers. Stewart Mitchell, ed., *The Winthrop Papers*, 5 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929–47), 2:106–27, 114.
- 2 1629 fragment in John Winthrop’s hand, evidently from a letter, arguing in favor of emigration, *Winthrop Papers*, 2:121–24, 122.
- 3 Robert Ryece to John Winthrop, *Winthrop Papers* 2:127–32; 129–30.
- 4 Quoted in Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), 102.
- 5 *Winthrop Papers* 2:91–92. Compare this to Thomas Hooker’s remark in March 1631: “God makes account that New England shall be a refuge for his Noahs and his Lots.” Quoted in Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991), 110.
- 6 Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (1637; rpt., New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), 230.

- 7 Contrary to this gloss, John Boswell has argued that the text of Genesis 18 and 19 should not be read as attributing any sexual practice at all to the Sodomites. In his view, this is a much later misreading, institutionalized since the Romans coined the term *sodomia*. Where the citizens of Sodom demand to “know” the angels, Boswell argues, the verb does not necessarily imply sex and demonstrates instead an unpardonable breach in the etiquette of hospitality. See *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 92–98.
- 8 Quoted in Foster, *The Long Argument*, 50.
- 9 Robert Gray, *An Alarum to England* (London, 1609), quoted in Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), 20.
- 10 To this day the popular imagination associates Puritanism with the phrase “fire and brimstone,” commonly thought to refer to hell but actually deriving from the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19:24. “Sodom,” as one writer needlessly reminded his readers, “was destroy’d with *fire & brimstone* from Heaven.” (Benjamin Wadsworth, *Unchast Practices Procure Divine Judgments* [Boston, 1716], 16.) Puritans often made the connection between the destruction of Sodom and metaphysical hell, as did Samuel Mather in citing Sodom and hell as type and antitype. Mather points out in support of this typology that the phrase “fire and brimstone” is repeated in Revelation to describe hell. (Samuel Mather, *Figures and Types of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. [London, 1705], 57, 83, 163.)
- 11 The definition of sodomy has been notoriously problematic, leading Foucault once to call it “that utterly confused category” (Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley [New York: Vintage, 1980], 101). On the meaning of “sodomy” in colonial usage, see Robert Oaks, “‘Things Fearful to Name’: Sodomy and Buggery in Seventeenth-Century New England,” in *The American Man*, ed. Elizabeth Pleck and Joseph Pleck (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 53–76. More generally on the political history of “sodomy” and the law, see Ed Cohen, “Legislating the Norm: From Sodomy to Gross Indecency,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (Winter 1989): 181–217.
- 12 Roger Thompson, *Sex in Middlesex: Popular Mores in a Massachusetts County, 1649–1699* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1986). Thompson goes on to interpret this nonevidence as follows: “Men and women of the middle and lower orders took their pleasures straight . . . sexual experimentation and libertinism were the outcome of sophisticated, leisured, privileged, and urbanized groups, such as court or literary coteries; these prerequisites would effectively exclude the population of Middlesex County, Massachusetts” (74–75). It does not seem to occur to Thompson that the scarcity of court evidence might indicate nonreporting from any of a number of causes. Nothing would be less surprising than that sex among men or among women would be less visible than other kinds, given a) the different and less public contexts in which it might come about, and b) the capital

punishments provided by law and the extreme, even terroristic rhetoric of the culture. But from anyone who is capable of using the word “straight” without irony in this context, we should hardly be surprised to see such stale and ideological images of urban decadence and rural simplicity, of natural sex and deviant “complications” (his term). Farm boys know better. I might note, moreover, that Thompson’s association of “deviant” sex with urban geography gives yet another instance of the rhetorical tradition I am tracing in this essay.

- 13 The results of that interest were sometimes lethal and always oppressive, as we know from recent work such as the following: Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay American History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Robert Oaks, “‘Things Fearful to Name’”; Kathleen Verduin, “Our Cursed Natures,” *New England Quarterly* 56 (1983): 220–37; Walter Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Cultures* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); Walter Hughes, “‘Meat Out of the Eater’: Panic and Desire in American Puritan Poetry,” in *Engendering Men*, ed. Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden (New York: Routledge, 1990), 102–21. I am particularly indebted to Jonathan Goldberg, “Bradford’s ‘Ancient Members’ and ‘A Case of Bugger . . . Amongst Them,’” in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger (New York: Routledge, 1991); and his “Sodomy in the New World,” *Social Text* 29 (Fall 1991): 46–57. Goldberg is astute on the mystification involved by celebrations of the Puritan legacy—such as Wayne Franklin’s—that diminish the importance of violence, whether homophobic or racist or misogynist, in the nation’s founding texts.

Unfortunately these scholars’ work has as yet scarcely made a dent in narratives and origin myths offered by cultural historians, as Michael Moon observed in remarks to a panel at the Modern Language Association, 30 December 1990. Perhaps one reason is that we have not grasped the connections—condensed into the very term “sodomy”—between unofficial sexualities and the more prestigious themes of Puritan history: the city on the hill, the errand into the wilderness, the social covenant, declension and redemption, the jeremiad.

- 14 For some examples of these complaints, see Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (1963; rpt., Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987). More generally on discipline and the body in Puritan New England, see Kai Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Macmillan, 1966). For an especially strong statement of the relationship between sexual behavior and national judgment, see John Cotton’s 1636 sermon at Salem, in *John Cotton on the Churches of New England*, ed. Larzer Ziff (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), 67.
- 15 The exception might seem to be French kissing. But Frenching doesn’t make you French, as sodomizing makes you a sodomite. (Interestingly, but not surprisingly, there is no corresponding verb for being a lesbian.)

- 16 The Supreme Court's majority decision in that case, by Justice Byron White, continually refers to "homosexual sodomy." It argues that there can be no "fundamental right" for "homosexuals to engage in acts of consensual sodomy. Proscriptions against that conduct have ancient roots. Sodomy was a criminal offense at common law and was forbidden by the laws of the original 13 states when they ratified the Bill of Rights." Chief Justice Burger wrote a concurring opinion in the case expressly in order to endorse the premodern associations of the term "sodomy": "As the Court notes, the proscriptions against sodomy have very 'ancient roots.' Decisions of individuals relating to homosexual conduct have been subject to state intervention throughout the history of Western civilization. Condemnation of those practices is firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian moral and ethical standards. Homosexual sodomy was a capital crime under Roman law. . . . During the English Reformation when powers of the ecclesiastical courts were transferred to the King's Courts, the first English statute criminalizing sodomy was passed. Blackstone described 'the infamous crime against nature' as an offense of 'deeper malignity' than rape, an heinous act 'the very mention of which is a disgrace to human nature,' and 'a crime not fit to be named'" (*Bowers v. Hardwick*, from *New York Times*, 1 July 1986). Both in choice of nomenclature and in anathematization the Supreme Court chooses not to deviate from the early Christian exegesis of the Sodom episode in Genesis.
- 17 Samuel Willard, *Useful Instructions for a professing People in Times of great Security and Degeneracy* (Cambridge, 1673), 12.
- 18 David Cressy argues that, given the social conditions of migration, the congregationalist venture was from the outset coupled with colonial requirements that could only be registered by Puritans as corruption. The company wrote to Endecott in 1629, for example, saying that it was sending him mostly godly persons, but that "notwithstanding our care to purge them, there may still remain some libertines.'" "Newcomers to Massachusetts," Cressy continues, "complained of 'the prophane and dissolute living of divers of our nation.'" As Cressy points out, this effect of degeneracy was unavoidable given the importance of kinship and patronage networks for emigration. David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 40–48.
- 19 Samuel Danforth, *The Cry of Sodom Enquired into; Upon Occasion of the Arraignment and Condemnation of Benjamin Goad, for his Prodigious Villany* (Cambridge, 1674), 22. There is an important discussion of this text in John Canup, *Out of the Wilderness: The Emergence of an American Identity in Colonial New England* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1990).
- 20 Samuel Whiting, *Abraham's Humble Intercession for Sodom* (Cambridge, 1666), 46.
- 21 William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, ed. Samuel Morison (New York: Knopf, 1952), 321.

- 22 The reference is to Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987). For a good critique of this book's scapegoating rhetoric (and homophobia) in its construction of Gaetan Dugas, see Douglas Crimp, "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic," *October* 43 (Winter 1987): 237–71, esp. 238–46.
- 23 For an excellent discussion of the themes of specularity and male bonds in Bradford, see Jonathan Goldberg, "Bradford's 'Ancient Members.'"
- 24 "A Modell of Christian Charity," *Winthrop Papers* 2:282–95, at 294–95. In these texts by Winthrop and Bradford the link between homoerotics and panicky visibility may call to mind the classic instance of that link in Freud's analysis of the Schreber case. I owe to Eve Sedgwick, however, the observation that Schreber's fantasies of visibility can be read as struggles to articulate desires and possibilities otherwise inexpressible; for this reason, Freud's pathologizing account of paranoia as a symptomatic displacement of homoerotics must be seen as inadequate at best.
- 25 Peter Bulkeley, *The Gospel-Covenant*, 2nd ed. (London, 1651), 11, 16.
- 26 Urian Oakes, *New-England Pleaded With* (Cambridge, 1673). Oakes makes several references to Sodom (e.g., 15) in order to make the point that it is a people's duty to "understand and consider their latter end" (7), especially when that people has become "degenerous" (24), and guilty of "monstrous deportment of a Covenant people" (33).
- 27 Walter Hughes, "'Meat Out of the Eater,'" 113. For a related but somewhat different reading of Puritan male sexual panic, see Eva Cherniavsky, "Night Pollution and the Floods of Confession in Michael Wigglesworth's Diary," *Arizona Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1989): 15–33.
- 28 Address of John Winthrop to the Company of the Massachusetts Bay, *Winthrop Papers* 2:174–77, at 176.
- 29 Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982), esp. 58–80.
- 30 One significant exception is Andrew Delbanco, who briefly discusses the passage in *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989), 74.
- 31 The sources of Winthrop's thinking here have not yet been identified, though he clearly draws on a broad tradition that includes such un-Puritan thinkers as Bonaventure and Aquinas. "Up to the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture. It was resemblance that largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts; it was resemblance that organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them" (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* [New York: Vintage, 1973], 17).
- 32 Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).
- 33 For a good if not very critical account of this logic in Milton, see Jean Hagstrum, *Sex and Sensibility: Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 24–49.

- 34 The language of this account, as Winthrop takes it up, remains consistent in the Geneva and King James Bibles. In the Geneva version it runs: “And when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, the soule of Jonathan was knit with the soule of David, and Jonathan loved him, as his owne soule. And Saul toke him that day, and wolde not let him returne to his fathers house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant: for he loved him as his owne soule. And Jonathan put of the robe that was upon him, and gave it David, and his garments, even to his sworde, & to his bowe, and to his girdle” (I Samuel 18:1–4).
- 35 Winthrop to Sir William Springe, 8 Feb. 1629/30, *Winthrop Papers* 2:203–06, 205.
- 36 The historian Stephen Foster is a near exception. He writes that “To [Winthrop] and his generation love to God and man was not just the English translation of some New Testament Greek, but a real, vivid passion in which *agape*, *philos*, and *eros* were all combined.” Winthrop’s letter to Springe is cited as an example of this. Stephen Foster, *Their Solitary Way: The Puritan Social Ethic in the First Century of Settlement in New England* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1971), 48–49.
- 37 Winthrop, *Journal*, quoted in Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History*, 22.
- 38 Francis Higginson’s *True Relacion*, in *The Founding of Massachusetts*, ed. Stewart Mitchell (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1930), 71. Historians, when they have noted this incident at all, have shown an alarming tendency to identify with Higginson’s horrified reaction. See for example David Cressy, *Coming Over*, 101. Interestingly, Cressy later observes, apropos of Winthrop’s interest in charity’s bonds: “Confined for eight to twelve weeks or more to a tiny wooden world, the travellers were thrust into intimacies that might never have developed on land” (151).
- 39 Nathaniel Shurtliff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay*, 6 vols. (Boston, 1853–55), 1:54.
- 40 Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630–1650* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1933); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind*, vol. 1 (1939; rpt., Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), esp. 398–431; Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*. The notion of inadvertent liberalism is in Miller, *New England Mind*, 1:418. On the social character of the covenant, see also Foster, *Their Solitary Way*; and Larzer Ziff, “The Social Bond of the Church Covenant,” *American Quarterly* 10 (1958): 454–62.
- Miller’s version of this history has of course been much contested, partly because it has defined the field so fundamentally. For some examples of the revisions of Miller’s theses that are relevant to the point made here, see David D. Hall’s introduction to the 1970 Harper Torchbooks edition of *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts*; also Philip Gura, *A Glimpse of Zion’s Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620–1660* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1984); and Darrett Rutman, *Winthrop’s Boston: A Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630–1649* (1965; rpt., New York: Norton, 1972).
- 41 Foster, *The Long Argument*, 64.

- 42 Alan Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1990): 1–19. "As a social form," writes Bray, "the personal service of early Tudor England was in decay by the end of the sixteenth century but as a cultural form it was not; here the language of 'friendship,' as a set of assumptions and expectations, was still very much alive. There was though now a disparity between the two in precisely those elements that protected the intimacy it involved from a charge of sodomy" (13). A further connection here is the denunciation of Bacon's sodomy, cited by Bray, in the autobiography of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, whose affiliations with the early New England Puritans were many.
- 43 On this point see Miller, *New England Mind*, esp. 1:413.
- 44 In saying this I am trying to suggest one historical framework for modern homosociality and its proscription of the homoerotic, as classically analyzed in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985). For a more theoretical statement of the issues raised by such a historical claim, focused especially on the liberal ego, see my "Homo-Narcissism; Or, Heterosexuality," in *Engendering Men*, ed. Boone and Cadden, 190–206.
- 45 Bercovitch, *Puritan Origins*, 81.
- 46 Thomas Shepard, autobiography and journal, ed. by Michael McGiffert as *God's Plot: The Paradoxes of Puritan Piety* (Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 1972), 40.
- 47 *The Works of Thomas Shepard*, vol. 1 (Boston, 1853), 28.
- 48 Gura points out that Puritanism could not eliminate a tendency to radicalize itself in a way that undermined generational logic. "If the baptists had their way," he writes, "the intricate genetics of salvation on which the New England Puritans believed the continuity of their churches depended, with the children of church members guaranteed the right to baptism by their virtue as the 'seed' of believers and so placed under the spiritual watch and care of the church, would simply crumble. . . . [The baptists'] implicit premise was that no one could inherit membership in the Church" (*A Glimpse of Zion's Glory*, 95, 217).
- 49 Thomas Lechford, *Plain-Dealing: Or, Newes from New-England* (London, 1642), 39–40.
- 50 Bulkeley, *The Gospel-Covenant*, 151, 154–55.
- 51 See especially the 1636 Salem sermon, in *John Cotton on the Churches of New England*, ed. Larzer Ziff (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968).
- 52 *God's Promise to His Plantation* (London, 1630), 19. Compare this with *The Covenant of Gods Free Grace* (London, 1645), in which Cotton lays much emphasis throughout on family duties and relations, especially those of parent and child, as the arena of grace and the covenant. Cotton's text, 2 Samuel 23:5, leads him to cite especially David's children, and the recurrent theme is that of the generational transmission of the covenant: e.g., "it may teach every righteous Housholder and Parent, to take more care to leave a good

covenant to their children and servants than any thing else” (26). Cotton’s language consistently tries to ambiguate the relative weight of chosen and unchosen relations, covenants made and covenants left behind. “If you be not in the Covenant, but your whole desire is, that you may, you must labour to bring your selves into a good family, and that you may be fitted for any service, you must deny your selves, and give up your mindes, wills and affections unto God” (20).