

Sexy Puritans

Anne Bradstreet, 1612-1672

A Letter to her Husband, Absent upon Publick employment

My head, my heart, mine Eyes, my life, nay more,
My joy, my Magazine¹ of earthly store,
If two be one, as surely thou and I,
How stayest thou there, whilst I at *Ipswich*² lye?
So many steps, head from the heart to sever
If but a neck, soon should we be together:
I like the earth this season, mourn in black,
My Sun is gone so far in's Zodiack,
Whom whilst I 'joy'd, nor storms, nor frosts I felt,
His warmth such frigid colds did cause to melt.
My chilled limbs now nummed lye forlorn;
Return, return sweet *Sol*³ from *Capricorn*;⁴
In this dead time, alas, what can I more
Then view those fruits which through thy heat I bore?
Which sweet contentment yield me for a space,
True living Pictures of their Fathers face.
O strange effect! now thou art *Southward* gone,
I weary grow, the tedious day so long;
But when thou *Northward* to me shalt return,
I wish my Sun may never set, but burn
Within the Cancer⁵ of my glowing breast,
The welcome house of him my dearest guest.
Where ever, ever stay, and go not thence,
Till natures sad decree shall call thee hence;
Flesh of thy flesh, bone of thy bone,
I here, thou there, yet both but one.

¹ Place for storing goods, especially ammunition.

² Town in Massachusetts.

³ Sun.

⁴ A winter zodiac sign; also a tropical meridian.

⁵ A summer zodiac sign; also a tropical meridian.

Michael Wigglesworth, 1631-1705

God's Controversy with New England

(Written in the Time of the Great Drought, Anno 1662.)

Are these the men that prized libertee
 To walk with God according to their light,
 To be as good as he would have them bee,
 To serve and worship him with all their might,
 Before the pleasures which a fruitfull field,
 And country flowing-full of all good things, could yield, . . .

Are these the men whose gates with peace I crown'd,
 To whom for bulwarks I salvation gave,
 Whilst all things else with rattling tumults sound,
 And mortall frays send thousands to the grave?
 Whilest their own brethren bloody hands embrewed
 In brothers blood, and fields with carcasses bestrewed?⁶ . . .

If these be they, how is it that I find
 In stead of holiness Carnality,
 In stead of heavenly frames an Earthly mind,
 For burning zeal luke-warm Indifferency,
 For flaming love, key-cold Dead-heartedness,

For temperance (in meat, and drinke, and cloaths) excess?
 Whence cometh it, that Pride, and Luxurie
 Debate, Deceit, Contention, and Strife,
 False-dealing, Covetousness, Hypocrisie
 (With such like Crimes) amongst them arc so rife,
 That one of them doth over-reach another?
 And that an honest man can hardly trust his Brother?

How is it, that Security, and Sloth,
 Amongst the best are Common to be found?
 That grosser sins, in stead of Graces growth,
 Amongst the many more and more abound?
 I hate dissembling shews of Holiness.
 Or practise as you talk, or never more profess. . . .

This O New-England hast thou got
 By riot, & excess:
 This hast thou brought upon thy self
 By pride & wantonness.

⁶ Reference to the English Civil War.

Thus must thy worldyness be whipt.
 They, that too much do crave,
 Provoke the Lord to take away
 Such blessings as they have.

We have been also threatened
 With worsser things then these:
 And God can bring them on us still,
 To morrow if he please.
 For if his mercy be abus'd,
 Which helpe us at our need
 And mov'd his heart to pittie us,
 We shall be plagu'd indeed.

Beware, O sinful Land, beware;
 And do not think it strange
 That sorer judgements are at hand,
 Unless thou quickly change.
 Or God, or thou, must quickly change;
 Or else thou art undon:
 Wrath cannot cease, if sin remain,
 Where judgement is begun.

Ah dear New England! dearest land to me;
 Which unto God hast hitherto been dear,
 And mayst be still more clear than formerlie,
 If to his voice thou wilt incline thine ear.

Consider wel & wisely what the rod,
 Wherewith thou art from year to year chastized,
 Instructeth thee. Repent, & turn to God,
 Who wil not have his nurture be despized.

Thou still hast in thee many praying saints,
 Of great account, and precious with the Lord,
 Who dayly pour out unto him their plaints,
 And strive to please him both in deed & word.

Cheer on, sweet souls, my heart is with you all,
 And shall be with you, maugre⁷ Sathan's might:
 And whereso'ere this body be a Thrall,
 Still in New-England shall be my delight.

⁷ In spite of.

Excerpts from Michael Wigglesworth's Diary

Note: Wigglesworth used a secret code to report his sexual sins to god. What follows has been decoded.

If the unloving carriages of my pupils can go so to my heart as they do; how then do my vain thoughts, my detestable pride, my unnatural filthy lust that are so oft and even this day in some measure stirring in me . . . ?

I confess myself an object of God's loathing.

Lord I am vile, I desire to abhor my self (O that I could!)... I find such unresistable torments of carnal lusts or provocation unto the ejection of seed that I find my self unable to read anything to inform me about my distemper because of the prevailing or rising of my lusts. . . .

The last night a filthy dream and so pollution escaped me in my sleep for which I desire to hang down my head with shame and beseech the Lord not to make me possess the sin of my youth and give me into the hands of my abomination.

such filthy lust also flowing from my fond affection to my pupils whiles in their presence ... that I confess myself an object of God's loathing. . . .

whilest God is bidding me see his glory I cannot see it; vile and unworthy conceptions concerning god come into my mind.

I see a need of whole christ and do desire him, help my want of desires: open thou my mouth wide and tehn fill it with thy son. I need him.

wednesday morning, upon the obstinate untowardness of some of my pupils in refusing to read Hebrew, god brings to mind and ashameth me of my own perversness . . . both to my naturall parents and Achademical: and also I see that this is the spirit (and I fear . . . wil be the ruin) of the whole country: A spirit of unbridled licentiousness.

Edward Taylor, 1642-1729

Meditation 1.1

What Love is this of thine, that Cannot bee
 In thine Infinity, O Lord, Confinde,
 Unless it in thy very Person see,
 Infinity, and Finity Conjoyn'd?
 What hath thy Godhead, as not satisfide
 Marri'de our Manhood, making it its Bride?

Oh, Matchless Love! filling Heaven to the brim!
 O're running it: all running o're beside
 This World! Nay Overflowing Hell; wherein
 For thine Elect, there rose a mighty Tide!
 That there our Veans might through thy Person bleed,
 To quench those flames, that else would on us feed.

Oh! that thy Love might overflow my Heart!
 To fire the same with Love: for Love I would.
 But oh! my streight'ned Breast! my Lifeless Sparke!
 My Fireless Flame! What Chilly Love, and Cold?
 In measure small! In Manner Chilly! See.
 Lord blow the Coal: Thy Love Enflame in mee.

The Reflexion

Canticles 2:1 "I am the rose of Sharon."

Lord, art thou at the Table Head above
 Meat, Med'cine, Sweetness, sparkling Beautys, to
 Enamour Souls with Flaming Flakes of Love,
 And not my Trencher,⁸ nor my Cup o'reflow?
 Ben't I a bidden guest? Oh! sweat mine Eye:
 O'reflow with Teares: Oh! draw thy fountains dry.

Shall I not smell thy sweet, oh! Sharons Rose?
 Shall not mine Eye salute thy Beauty? Why?
 Shall thy sweet leaves their Beautious sweets upclose⁹?
 As halfe ashamde my sight should on them ly?

⁸ Tray.

⁹ Close up.

Woe's me! For this my sighs shall be in grain,
Offer'd on Sorrows Altar for the same.

Had not my Soule's, thy Conduit, Pipes stopt bin
With mud, what Ravishment would'st thou convey?
Let Graces Golden Spade dig till the Spring
Of tears arise, and cleare this filth away.
Lord, let thy Spirit raise my sighings till
These Pipes my soule do with thy sweetness fill.

Earth once was Paradise of Heaven below,
Till inkefac'd sin had it with poyson stockt;
And Chast this Paradise away into
Heav'ns upmost Loft, and it in Glory Lockt.
But thou, sweet Lord, hast with thy golden Key
Unlockt the Doore, and made a golden day.

Once at thy Feast, I saw thee Pearle-like stand
'Tween Heaven and Earth, where Heavens Bright glory all
In streams fell on thee, as a floodgate and
Like Sun Beams through thee on the World to Fall.
Oh! Sugar sweet then! My Deare sweet Lord, I see
Saints Heaven-lost Happiness restor'd by thee.

Shall Heaven and Earth's bright Glory all up lie,
Like Sun Beams bundled in the sun in thee?
Dost thou sit Rose at Table Head, where I
Do sit, and Carv'st no morsell sweet for mee?
So much before, so little now! Sprindge,¹⁰ Lord,
Thy Rosie Leaves, and me their Glee afford.

Shall not thy Rose my Garden fresh, perfume?
Shall not thy Beauty my dull Heart assaile?
Shall not thy golden gleams run through this gloom?
Shall my black Velvet Mask thy fair Face Vaile?
Pass o're my Faults: shine forth, bright sun, arise!
Enthroned thy Rosy-selfe within mine Eyes.

¹⁰ Catch.



Bundling couple in 18th Century Woodcut



17th Century Woodcut