



Memoranda and Documents

AUTHOR, AUTHOR: *A SHORT STORY OF THE RISE,
REIGN, AND RUINE OF THE LATE ANTINOMIANS,
FAMILISTS, AND LIBERTINES* (1644) REAPPRAISED

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WHEN the London bookseller Ralph Smith published *A Short Story of the Rise, reign, and ruine of the Late Antinomians, Familists, and Libertines, that infected the Churches of New-England* (1644), no author's name appeared on the title page. Formally, the book was anonymous. The only indications of someone's involvement were a "T. W.," which came at the end of the single-paragraph "To the Reader" that opens the book, followed, at the close of an eighteen-page "Preface," by "T. Welde." Thomas Weld (1599–1661) arrived in Massachusetts in 1632 and became one of the ministers in Roxbury. His tenure in Massachusetts ended in 1641 when, at the behest of the government, he returned to England to represent the interests of the colony. In his "To the Reader," Weld described how, "Meeting with this Book, newly come forth of the Presse" in London, he was "earnestly pressed by diverse to perfect it, by laying down the order and sense of this story, (which in the Book is omitted)." This he did in his lengthy preface.

The expression "Meeting with this Book, newly come forth of the Presse" was Weld's way of acknowledging not the *Short Story* but the recently published (by January 16, 1644) *Antinomians and Familists Condemned By the Synod of Elders in New-England; with the Proceedings of the Magistrates against them, and their Apology for the same*. With Weld's additions, leftover sheets from this printing acquired their more familiar title when these were bound up anew by Ralph Smith's journeymen. Almost certainly, Smith devised the first title. Finger to the wind, he knew that terms such as "Antinomian"

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and “Familist” had become hotly contested words in the religious politics of mid-1640s England, although neither appeared in the body of the book itself. Weld may have had a role in devising the second, with its emphasis on “story.”¹

Did the *Short Story* really lack an author? Not in the opinion of several of its English and Scottish readers in the mid-1640s. To a person, they attributed the book to Weld and, especially, to John Winthrop,² a step in keeping with their efforts to demonstrate that the “Congregational Way” of the colonists endangered the system of church government they were urging the Assembly to adopt. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century cataloguers agreed. R.W.G. Vail, who wrote the entry for the *Short Story* in *Bibliotheca Americana*, wavered, crediting Weld with the 1644 printing and Winthrop with a reprinting in 1692, but his confusion was nearly unique.³ Indeed, Weld disappeared from references to its author. As recently as 2003, Francis J. Bremer declared that “Winthrop penned a manuscript collection of the relevant documents and a history of the controversy, all

¹The date is George Thomason’s; for which see *Catalogue of the Pamphlets, Books, Newspapers and Manuscripts relating to the Civil War*, 2 vols., (London: British Museum, 1908), 1:308. The rhetorical currents swirling around the epithet “Antinomian” are described in Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001). Ralph Smith (active c. 1642–1660) mainly published mainstream or moderate puritans. For Smith’s career, see Henry R. Plomer, *A Dictionary of the Booksellers and Printers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland between 1641 and 1667* (London, 1907), 167. Based on Weld’s comment in his “To the Reader” that he made “some additions to the conclusion of the Book,” James Savage assumed that he had written the final two pages. But the final pages are the same in both printings of the book. By “conclusion,” Weld meant the “Postscript” he had quickly added, a newflash reporting the submission of two “Sagamoses” to the colony government.

²Robert Baillie attributed the book to Weld and Winthrop in *A Dissuasive from the errors of the time* (London, 1645), 57–58 but also refers to “Master Winthrop’s narrative” (64). John Wheelwright assigned the book to Weld in *A Brief, and Plain Apology by John Wheelwright* (1658), title page and 7. Attributions by other contemporaries are brought together in Charles Francis Adams Jr., ed., *Antinomianism in the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay 1636–1638* (Boston: The Prince Society, 1894), 37–64. Giles Firmin, who had worked alongside John Higginson as clerk of the synod of 1637 and recalled his encounters with lay “Antinomians” in the colony in *A Brief Review of Mr. Davis’s Vindication* (London, 1693), described the *Short Story* as “the Book put forth by Mr. Weld” (“To the Reader”). In Samuel Groom’s *A Glass for the People of New England* (London[?], 1676), he refers to it as “brother Wells his short Story” (8). The initials S.G. on the title page of this book have prompted suggestions that the author was Samuel Gorton, but the traditional identification seems more likely given the substantial treatment of Quakers.

³Entry for Weld in Wilberforce Eames and R. W. G. Vail, *Bibliotheca Americana: A Dictionary of Books relating to America* (Portland, ME: Southworth-Anthoesen Prss, 1936), vol. 28.

of which was later published as *A Short Story of the Rise, Reigne, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists and Libertines*.⁴

Like the mid-seventeenth-century attributions, these more recent references to Winthrop overlook the structure of the *Short Story*.⁵ Apart from Weld's preface and a few other passages, it is a collection of documents: "A Catalogue of such erroneous opinions as were found to have beene brought into *New-England*," a document linked to a special "synod" held in September 1637; "The proceedings of the Generall Court holden at New towne . . . Octob. [November] 2.1637," a text that concludes with a back-and-forth with Anne Hutchinson, a text commonly described as her "Examination"; a description of a deformed fetus or "Monster" attributed to Mary Dyer, a woman allied with the "Antinomian" party in Boston; a "briefe Apologie in defence of the generall proceedings of the Court . . . against Mr. J. Wheelwright," a minister convicted of "sedition" in March 1637 for denouncing most of the colonists as "hypocrites" in a sermon he preached in January; and, although not formally introduced as a text, a summary of Hutchinson's church trial in March 1638 when her home congregation in Boston voted to excommunicate her. As well, the book contained swatches of invective and Weld's "To the Reader," and "Preface."

Would a heterogenous array of documents be "penned" by a single person? Everyone who has pondered the *Short Story* agrees that Winthrop wrote the "Briefe Apologie" and that his description of the exhumed foetus influenced the descriptions printed in London in the 1640s.⁶ Otherwise, he seems absent except as a partisan of one side during the "Antinomian controversy" the book documents. When we entertain the possibility of a Winthrop-less *Short Story*, some of its features—most of them unnoticed by students of the Antinomian controversy—take on a fresh significance and invite more detailed analysis. Consider, for example, the presence of an 'I' that addresses

⁴Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop America's Forgotten Founding Father* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 300. A year earlier, Michael P. Winship had opined in *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636–1641* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 262n20 that he knew "of no historian who questioned" the attribution to Winthrop.

⁵Hereafter, page references in the text of this essay are to the 1644 printing.

⁶The publishing history of the monster birth narrative is described in Valerie Pearl and Morris Pearl, "Governor John Winthrop on the Birth of the Antinomians 'Monster': The Earliest Reports to Reach England and the Making of a Myth," *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* 102 (1990): 21–37.

the reader in three different parts of the text, an “I” never carefully analyzed by historians of the controversy. And, despite its structure as a collection of documents, the book is animated by a narrative structure that seems the doing of the anonymous “I” and Weld in his “Preface.” That a manuscript assembled in 1630s Massachusetts was published in London in 1644 was something of an accident. But the makers of that manuscript approached this task with intentions that are visible in how the collection was assembled, certain documents were edited, and the whole fashioned around a narrative voice. Via evidence of this kind, the question of authorship merits a reappraisal.

1

I begin with a backward glance at a mid-nineteenth-century debate about the making of the *Short Story*. In the small world of nineteenth-century Boston-based antiquarians, James Savage (1784–1873) was unusually prominent. By mid-century, he had become the premier genealogist of the people who arrived in New England before 1692. Building on the work of John Farmer, Savage published a four-volume *Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England* (1860).⁷ He also owed his prominence to a painstaking transcription of the journals kept by John Winthrop between 1630 and 1649. An incomplete, mistake-laden version had been published in Hartford in 1790. When a hitherto missing third volume came into the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1816, Savage agreed to edit the entire series anew. Although he struggled with Winthrop’s handwriting, Savage persevered and, in 1825–26, published *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*, with extensive annotations. Subsequently, he oversaw a reprinting in 1853 “with additions and corrections.” Not until many decades later would Richard L. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle publish a fresh transcription, *The Journal of John Winthrop 1630–1649* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). As they rightly noted, the new edition depended on Savage’s for the most substantial section of the journal, a manuscript volume accidentally destroyed in a fire in his office in 1825.⁸

⁷Farmer’s remarkable endeavors are described in François Weil, *Family Trees: A History of Genealogy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), chap. 2.

⁸Richard S. Dunn narrates the pre-Savage history of editions and manuscripts found and lost in his Introduction to the 1996 edition; see esp. xi–xiv. Cited hereafter as Dunn, ed., *Winthrop’s Journal*.

In Savage's judgment and in that of everyone after him who has written about the early decades of colonization, Winthrop's journal was a crucial source of information about decisions and disputes that beset Massachusetts and its neighbors. One of these disputes, which became known in the nineteenth century as the "Antinomian controversy," erupted in late 1636 and sputtered to a close in 1638.⁹ Winthrop said a good deal in the journal about it, so much so that his entries remain our principal source for much of what happened. Savage and his fellow students of that event could also draw on the documents included in the *Short Story*.

Two centuries later, Savage decided to erase the customary attribution to Winthrop, although accepting his authorship of a single section of the book, the "briefe Apologie" (46–59). The rest was the doing of a conniving, untrustworthy Weld, who committed an act of "bibliographical disingenuity" by arranging to publish a version of the book—*Antinomians and Familists*—shorn of his name. Rejecting Weld's story of an accidental encounter, which Savage characterized as "altogether a pretense on the part of the virulent pamphleteer," he conducted an elaborate analysis of typographical differences between the two printings to prove his case.¹⁰

Among his contemporaries, James Savage was known as a "good hater."¹¹ Certainly this was true when it came to Weld. Perhaps because Savage said such harsh things about him, several fellow antiquarians dismissed his analysis of the two printings and defended the attribution to Winthrop.¹² Joseph Felt (1789–1869), who knew

⁹So entitled by Charles Francis Adams Jr., who reprinted several of the core documents (including the *Short Story*) in *Antinomianism in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, 1636–1638*. But as Michael P. Winship has pointed out, the first person to use the phrase "or at least popularize it" was George Bancroft in 1834. Winship, *Making Heretics*, 247n1.

¹⁰Savage included his collation in the entry on Thomas Weld in the *Genealogical Dictionary*, 4:459. See also Savage, *Winthrop's History of New England*, 1:298n1, and "Short Story," *Historical Magazine* 2 (1858): 170–72.

¹¹Described as such by Charles Deane: *MHS Proceedings* 5 (1878), 240 and repeated by Charles Francis Adams in his introduction to *Antinomianism*. In 1905, Adams characterized Savage as "foremost" in his area of scholarship but also as having "the most striking individuality" that "would bring Mr. Savage into collision with some other person of equally individual attitudes." *MHS Proceedings* 20 (1906): 234–37. For Deane's renown, see *MHS Proceedings* 15 (1889): 102–41.

¹²Joseph Felt, *The Ecclesiastical History of New England*, 2 vols. (1852), 1:329; "Hutchinson," "Authorship of the 'Short Story,'" *Hist. Mag.* 1 (1857): 321–24. Savage and Thornton replied in *Hist. Mag.* 2 (1858): 22–23, and Thornton on 2:170–72. Charles Deane's exchanges with Savage are tucked into the elaborate binding of his

the Massachusetts State Archives better than anyone else, brushed off Savage's attribution in *The Ecclesiastical History of New England* (1855). Charles Deane (1813–1886), Savage's most learned rival, challenged him in private correspondence. A more significant intervention was anonymous. Using the penname "Hutchinson," J. Wingate Thornton (1818–1862) published a brief essay (1857) in the *Historical Magazine* disputing—indeed, disproving—Savage's argument that discrepancies between the two printings of the book proved that Weld had contrived the printing of *Antinomians and Familists* after the *Short Story* had been published. As Thornton was able to demonstrate, the traditional dating—*Antinomians and Familists* first, *Short Story* second—was correct. Any differences between the two versions were an outcome of printing house practices—in particular, the practice of incorporating sheets at various stages of correction into a book, a process guaranteed to introduce unpredictable differences between editions and, for that matter, between copies of the same printing.¹³

Productive in important ways, this back-and-forth did not address the identity of the "I" and overlooked several indications that the making of the book was intentional. The earliest reference to intention occurs in Winthrop's journal. Writing in the aftermath of the General Court session of early November 1637, he reported that the government "finding, upon consultation, that two so opposite parties could not contain [*sic*] in the same body," punished those who had signed a "remonstrance," fining and disenfranchising some and banishing a few others. Then follows an allusion to a book in the making: "as appears at large in the proceedings of this court, which were faithfully collected and published soon after the court brake up."¹⁴ Almost certainly, this is the manuscript the minister Hugh Peter sent to John Winthrop Jr., in February 1638; as Peter noted in a letter, "I have sent you the booke of the proceedings of the Court, which when it is copyed out for your towne I must have agayne." It seems just as certain that this was the "Book in Manuscript, in which is all their Proceeding" that came into the hands of the religious dissident Samuel Groom, who quoted from it in *A Glass For the People*

personal copy of the *Short Story* (Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA). The Houghton collection also includes J. Wingate Thornton's copy, also with materials from the controversy of the 1850s bound in it.

¹³A parallel example is described in Randolph G. Adams, "William Hubbard's 'Narrative,' 1677: A Bibliographical Study," *Bibliographic Society of America Papers* 33 (1939): 25–39.

¹⁴Dunn, ed., *Winthrop's Journal*, 239.

of *New-England* (London[?] 1676). Collectively, these statements establish the existence of one of the documents that made its way into the *Short Story*, a document the government was eager to share.¹⁵

Intention—that is, the purposeful planning of what became the *Short Story*—is also apparent from a phrase in the manuscript version of the book, a phrase overlooked by the printers in Ralph Smith's shop. The voice of an editor/organizer intrudes at the end of page forty-three, concluding a sentence in which this person sums up the actions in various local churches against dissidents in their midst and looks ahead to the church trial of Anne Hutchinson, "the manner and issue whereof is set down in the next" (emphasis added). What the reader expects to encounter is not what comes next. Instead, Smith or someone in his shop inserted the monster birth story (44–46) that Smith may have appropriated from a previous London printing of this text. Once past this story, the reader encounters the "briefe Apologie," not an account of the church trial. A familiar printing house practice—slapping together manuscript texts without much regard for coherence or consistency—disrupted the structure of a book that someone had assembled in Boston.¹⁶

Further evidence of intention is apparent from how three texts were abridged, a point to which I return at a later moment, and from the narrative coherence of the book. The "story" it tells was shaped in ways that bespeak the colonists' uneasiness with the politics of religion in 1630s England and how godly rule in Massachusetts was being represented. Aware of rumors that some of the ministers were disagreeing with each other, the makers of the book wanted to ensure that John Cotton, in English eyes the most "eminent" minister in their midst, would be erased from the record as fully as possible—erased because he had endorsed much of Anne Hutchinson's message and was openly at odds with his fellow ministers on aspects of everyday theology. Hence his near-total absence, although a close reader would have discerned his sympathy for Hutchinson. The summary of her "opinions" (31) is remarkably neutral about her skills as a spiritual counselor, to the point of informing us that "many were convinced that they had gone on in a Covenant of works, and were much

¹⁵*Winthrop Papers*: Massachusetts Historical Society *Publications*, 6 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929–), 3:141; Groom, *Glass For the People of New England*, 6–8.

¹⁶For example, a London bookseller turned Thomas Hooker's *The Poor Doubting Christian* into a mishmash of texts. See Sargent Bush, "The Growth of Thomas Hooker's *The Poor Doubting Christian*," *Early American Literature* 8 (1978): 5–13.

humbled thereby and . . . [that] all this was well, and suited with the publick Ministry [Cotton's], which went along in the same way," a passage Cotton would subsequently quote in *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (1648).¹⁷ But the real eye-opener appears several pages later during the "Examination," when the narrator cites (36) Hutchinson's assertion that "none of them [the ministers in the colony] did preach the Covenant of free Grace, but Master Cotton, and that they have not the Seale of the Spirit." Apart from these two references, Cotton is barely visible in the book.¹⁸

His near absence enabled Weld in his Preface and the book's anonymous editors/compilers/writers to foreground the provocative theologizing of Anne Hutchinson, a veritable "Jezabel" who wanted to ruin the new colony. Weld amplified this narrative for the benefit of English readers. After he detailed the stages of the controversy and how the magistrates and ministers had successfully quelled dissent, he named the people whose wrongdoing had been responsible for the uproar. Chief among these was Hutchinson. According to Weld, her unorthodox beliefs—some twenty-nine of them, a list amplified from the fifteen attributed to her at the church trial—and, of greater consequence, her practice of labeling all but two or three of the ministers in the colony as "legal" preachers, triggered "disturbances, divisions" and "contentions" that undermined the authority of the colony's leadership. Weld concluded by citing two examples of divine providence, the first of them the "monster birth" of Mary Dyer and a kindred medical moment experienced by Hutchinson, the second her death in 1643 at the hands of Native Americans in New Netherland, where she had moved from Rhode Island, her refuge after she was exiled from Massachusetts. More invective of this kind occurs in several places in the *Short Story*, all of it betokening agreement on how to frame the controversy for readers on the other side of the Atlantic.

Delaying a closer look at what a mysterious "I" contributed to the book, let me turn to evidence that pertains to its publication—or,

¹⁷David D. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), 263; John Cotton, *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (London: 1648), reprinted in Larzer Ziff, ed., *John Cotton on the Churches of New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 239.

¹⁸Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 270, 273–74. Cotton was asked what he thought of Hutchinson's "Revelations." In the full transcript he was sharply rebuked for equivocating. Henry Vane Jr., the young English aristocrat who arrived unexpectedly in 1636 and became governor of the colony, had sided with Cotton as the crisis began to unfold. His status in England may explain why he was almost completely erased from the book.

more accurately, its status as a scribal text that circulated in handwritten manuscripts. A long over-looked letter in the Massachusetts State Archives, a letter written by the young minister-to-be John Higginson (1616–1702) that the New York-based antiquarian George H. Moore published in the *Historical Magazine* in 1868, reveals a change of mind that occurred as the makers of the *Short Story*—at this moment, a handwritten manuscript—pondered whether to share it with some of their fellow godly in England. Writing to the Massachusetts government a few years after the controversy had ended, Higginson recalled his services as clerk at the synod of 1637 and the bargain he struck about being paid, a bargain that fell apart after it was decided that the manuscript should not be sent to England. For my purposes, the letter is crucial evidence of intention: in 1637–38, a group of leaders (lay and religious) wanted to dispatch a manuscript Higginson had helped prepare to England and have it published there. As he reminded the government in this letter, “I was desired to draw up a copie of all the Materiall passages [from discussions in the synod], that it might be printed for Publicke use, which so farre as it did belong to me, after the Expence of so much time and paines on my Part was done.” Seemingly, Higginson did not finish his work until May 1639. Although the government asked him to have the book “faithfullie printed,” Higginson pointed out that second thoughts had overtaken most of the ministers about the benefits of sharing the manuscript, “whereupon” the young clerk decided that he “durst not have a hand in the publishing of it.” Some four years later, he was begging the Court to pay him for his labors, having never earned the “hundred pounds” he was told he would receive from having rights to a book that did not materialize.¹⁹

The second thoughts that halted the publication of a text akin to the *Short Story* may be glimpsed in a letter Thomas Hooker sent

¹⁹George H. Moore, “Work and Materials for American History, Continued,” *Hist. Mag.*, 2nd ser., 3 (1868): 26–28. In *Ways of Writing: The Practice and Politics of Text-Making in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), chap. 2, I surmised that Higginson served as clerk or recorder for the November 1637 session of the General Court. It seems improbable—indeed, fantastic—that Higginson could possibly have earned the sum of one hundred pounds for his services at the synod. The only professional scrivener in Boston at the time was Thomas Lechford. The early eighteenth-century minister-antiquarian Thomas Prince had seen “An ancient Record of the first New-England Synod, viz. at Cambridge, 1637.” Thomas Prince, *A Chronological History of New-England*, ed. Samuel G. Drake (1746: repr., Boston, 1852), xvii. Almost certainly, this is the manuscript Higginson had prepared.

from newly-founded Hartford to Thomas Shepard in April 1637. "My present thoughts," Hooker wrote, "run thus: That such conclusions which are most extra, most erroneous, and cross to the common current, send them over to the godly learned to judge in our own country, and return their apprehensions. I suppose the issue will be more uncontrollable. If any should suggest this was the way to make the clamor too great and loud, and to bring a prejudice upon the plantations, I should soon answer, There is nothing done in corners here but it is openly there related; and in such notorious cases, which can not be kept secrett, the most plain and naked relation ever causeth the truth most to appear." Here, in so many words, was the dilemma that Hooker, Shepard, Winthrop, and their allies were facing: conceal any evidence of inter-ministerial conflict or brave the consequences by publishing it?⁹ In the end, these men decided that silence was better than publicity.²⁰

A book in the making that was suppressed but eventually published in London by an enterprising bookseller: in what follows, I amplify this glimpse of the origins of the *Short Story*, look more closely at the rhetoric the "I" was employing, and suggest who that person might be.

2

To reiterate, the *Short Story* is a compilation of documents accompanied by sections of commentary or resume. Whoever decided on its contents could pick and choose among twenty-odd texts thrown up by the Antinomian controversy, all of them circulating in handwritten copies, the only local means of publishing a text in mid-1630s Massachusetts where a printing office was not up and running until 1639.²¹ Because the makers of the book were selecting some and omitting others, the ones they chose to exclude are revealing of the

²⁰Thomas Hutchinson, *History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay*, ed. Lawrence Shaw Mayo, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 1:60–61, 64. As Hutchinson gasped (having read letters that may no longer survive), "The confusion in the colony, occasioned by these religious disputes, was very great; and it appears from the letters then wrote from England, that they made great noise there."

²¹For other texts that circulated in this manner, see David D. Hall, "Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century New England: An Introduction and Checklist," *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings* 115 (2006): 29–80 and "Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Second Checklist," *AAS Proceedings* 118 (2009): 267–96.

politics that informed the shape of the book-to-be. Among the omissions was a list of questions-plus-answers his fellow ministers handed John Cotton in December 1636, questions he promptly answered. According to Winthrop, “many copies thereof [i.e., handwritten copies] were dispersed about,” a statement supported by the survival of two such copies. A third came into the hands of a London bookseller, who published it in 1644 as *Sixteene Questions of Serious and Necessary Consequence, Propounded unto Mr. John Cotton of Boston in New-England, Together with His Answers to each Question*. Almost certainly, multiple copies were made of a sequel. To quote Winthrop again, “the rest of the ministers replied to these answers, and at large showed their dissent, and the grounds thereof.” This “Reply” and Cotton’s “Rejoynder” (which Winthrop did not mention) remained in manuscript and unknown to all but a very few scholars until 1968, when I published them in *The Antinomian Controversy*.²²

Nor did the *Short Story* include Cotton’s response to another set of questions. Again, Winthrop fills in the context. In the aftermath of the synod of 1637, he noted in his journal that there remained “five points in question, between Mr. Cotton and Mr. Wheelwright on the one part, and the rest of the elders on the other part, which were after reduced to three, and those after put into such expressions as Mr. Cotton and they agreed, but Mr. Wheelwright did not.” Presumably, the three questions and Cotton’s answers to them were what a London bookseller published in 1646 as *A Conference Mr. John Cotton Held at Boston with the Elders of New-England*. The dating of these questions remains in doubt; as I pointed out in 1968, the three questions-plus-answers probably antedate the synod of 1637.²³

Others that fell by the wayside included John Wheelwright’s inflammatory fast-day sermon of January 1637. Several copies of this seem to have circulated, and two survive.²⁴ In April, a correspondent of Winthrop’s informed him that “all the late differences between mr. Wheelwright and your selves are in writing at Richmonds Ile [in Maine] where Turlany shewed him six sheets of paper full

²²Dunn, ed., *Winthrop’s Journal*, 203, 207. A partial transcript survives in the Matthew Grant Notebook, Connecticut State Library, Hartford. Another made its way into the Samuel Hartlib Papers, Rylands Library, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

²³Dunn, ed., *Winthrop’s Journal*, 233. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 174.

²⁴For the locations of these manuscripts, see Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 153. Samuel Groom quoted another copy in *Glass for the People of New England*, 4–5.

written about them.”²⁵ Others have vanished—for example, the “answers” and “arguments” written out and exchanged between disputants during the synod of 1637, documents mentioned by Weld in his “To the Reader.” In late 1636, John Winthrop wrote a “Declaration” and a “Pacification” he shared with Thomas Shepard, who advised him to “forbeare wrighting for a while” and recommended withdrawing these texts from circulation; we know of them only through Shepard’s letter. Another missing text by Winthrop, apparently a riposte to Wheelwright’s fast-day sermon, is mentioned in the journal: “A day or two after, the same brother wrote his mind fully, with such scriptures and arguments as came to hand, and sent it to Mr. Cotton.” Would that we still had Wheelwright’s own “short writings to the Elders,” which may be the same text as his “Answer to the Elders” in which he insisted that the “difference” between their understanding of salvation history and his was “great.” Similarly, the ministers’ “Answer” to him is known to us only because Wheelwright referred to it in *A Briefe, and Plain Apologie* (London, 1658).²⁶

Cotton, too, was involved in this trail of texts. Defending himself against the Scottish minister Robert Baillie, who mined the *Short Story* for evidence that Cotton was Hutchinson’s close ally, Cotton described a highly political text that has vanished: “The 3. thing thought needful for preparation to the Synod [of September 1637], was, to gather out of my Sermons to the people, and my conferences (in word and writing) with the Elders, all such opinions of mine as were conceived by some, to bee erroneous.” The strong interest in what Cotton was saying in his sermons is indicated not only by this action but also by the existence of notes on a sermon of his about the “conditional promise” that came into Winthrop’s hands, a text eventually printed in the *Winthrop Papers*.²⁷

The compilers also chose to exclude Henry Vane’s “A briefe Answer to a certaine declaration” and John Winthrop’s “A reply to an Answer.” Both were eventually made available in Thomas Hutchinson’s

²⁵Winthrop *Papers*, 3:392.

²⁶Sargent Bush Jr., “Revising What We Have Done Amis: John Cotton and John Wheelwright, 1640,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 45 (1988): 745; Sargent Bush, ed., *The Correspondence of John Cotton* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 309; Sargent Bush Jr., “John Wheelwright’s Forgotten Apology: The Last Word in the Antinomian Controversy,” *New England Quarterly* 64 (1991): 31; *Winthrop Papers*, 3:326; Dunn, ed., *Winthrop’s Journal*, 197.

²⁷John Cotton, *The Way of the Churches in New England Cleared* (London, 1648), 41; *Winthrop Papers*, 3: 351.

A Collection of Papers Relative to the history of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay (Boston, 1768). The vanished (and in all likelihood, intentionally omitted) include a text by Anne Hutchinson. The “Recantation,” which she “presented . . . before the whole church” (the Boston congregation), a text growing out of the efforts of John Davenport and John Cotton to “convince” her of having fallen into “erroneous ways,” has disappeared.²⁸ She wrote it in early 1638 at a moment when she was living with Cotton in Boston. Mentioned in the transcription of her church trial that March and some of it incorporated into a full-length report of that process, it would throw an interesting light on her predicament. Other texts—too many to enumerate here—came and went. The trail of the missing or concealed leads us back to John Cotton and a sermon series he seems to have preached in the 1630s, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (1659). As I have suggested elsewhere, it seems likely that Cotton withheld this manuscript from circulation until finally deciding to entrust it to Thomas Allen, a fellow minister who was returning to England at the beginning of the 1650s. There, it was published in 1659, several years after Cotton had died.²⁹

When we turn to the documentary texts that appear in the book and study these closely, it is obvious that all three had been substantially abridged. Not only did the maker(s) of the *Short Story* pick and choose in keeping with the politics of the book, they redacted those they decided to include. Doing so was in keeping with the objectives that animated Weld’s “Preface”: ensure that these texts would strengthen the case against Hutchinson and, to a lesser extent, Wheelwright and a few members of the Boston congregation, and downplay Cotton’s role. Then too, the compilers wanted a readable book; as Winthrop remarked of his own “briefe Apologie,” it did not include “such passages as fell by occasion, and are too large to be here inserted” (46). The full-length version of the “Examination” included a laborious back-and-forth among the ministers, magistrates, and deputies about what Hutchinson had said to the ministers who met with her in December 1636. Almost in its entirety, this section was eliminated from the version printed in the *Short Story*.

²⁸Cotton, *Way Cleared*, repr. in Ziff, ed., *John Cotton on the Churches of New England*, 252, 283; another reference appears in a letter by Thomas Hooker, quoted in Hutchinson, *History of the Colony and Province*, 1:63.

²⁹Hall, *Ways of Writing*, 125–35. For sure, the sermons in this treatise contain assertions akin to his thinking in the 1630s, as Winship notes in *Making Heretics*.

So was much of what was said during the first day, especially the back-and-forth about the legitimacy of the private meeting Hutchinson was holding in her home. Similarly, much was cut from a full-length report of the church trial, most notably the willingness of Hutchinson to recant one or more of her opinions and the invective of an impatient Thomas Shepard (see below), who urged the congregation to excommunicate her. Finally, Samuel Groom's manuscript of the "proceedings" of November 1637 contains a passage eliminated from the printed version.³⁰

That a handful of documents made their way across the Atlantic and others sank into oblivion in Massachusetts had much to do with the workings of scribal publication. Long before the founding of Massachusetts, this technology appealed to writers wanting to circumscribe who had access to a text. Almost by definition, printed texts enjoyed an indiscriminate audience, whereas handwritten ones could remain "private," their circulation confined to a small group of friends or perhaps a confidant. Yet in practice, boundaries of this kind were frequently violated. Much to his dissatisfaction, a letter of John Cotton's he described as "private" had been published in London without his consent or remuneration, one of many such examples of scribal publication failing to protect a text.³¹

In 1637–38, the leadership in Massachusetts had reason to worry about texts in their keeping that would escape and become widely shared. I have already quoted Edward Winslow's sense of alarm that "the late differences" involving Wheelwright had come into the hands of people living on the Maine coast and Hooker's uncertainty about the merits of silence versus publicity. Unbeknownst to the colonists, one or more texts stemming from the controversy came into the hands of William Laud by September 1637. Meanwhile, an English correspondent of Winthrop's was warning him that "sundry lettres written from some of you unto other with us" contained "many weake and some dangerous passages, which if they should come to the eyes or eares of any one of many thousands of our adversaries, it would afford them matter enough to attempt your undoing." For this correspondent, the "dangerous passages" included assertions that people in England were not true members of the church, an assertion rightly described as tending to Separatism. That Roger Williams had been

³⁰Groom, *Glasse for the People of New England*, 13–14.

³¹Dunn, ed., *Winthrop's Journal*, 402; Hall, *Ways of Writing*, 48, for more on this process see chaps. 3–4.

expelled was, for this writer, an encouraging sign of anti-Separatism. Even so, danger lay in what was being conveyed to English readers and the English government. As Weld would acknowledge in his “Preface,” the cat was out of the bag well before 1644: “these things are so well knowne in New England, that they have been made use of in publike . . . and testified by so many letters to friends here, that the things are past question.”³²

Hence the second thoughts of c. 1638 that deprived Higginson of his money-making opportunity. Even so, the manuscript of the *Short Story* would include several statements inserted for the benefit of readers who distrusted the colonists or the men who were leading the attack on local Antinomians. Most of these occur in Winthrop’s “Apologie,” which he wrote in response to a “Remonstrance” that questioned the government’s decision to convict Wheelwright of sedition. Winthrop knew that some people in New England were complaining that the government should have waited for Wheelwright’s church to assess his faults and decide if he should be subjected to church discipline. In theory, church before state in matters of religious behavior was the rule. But Winthrop insisted that “in some cases of religious nature, as manifest heresie,” the “Civill power may proceed.” For good reason, he was also worried about public opinion in England, which would turn against the colonists should “many untrusts . . . be spread abroad.” Hence his decision to “make this publike Declaration of all the proceedings, with the reasons and grounds thereof.” As a sop to those who defended Wheelwright, he added that several of the minister’s “special friends” had kept a shorthand record of the proceedings in March 1637 (46).³³

All such evidence matters, but the strongest case for the *Short Story* as a carefully designed text is the consistency of the passages that summarize what is happening and reinforce a master narrative, two of them the doing of an anonymous “I.” The book’s seventeenth-century readers encountered that rhetoric in the opening sentence

³²Winthrop Papers, 3:302–3; 397–402; *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series*, 1, 1574–1660, ed. W. N. Sainsbury (London, 1860), 259; Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 174n4, 214.

³³The tussle between magistrates and churches over matters of discipline is described in David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), chap. 6, although without noticing this dispute. Corresponding with me about this essay, Abram Van Engen urged much greater attention to the tensions between clergy and magistrates that punctuate the controversy.

of a new section (following the summary of the General Court session of November) under the heading “Mistris Hutchinson” (31). The sentence reads, “All these (except Mr. Wheelwright) were but young branches, sprung out of an old root, the Court had more to do with the head of all this faction, (*Dux femina facti*), a woman had been the breeder and nourisher of all these distempers, one Mistris Hutchinson, a woman of a haughty and fierce carriage, of a nimble wit and active spirit, and a very voluble tongue, more bold then a man. . . .” What follows is unusually interesting. Noting her candidacy for membership in the Boston church, which admitted her several weeks after her husband William was voted in, the narrator asks us to “see how cunningly” she “dissembled” in answering questions about her spiritual history. Next, the narrator summarizes the counsel Hutchinson provided women undergoing the experience of giving birth, counsel in which she warned them that true assurance flowed from the witness of the Spirit rather than from duties or righteousness. Conceding that “All this was well, and suited with the publick Ministry,” an allusion, it seems, to Cotton’s own preaching, the narrator warns that any good she was accomplishing was quickly overtaken by “her own stuffe” (32).³⁴

Abruptly, we arrive at the heart of the problem, Hutchinson’s assertion that assurance rested “upon an immediate wnesse of the Spirit, without sight of any gift or grace” (32). In the eyes of the narrator, she was providing local women and the men who admired her “a very easie . . . way to heaven” (32), a jab at her popularity among the members of the church in Boston and also an allusion to the alternative pathway to salvation Cotton’s critics in the colony endorsed. Through the eyes of her opponent, we learn of her biblical hermeneutics and a favorite epithet: she taught the “whole pedigree of the Covenant of works” from the Old Testament onward and was characterizing “neere all the Elders and most of the faithfull Christians” in the colony as “under a Covenant of works,” to the end of the “utter subversion both of Churches and civill state.” Fortunately, this project failed, whereupon the narrator rejoices: “blessed bee the Lord, the snare is broken, and wee are delivered, and this woman who was the root of all these troubles, stands now before the seat of Justice” (32–33).

What comes next is the sharply abbreviated version of Hutchinson’s “Examination” during which she described hearing the voice of

³⁴Cotton quoted this very passage in *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, repr. in Ziff, *Cotton on the Churches of New England*, 239.

God and likened herself to Daniel in the lion's den. No one is identified as the speaker of the initial paragraph, although in the full transcript we know it was Winthrop. There, he spoke procedurally, but in the *Short Story* the paragraph is forcefully confrontational; for example, she is charged with "encouraging such as have sowed seditions amongst us" (33). Someone other than Winthrop also wrote the summary comments on her spiritual testimony that conclude this section of the book. In these, the narrator reiterates that "her opinions . . . have been the cause of al our disturbances" and that "such bottomlesse revelations" are "above reason and Scripture." That she was also repudiating the ministers (save for Cotton and Wheelwright), deeming them "Antichristians" because they were "not able Ministers of the New Testament, nor "sealed by the Spirit" (36; repeated, 40) was another falsehood. The invective flows for a full page, its climax the assertion that the colony had come close to experiencing its own version of the "Tragedy of *Munster*." (40).³⁵ Wheelwright re-enters, to be condemned anew for associating himself with such "immediate revelations" outside the contours of the law (42). Indeed, "immediate revelations" become a recurring motif (43), as does the theme of "wise and faithfull Ministers" who "discover this Master-piece of the old Serpant."³⁶

The monster birth story and Winthrop's "Apologie" follow until (59) the narrative resumes: Hutchinson has been banished but must remain until winter weather eases before leaving the colony. As she waits for the church trial that begins in March, she begins to tell visitors that she questions "the immortality of the soule" and other principles of Reformed orthodoxy. Again, "the root of all [bad ideas in the colony] was found to be in Mistris *Hutchinson*" (59), an assertion validated by a summary of the church trial that follows. Now, the end of the story is in sight. Once again, the narrator celebrates the

³⁵The "Tragedy of Munster" alludes to the brief reign of radical Protestants in the town of Munster, Germany in 1535. Justifying the penalties it imposed in 1637 on laymen for their part in the controversy, the General Court evoked the "suspition, that they, as others in Germany, in former times, may, upon some revelation, make some suddaine irruption upon those that differ from them in judgment." *Records of the Governour and Company of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, 5 vols. (Boston, 1853–54), 1:207–8, a reference I owe to Savage.

³⁶To give credit where credit is due, James Savage recognized that the "voice" of these passages was not Winthrop's. Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary*, 4:460–61. Although Anne Hutchinson was (in Richard Dunn's words), a woman Winthrop "de-tested," the language he used about her in the journal was, in Dunn's estimation as in Savage's and mine, "sober and controlled." Dunn, ed., *Winthrop's Journal*, xxxi.

process of “discover[ing] this great imposter, an instrument of Satan.” An “I” intrudes (64), the I of a narrator who outlines her career using the language of a playbook: “the first act of her course,” then the second and third until, in the final paragraph (66) of the book, she is described as an “American Jesabel” whose identity—ultimately, as an ally of Satan—was “discovered” in a manner that restored the “liberty of many godly hearts that have been captivated by her.”³⁷

Not included in the *Short Story* except in a snippet of summary, but relevant to this quest for the identity of the “I,” is the full -length transcript of what was said during her church trial of March 1638. To a modern reader, the back-and-forth about the meaning of biblical passages and the implications of, for example, Hutchinson’s insistence that the bodies of the dead do not immediately pass to heaven make for heavy reading. Instead, our eye may light on procedural aspects of the disciplinary process and the efforts of Hutchinson’s sons and allies on her behalf. In the context of my inquiry, however, the most striking aspect of this back-and-forth is the vehemence of Shepard. Because he was not a member of the Boston congregation, he could not vote. Yet he spoke eight times, twice to address matters of procedure or narrowly doctrinal but the rest much more substantial and very personal. In the second, he reported that, during in his initial visit with a sequestered Hutchinson in late 1637, he sought “further satisfaction” about “some speeches that she used in the Court.” Then, after characterizing himself as “lovingly” in how he questioned her, his tone of voice shifts and invective takes over: “I account her a very dayngerous Woman to sowe her corrupt opinions to the infection of many and therefore the more neede you have to looke to her.” The third is brief: “I would have this Congregation know that the vilest Errors that ever was brought into the Church was brought by way of Questions 42.7 [an inaccurate reference to Scripture].” In the aftermath of a long interchange about doctrine that, for the moment, put her in a more favorable position, he insisted that the best way of showing “love to her Soule” would be to force her to “answer to these dayngerous and fearfull Errors which she hath drunke in . . . For she is of a most dayngerous Spirit and likely with her fluent Tounge . . . to seduce and draw away many Espetially simple Women.”³⁸

³⁷Abram C. Van Engen suggests that the core motif of this narrative was “seduction.” *Sympathetic Puritans Calvinist Fellow Feeling in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 109–17.

³⁸Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 353, 354, 365.

The nastiest of these interventions happened after she had been admonished by the congregation. Wanting more by way of punishment, he expressed his “Astonishment . . . to heare that she should thus Impudently affirme soe horrible an Untruth. . . In the midst of such a sollomne Ordinance of Jesus Christ,” a response to her assertion that she held none of the errors before being imprisoned. When Hutchinson challenged some of his aspersions, he responded by citing her “groce and damnable Errors” she had yet to repent, adding that “I confes I am wholly unsatisfied in her Expressions to some of the Errors” and should be considered a “Hereticke.” In his eyes, moreover, Hutchinson was “one that never had any trew Grace in her hart.” Indeed, she was “a Notorious Imposter’ for say[ing] thear is no Grace in the Saints.” As the process moved toward a conclusion, he intervened again: “I would have this Church consider whether it will be for the Honor of God and the honor of this Church to bare with patience so groce [*sic*] an offender.”³⁹

Throughout the church trial, Shepard vilified Hutchinson in no uncertain terms. The sections of invective that link together the documents included in the *Short Story* are of the same ilk: painting her as an extremist who, far from being a spiritually enlightened Christian, as some in Boston had assumed, was frighteningly capable of seducing women and men to believe that most of the ministers were teaching false doctrine—in short, doing the devil’s work. Hence the imperative to banish her lest the “infection” of which she was the principal agent overtake the colony. Stylistically, these interventions or bridging passages are alike in evoking her disdain for the ministers in the colony. That an “I” is speaking to us in these passages is indicated not only by the pronoun but also by the coherence of these passages. To a careful reader, they become the doing of a single writer.⁴⁰

Together with these signs of “voice” and authorial intention, the book includes an earlier “I” that addresses the reader in the “Catalogue of such erroneous opinions” with which the book begins, an “I” that bursts into view (18) when the reader comes upon the second “Unsavoury speech,” the assertion that “evidence[ing] justification by

³⁹Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 373–74, 377, 378, 383, 386–87. What finally persuaded the church to impose the sentence of excommunication was (as Cotton remarked in a letter at the time) her “publicly revok[ing] the errors, yet affirming her judgment was never otherwise.” Hutchinson, *History of the Colony and Province*, 1:62 n.

⁴⁰Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, 90–91, 109–13. The fullest, possibly overstated description of the controversy as a speech event is Winship, *Making Heretics*.

sanctification” is “savour[ing] of Rome.” In response, the unidentified “I” cites “the doctrine of Saint John so evident this way in his first Epistle (whereof I have already made mention) I doubt not, but it was the faith of the Church of Rome that then was, so that the speech is unsavoury.” That the person who wrote this sentence has “already mentioned” 1 John is borne out by numerous citations to the epistle in the “Confutations” to eighty-two “errours.” The first of these occurs in response to error 6. Three more appear in the confutation of errors 35 and 37, and the confutation of error 44 cites the entirety of the two epistles assigned to John. More follow thick and fast, two of them referencing 1 John 3:14–18, with its strong words about “love of the brethren.”⁴¹

As Abram Van Engen has shown in his careful reading of the core texts of the controversy, “love of the brethren” was deeply significant to the ministers Hutchinson was stigmatizing as “legal” preachers and especially significant, it seems, to Thomas Shepard. In their eyes, “love of the brethren” differentiated the hypocrite from the sincere Christian. Moreover, those who expressed this love could count on it for assurance of salvation. As was customary for preachers aligned with the practical divinity, these ministers were validating “sanctification” or righteousness as a source of assurance and insisting in the same breath on “repentance” in response to the “law.” Hence, perhaps, their vulnerability to Hutchinson’s harsh words. But as Van Engen rightly observes, “love of the brethren” was more spiritual or heart-centered than outward righteousness. Its prominence in the back-and-forth of 1636–37 contradicts not only Hutchinson but the many twentieth-century historians who side with her and Perry Miller.⁴²

Once the “I” becomes visible, an “I” who, by his own admission, has prepared other parts of the “Result,” this document ceases to be the product of a committee or a summary of what was debated at the synod. In his Preface, Weld referred to handwritten documents that each party exchanged with the other. None of these survive, perhaps because the sheer bulk of these texts prompted the makers of the *Short Story* to set them aside. To quote Weld, none were included “because of the swelling of the booke.” What we have, therefore, is a pithy description of “Errours,” “Confutations,” and Unsavoury Speeches,” each of these also criticized. Could the entirety of this text

⁴¹For these, see the confutations of errors 63, 64, 67, 69, 72, 75, and 77.

⁴²Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, 70–85.

be the doing of a single minister? The substance and style suggest as much, as does the "I."⁴³

That Shepard's voice and pen shaped much of the *Short Story* seems likely. Let us therefore credit him with the first of the documents in it, the "result," and it seems plausible that the sections that establish Anne Hutchinson as the person most responsible for the uproar were also his doing. This said, it also seems likely that the making of the *Short Story* included others—the clerks who recorded the back-and-forth of Hutchinson's "Examination" and the proceedings of the General Court in November 1637, the person or persons who abridged those proceedings, and those—Weld probably among them—who decided what the book should contain by way of documents. It seems likely that Thomas Hooker, who had known Shepard since their careers converged in East Anglia, was being consulted, as was Weld, for he reported in his preface that texts arising out of the synod of 1637 were too bulky to be included in the final version of the manuscript.⁴⁴

When our gaze encompasses the entire controversy, Shepard becomes unusually prominent. Probably at the urging of his colleagues, he wrote Cotton a forceful letter in the summer or fall of 1636 in which he questioned his older colleague's preaching. The issues Shepard specified in this letter recur in the sixteen questions and answers. For this reason other students of the controversy have attributed the text to him.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Winthrop was asking Shepard to review two essays on theological topics, essays Shepard criticized so severely that Winthrop seems to have suppressed them. Shepard was also versed in the modes of invective so typical of his times: insinuations of "popery" directed at the anti-puritan party within the Church of England; the epithet of "libertine" directed at anyone who tinkered with the relationship between law and gospel; the invective of "anarchy" or "world turned upside down" directed at those who threatened the

⁴³Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 213.

⁴⁴Hooker's invective about Hutchinson fills a letter printed in Hutchinson, *History of the Colony and Province*, 1:61.

⁴⁵Bush ed., *Correspondence of John Cotton*, 225–30, followed by Cotton's response, 230–34. Undated, the letter has been assigned to several different months or periods of 1636. Shepard's role in formulating the sixteen questions is suggested by Mary Jane Lewis in "A Sweet Sacrifice: Civil War in New England" (PhD diss., State University of New York, Binghamton, 1986), 66. Overlooked by historians of the controversy, Lewis is a detailed analysis of the entries in Winthrop's journal for this period, most of them written after the crisis had subsided.

authority of magistrates and ministers. All of these registers were in play in mid-1630s Massachusetts, voiced either by the party associated with Hutchinson and Wheelwright or by their opponents, one of them the layman Edward Johnson, whose description of the controversy in his *Wonder-Working of Sions Providence* (1654) is a pastiche of these rhetorical strategies. But no layman would have commanded the fluency with theological doctrine that animates this section of the *Short Story*.

Once it seems possible that Shepard wrote the “Result” and may have penned the passages of invective—in short, all of the places in which an “I” appears—he seems omnipresent: confronting Cotton, Hutchinson, and probably Wheelwright in late 1636; shaping the sixteen questions forwarded to Cotton; trusted by Winthrop with texts Shepard advised him to suppress; leader of a church in Newtown (Cambridge) free of infection that challenged the Boston congregation—to the best of our knowledge, the only church to do so; chosen to preach the election sermon at the crucial day of May 1637 when Winthrop was returned to the post of governor, an election that took place not in Boston but in Newtown and entrusted with the prayer that opened the synod of 1637.⁴⁶

Simultaneously, he was initiating a sermon series on the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25: 1–13). According to the editors of these sermons (London, 1660), June 1636 marked the start and 1640 the end point for the series. In the context of my inquiry, what is striking about the early sermons is how explicitly they reference the “result” of the synod and the sixteen questions of circa December 1636. Noting the possibility of an “immediate witness of the Spirit” that provides assurance of salvation, a possibility Cotton had emphasized in his response to the sixteen questions, Shepard argues that the Spirit “doth most usually and firstly witness by means,” to which he added a jab at the “carnal men” who, “pretending gospel, will profess the law is preached” when “evangelical duty” is evoked. Earlier in the same sermon, he evoked “all those doubting, drooping, yet sincere hearts that much question the love of Christ to them,” language that echoes a passage in the same text. In the same vein, he validated the legitimacy of doubt, which several of the “Antinomian” errors condemned, and endorsed “diligence” on the part of those who are seeking assurance,

⁴⁶Dunn, ed., *Winthrop’s Journal*, 232. It is tempting to see him as the “Elder” Hutchinson describes as attempting “to entrappe her” when he came for a visit during her stay in Roxbury in late 1637. Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 303.

the diligence evoked in 2 Pet. 9–10. Other quotations suggest that he had a manuscript draft of the “result” and probably a draft of what became the *Sixteene Questions* in front of him as he was writing out these sermons.⁴⁷

That Shepard’s voice and pen shaped much of the *Short Story* seems likely. This said, I reiterate that the making of the *Short Story* included others—for example, the clerks who recorded the back-and-forth of Hutchinson’s “Examination” and the proceedings of the General Court in November 1637 that someone subsequently abridged—possibly Shepard, but perhaps one of his colleagues who agreed with the narrative Shepard would impose on the book. Certainly, Shepard labored with the support of others, most especially, perhaps, his mentor and future father-in-law Thomas Hooker. Weld, too, was involved, the Weld who reported in his preface that texts arising out of the syod of 1637 were too bulky to be included in the final version of the manuscript.

Shepard yes, Shepard maybe, Shepard no? Even though all roads lead to his doorstep, it seems prudent to preserve a degree of uncertainty about the “I” of the *Short Story*. What becomes apparent, however, is that Winthrop played a very modest role in the making of the book. A single document, the “Apologie,” was his doing, and his report on the excavation of the “monster birth” was one of the sources of the version included in the *Short Story*. Otherwise, he is present only as a member of the General Court.

Let me summarize what can be learned from internal and external evidence. Documents thrown up by the controversy were available in multiple copies by 1638, and most of the ministers and magistrates wanted a selection of them published in London. Selection is the right word, for they decided not to include the manuscript known as the *Sixteene Questions*, Wheelwright’s fast-day sermon, and Cotton’s

⁴⁷*The Parable of the Ten Virgins Opened and Applied* (1660), repr. in *The Works of Thomas Shepard*, ed. John A. Albro 3 vols. (Boston, 1853), 2:79, 77–78, 204, 215. The chapters or sections that follow contain other explicit borrowings from the “Result,” the “Reply,” and Cotton’s “Rejoynder.” See, e.g., Albro, *Works*, 2:143 for Shepard’s response to Cotton’s objections to a “Word, Work, Spirit” sequence (Hall, *Antinomian Controversy*, 138). See also David D. Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), chap. 9. Two collections of sermons Shepard preached in England but not put into print until the 1640s, *The Sincere Convert* and *The Sound Believer*, do not address “Antinomian” themes. These do figure in a book he wrote in the mid-1640s, *Theses Sabbaticae* (London, 1646), as indicated by one of the subtitles, “The Moral Law, as a rule of Life to a Believer Occasionally and Distinctly Handled.”

response to five (or three) other questions. Someone became responsible for abridging two of the manuscripts, and quite possibly the same person prepared a résumé of the church trial. Someone transposed two weeks' worth of debate in the synod of 1637 into the eighty-two errors and confutations. And someone highly skilled as a writer composed the passages that sustain the overall narrative—in effect, the passages that animate what would otherwise have been a collection of documents.

James Savage was right and many others wrong: Winthrop could not have done most of these tasks. Weld could have accomplished them and seems the most likely alternative to Shepard, although naming him as editor/compiler/writer means we must discount (a la Savage!) the surprise he says he felt when he came upon *Antinomians and Familists*. (But perhaps the real surprise was seeing documents meant to be private exposed in print.) Above all, the erratic history of the *Short Story* offers us a way into a hard-fought, sometimes bitter, not always truthful politics of religion that, for the colonists, was underway as the *Arbella* was carrying Winthrop to New England in 1630 and flared up anew in the 1640s.

3

After it passed into print in 1644, the tale of a woman provoking a “Munster”-like upheaval caught the eye of English and Scottish Presbyterians at a moment when they seemed on the verge of taking over the Church of England. This goal was strongly supported by the Westminster Assembly, the Scottish government, the Church of Scotland, and some in the Long Parliament, which would have the final say in how the state church was refashioned. The bad news was that unorthodox ideas and practices were flourishing as never before, flourishing because the customary mechanisms of state censorship had been abolished or become ineffective.⁴⁸

Much of the ire of the Presbyterians and moderates was directed at the small group of ministers (several of them members of the Westminster Assembly) who favored a form of church government that its critics nicknamed “Independency.” This was the same version the colonists adopted, a system they referred to as the “Congregational Way.” According to this model of the visible church, each

⁴⁸A story told in Hall, *The Puritans*, chap. 8.

congregation was empowered to choose and ordain its own minister, lay men had a strong voice in ongoing church business, and church membership was limited to “visible saints.” Such a system was completely at odds with what Presbyterians wanted. To their dismay, some members of the Long Parliament were also beginning to question national uniformity—that is, everyone belonging to the same national church—and favor something akin to toleration, that is, allowing a state church but also permitting other groups to practice their version of true religion.

In response, the Presbyterian coalition launched an all-out assault on critics of their system, an assault fed by what these men gleaned from the *Short Story*—namely, the errancy of John Cotton, the person they regarded as a principal architect of the Congregational Way, and the weakness of this system when it came to suppressing the unorthodox. The English minister Thomas Edwards smelled a rat as early as 1644. In *Antapologia: or, A full answer to the apologeticall narration. . . . Wherein is handled many of the controversies of these times*, a slashing attack on a manifesto published early that year by a tiny group of English Congregationalists, he described Cotton as “the most eminent minister in New-England” and as someone who

hath had his errours; and I referre you for prooffe to his Discourse about clearing the Doctrine of reprobation (which is in some of your hands)⁴⁹ with his being deceived (for a time) in the business of M Wheelwright and Mistris Hutchinson, and some of those opinions about Sanctification evidencing Justification, and to some other manuscripts and printed things about the Church-way, where there are many things of wit, and fancie more then of dee[p] judgment.⁵⁰

More assaults on Cotton followed. Reading between the lines, as it were, the Scottish minister Robert Ballie told readers of *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time* (1645), an all-out attack on the

⁴⁹An allusion to a manuscript in which Cotton tried to mollify “Arminians” in his Boston, Lincolnshire parish, a manuscript that became notorious because the distinguished theologian William Twisse denounced it in another manuscript; both were eventually published in 1646. Hall, *The Puritans*, 143.

⁵⁰Thomas Edwards, *Antapologia: or, A full answer to the apologeticall narration Wherein is handled many of the controversies of these times* (1644), 40; Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena; or, A Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time* (London, 1646); Robert Baillie, *A Dissuasive against the Errours of this Time* (London, 1645) drew substantially on the *Short Story* in building a case against Cotton as her ally, but also acknowledging (e.g., 150) that he was relying on Roger Williams as an informant.

Congregational Way, that Cotton was Hutchinson's closest friend and counselor, an assertion based on gossip that reached him (possibly via Roger Williams) and on a close reading of the *Short Story*. Edwards returned to the attack in *Gangraena; or, A Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time* (1646; reprinted twice the same year with substantial additions). Before and after this book, Ephraim Pagitt in *Heresiography* (1645), and the Scottish minister (and delegate to the Westminster Assembly) Samuel Rutherford in various books drew on the *Short Story* in documenting the relationship between Independency and doctrinal chaos.⁵¹

For others in mid-1640s England, the controversy had a more positive significance. The radical bookseller Giles Calvert, who at mid-decade was pumping out anti-presbyterian polemic, published *A Conference Mr. John Cotton Held at Boston* (1646) to which an English Puritan-turned-Baptist, Francis Cornwell, added a treatise of his own.⁵² In the main, however, the longer history of the *Short Story* reveals that it was of more use to moderates than to radicals. During the "Neonomian" dispute that broke out in the 1690s among English Nonconformists in the wake of a new edition of a book of 1643 by the "Antinomian" Tobias Crisp, the book was reprinted by the ministers who opposed Crisp's version of theology. When "New Lights" emerged in 1740s New England during the first wave of "awakenings," Charles Chauncy, the most outspoken opponent of this group, cited a manuscript resume of the synod of 1637 to buttress his case against "enthusiasm."⁵³

Thereafter, this back-and-forth died down. But the *Short Story* has had one enduring residue, the tantalizing figure of Anne Hutchinson. Was she a heroine unjustly punished by a puritan theocracy

⁵¹Hall, *The Puritans*, chap. 8–9; Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 83n91; Edwards, *Gangraena*, 1:3.

⁵²An edition using the same sheets but without a mis-bound signature was printed in 1646 under the title *Gospel Conversion*.

⁵³Charles Chauncy drew on a manuscript copy of the synod of 1637's deliberations (possibly the same manuscript known to Thomas Prince) in the course of preparing *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England* (Boston, 1743), quoting a passage (vi) on "the Reasons given for the meeting of the Synod" that does not appear in the *Short Story*. Critics of George Whitefield cited the *Short Story* in *Testimony of the Pastors of the Churches in the Province of Massachusetts Bay at the Annual Convocation in Boston, 25 May, 1743* (Boston, 1743), a reference I owe to Savage, *Winthrop's History*, 1:284n1.

because she was ahead of her times in asserting a woman's freedom to teach others? Did spiritual energies seep out of puritanism in New England once she and her followers were banished and the "legal" message Hutchinson had opposed become normative? Nineteenth-century commentators were of two minds, but the makers of "women's history" in the 1970s extolled her as a feminist before her time. Simultaneously, others discerned a turn toward legalism in the longer unfolding of New England theology. Both lines of argument involved acts of exclusion as forceful as those committed by the makers of the *Short Story*: serious attention to theology vanished, as did an informed understanding of Hutchinson's parting words during her "Examination" or her citing of Separatist influences.⁵⁴ On the other hand, in his recent study of the controversy, Abram Van Engen insists that the "legal" preachers did not deserve the epithet of "legal." True, they validated sanctification as evidence of justification and thus seem open to the charge of favoring external evidence. But as Van Engen demonstrates, the most crucial aspect of sanctification was "love of the brethren" (1 John 3:14), a verse Shepard and his colleagues cited during the controversy, a love rooted in the heart, not in "duties." In this understanding of the controversy, Hutchinson's authority as a witness to bad theology disappears.⁵⁵

Ultimately, the importance of the *Short Story* has little to do with who compiled or wrote its parts. Restored to the mid-1640s, when it was published, the book was fuel to a fire that was already burning,

⁵⁴Amy Schrager Lang, *Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1987), is sadly incomplete in its range of references to Hutchinson. Lang's misguided reading of Hutchinson is noted in Winship, *Making Heretics*, 301n22. Winship identifies other deficiencies in the scholarship on Hutchinson, John Cotton, and the controversy itself, including ones I have made; see, e.g., his comments on Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 290n49. The most acute reading of Hutchinson's theology is Theodore Dwight Bozeman's; see *The Precisionist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 296–305, which should be read alongside Winship's analysis.

⁵⁵Perry Miller is responsible for much of the twentieth-century opprobrium heaped on the "legal" preachers. See "'Preparation for Salvation' in Seventeenth-Century New England," (1943), reprinted in *Nature's Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967). Sadly, some scholars still take for granted this thesis; see, e.g., Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). More recently, Baird Tipson has thoroughly refuted Miller's reading of Thomas Hooker as a "preparationist." Tipson, *Hartford Puritanism: The Terrifying God of Thomas Hooker and Samuel Stone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). See also Van Engen, *Sympathetic Puritans*, 69, 72–75, and chap. 2.

the hostility between those in England and Scotland who wanted to preserve a comprehensive state church and those, far fewer in number, who preferred a version of voluntary membership granted to people who offered some sort of personal testimony. Historians of early New England mine the books written by the colonists in response to the Presbyterian critique—books by the likes of Richard Mather, John Davenport, Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, John Cotton, and others—for information about this system and why it was so appealing to the immigrants in the early 1630s. The pre-history of the *Short Story*—the history of manuscripts assembled in a “book” that was never officially sent to England—adds to our understanding of the anxieties that surrounded the ventures of colony and church-founding and, in the context of those anxieties, the imperative of fashioning a narrative that deflected criticism from abroad and within. Shorn of its rhetorical excess, the *Short Story* and its companion documents should also remind historians that space existed within the theological world of the ministers for debate about crucial aspects of pastoral theology, most especially assurance of salvation.

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