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**‘This briny ocean will o’erflow your  
shore’: Anne Bradstreet’s ‘Second  
World’ Atlanticism and national  
narratives of literary history**

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Katharine Gillespie

## **‘This briny ocean will o’erflow your shore’: Anne Bradstreet’s ‘Second World’ Atlanticism and national narratives of literary history**

The literary career of Anne Bradstreet helped to construct a transatlantic network of literary production and exchange. Born in England, she emigrated to New England in 1630. She composed poetry both in Old England and New and became the first New England poet to be published in England when, in 1647, her brother-in-law, John Woodbridge took a 207-page manuscript of her poetry back with him to London on a three-year business trip.<sup>1</sup> He there commissioned London printer, Stephen Bowtell, to publish and market the collection in 1650. By 1657, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America* merited a listing in William London’s *Catalogue [of] the most vendible books in London*.<sup>2</sup> Back in Massachusetts, Boston printer John Foster published a revised and expanded second edition of the book in 1678 just after Bradstreet’s death.

Bradstreet’s position between Old England and New challenges literary canons organized along national lines.<sup>3</sup> Her work can be read in the context of ‘second world’ theory, developed to describe the ‘settler colonies’ established in the nineteenth-century in what are now Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.<sup>4</sup> It is my argument that in the very act of spreading British empire, colonials such as Bradstreet and the men who appended her manuscript with prefatory verses fractured unified definitions of empire and received versions of national identity for the purpose of fashioning a gap between centralized British imperial programmes and the infant colony’s divergent desire to function somewhat autonomously as a ‘semi-periphery’ of the British empire. Read dynamically as agents subverting old national identities and establishing new ones, rather than statically as embodiments of fixed and monolithic versions of either British or American identities, Bradstreet’s works provide a unique opportunity to consider not just the uni-directional expansion of British imperial rule but also the subversive processes by which a proliferation of difference within British identity occurred almost