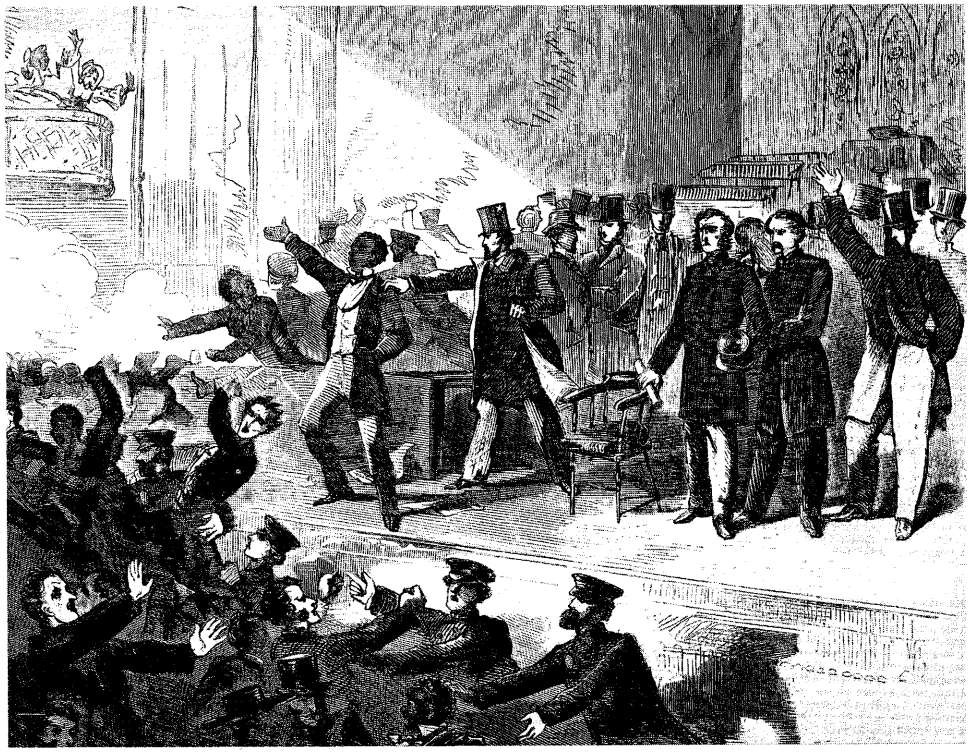

Abolitionists are gathered to condemn slavery and denounce the Constitution as a "covenant with death and an agreement with hell" when a police-led mob bursts into the hall. The intruders stop black men from "promiscuously" preaching to white ladies. ("Expulsion of Negroes and Abolitionists from Tremont Temple, Boston, Massachusetts," *Harper's Weekly,* December 15, 1860)

Hellfire Nation

THE POLITICS OF SIN IN AMERICAN HISTORY

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Yale University Press New Haven & London

Amerindians

The Native Americans posed a far simpler challenge. No tricky philosophico-juristic riddles about Puritan dogma pop up for this battle. The Indians offered English colonists an irreducible, satanic other—perfect for defining the Christian community. What was most terrifying about the natives was not anything they actually did but the possibility that, deep in the American wilderness, the differences between the tribes would begin to dissolve. If they were not vigilant, the saints might morph into pagans.

Hellish Sorcerers of the New World

Englishmen already had a mental category for the natives they encountered in the new world (as well as those in Africa): heathens. The natives were not simply a different color or an alien culture. They were non-Christian—savage, uncivilized, and unsaved.[54]

In the Puritan prehistory of the new world, Satan ruled. The "barbarous Indians and infidels" served him. "Their whole religion," explained Cotton Mather, "was the most explicit sort of devil worship." Their "chief sagamores are well known . . . to have been horrid sorcerers and hellish conjurers and such as conversed with demons." The English migration set off an epic contest between Satan and Jesus as heathens and Christians fought for control of America.[55]

This picture of Satan and his native legions organized Puritan narratives of every sort. Captain John Underhill served up the conventional view in describing the outbreak of the Pequot war in 1636: "The old serpent . . . stirred [the Pequots] against the Church of Christ in . . . a furious manner. . . . Like the divell, their commander, they runne up and down as roaring lyons, seeking whom they might devour." Or, to switch literary genres, take a typical snippet from Mary Rowlandson's description of her Indian captivity (a best seller published in 1682). "Oh, the roaring and singing and dancing and yelling of those black creatures in the night made the place a lively resemblance of hell." The Puritan thesaurus for "Indian" reads like a demonic menagerie: devils, witches, imps, dragons, lyons, vipers, serpents, wolves, dogs, kennels of cruelty.[56]

To the colonists, the Indians seemed a negative reflection of Puritan

norms. They were wild, slothful, ungoverned, and free. Family discipline, so prized by men like John Winthrop, seemed nonexistent. They were "affectionate" and "indulgent out of measure" in their child rearing. "This extreme affection," wrote Roger Williams, makes their children "saucie, bold, and undutiful." Their kinship systems seemed anarchic and polygamous to the Puritans.[57]

Worse, the Indians were lustful. New England Indians had no taboo against sex between unmarried people. The stricture against fornication applied only to married women. They dissolved marriages simply by the consent of both partners. This, of course, was all a long way from the Puritan ideal, and the settlers could not find enough derogatories like "whoredoms" and "uncleanness" to describe native behavior. Even worse, Indians seemed to violate fundamental taboos against cannibalism, blood lust, and savagery.[58]

The most dangerous aspect of all this alleged Indian depravity was the lingering dread that the saints themselves were sinking into precisely the same immoral state. "Defects in family government" were a jeremiad staple. And sex? Fornication and adultery filled the New England court dockets; it was by far the most common transgression (though most modern analysts find the rates relatively low). When it came to savagery and blood lust, fingers were soon pointing at the Christian soldiers who shocked the natives with their European ways of killing (details in a moment). And although the natives might "range up and downe" like "wild beasts" through the forests, Englishmen were also being lured into the same wilderness, seeking "elbow room" beyond the reach of church or state.[59]

Some English settlers actually became Indians. While captivity narratives like Rowlandson's celebrated redemption from Indian bondage, some captives refused rescue. Minister John Williams was redeemed after almost three years in captivity; but his daughter, Eunice, would not return despite envoys, entreaties, and promises of land. Minister Increase Mather (Cotton's father) incredulously described a "wretched English man that apostatized to the heathen, and fought with them against his own country men." A partial inventory of Indian captivities lists sixty New Englanders who became tribe members. Here was a victory for Satan. Christians were slipping into devil-worship.[60]

That slip fell neatly into the Calvinist picture: Everyone stood on the razor edge of perdition. New England was full of unconverted settlers. Their spiritual estate was no better than the savages'. The threat of impiety surrounded the Puritans and endangered everyone. The natives' presence constantly reminded the saints of the lustful, uncontrolled, pagan depravity that could overwhelm any Englishman. Decades after the most powerful Native Americans had been subjugated, Cotton Mather kept right on warning the colonists: "Our Indian

wars are not over yet. We have too far degenerated into Indian vices. . . . We have shamefully Indianized in . . . abominable things."[61]

God's Word

What should Puritans do about the menacing Indians? The original plan called for saving them: "The first planters of this colony did (as in the patent expressed) come into this land with a design to convert the heathen unto Christ." But Puritan orthodoxy complicated the job. The promiscuous French papists might drag anyone who could sign the cross into their church; but membership in the New England congregations was limited to visible saints. Even Englishmen found it difficult to prove their election and enter the communion of saints. The barriers to Native American conversion were formidable.[62]

Nor would the Puritans compromise their faith to accommodate what we would now call an alien culture. On the contrary, they added steps to the conversion ritual. Native Americans had to make several public professions of faith (before distinctly skeptical ministers). Christian Indians had to enter "praying villages" where they wore European clothes and tilled fields in European fashion.

Despite heroic efforts by individual missionaries, the English neighbors harassed the natives. Even Dedham—that utopian, God-fearing community—mistreated an adjacent praying village. "When good land was at stake and the other party was savage," comments Kenneth Lockridge, "the spirit of the covenant could be set aside." As time went by, it got worse. In Maine, "rude, wild ungovernable English did . . . rashly provoke the Indians," reported Cotton Mather. In Boston, mobs would try to lynch the praying Indians when war broke out in 1675.[63]

With so many barriers to success, it is not surprising that the missionary impulse was haphazard and usually half-hearted. The same could not be said about the Indian wars.

God's Sword

Satanic imagery infused the Puritan war narratives. "It was time for the devil to take alarum," wrote Cotton Mather, and "oppose the possession [of New England] which the Lord Jesus Christ was going to have." The colonists inflated their battles into epic contests, Christians fighting for God. God Himself sanctioned the European attacks—and pitched in with horrific epidemics—to "sweep [the savages] hence" and give His people space. Even the Indian allies who fought alongside the Puritans did not fog up the plot line—good versus evil. The friendly Indians, explained Cotton Mather, were simply a "division in the kingdom of Satan against itself."[64]

Within this moral framework, natives could never be trusted. In 1623 some Englishmen had stolen corn from the Massachusetts Indians. Rumor had it that the Indians were planning retaliation. Miles Standish led an armed party from Plymouth colony. They killed eight Indians, decapitated their sachem (Wituwamet), and impaled his head atop the Plymouth blockhouse as a "warning and terror."[65]

In 1636 a more important conflict broke out between the Puritans and the Pequot tribe of Connecticut. It began with the murder of two English captains: John Stone (with his crew of seven) in 1634, and John Oldam in 1636. (Stone had been a notorious troublemaker who had attempted both murder and kidnapping.) It was never clear just what happened in either case. But firm action—again, "warning and terror"—always seemed important against devil worshippers. The Reverend John Higginson wrote to Winthrop from Connecticut, "If some serious and very speedie course not be taken to tame the pride and take down the insolency of these now insulting Pequots . . . we are likely to have all the Indians in the country about our ears."[66]

The traditional story casts the Pequots as particularly ferocious. They had pushed into the lower Connecticut River valley, frightened the other tribes (who allied with the colonists), and left "no Englishman's life safe anywhere upon the river or the sound." John Endicott led an expedition to Block Island to kill the Indians ostensibly responsible for Oldham's death; the natives eluded him. Then the expedition turned to Connecticut to punish the Pequots and avenge Stone.[67]

One of the eyewitness accounts, however, promptly subverts the tale of Pequot ferocity. When the Indians spied the English vessel, they "came running in multitudes along the water side, crying, 'what cheere Englishmen, what cheere, what doe you come for?' They not thinking we intended warre went on cheerfully." The Pequots expected to trade. But the ominous silence from the Puritan vessels made the Indians uneasy. They began to cry "'What Englishman . . . are you angry, will you kill us, and doe you come to fight?'"[68]

In the most detailed recent analysis of the conflict, Alfred Cave suggests that "there is no evidence the Pequots were guilty of any hostility toward the English." They were not imperialistic newcomers to Connecticut, they were not a particularly fierce tribe, and they neither desired nor anticipated war with the Puritans.[69]

In the decisive battle, in May 1637, the English attacked Fort Mystic, a Pequot village enclosed by a palisade. The English struck at both ends of the fort. When the going got difficult, they set the enclosure ablaze, withdrew, and surrounded the burning fort. Cotton Mather gives the standard account of what followed.

> The fire . . . carried all before it; and such horrible confusion overwhelmed the savages, that many were broiled unto death in the revenging flames; many of them, climbing to the tops of the pallizadoz, were a fair mark for the mortiferous bullets there; many of them . . . were slain by the English that stood ready to bid 'em welcome. . . . In a little more than one hour, five or six hundred of these barbarians were dismissed from a world that was burdened with them.[70]

In Captain John Underhill's eyewitness account of the battle, a rare note creeps into the narrative: admiration for Indian bravery. "Many couragious fellowes . . . fought most desperately through the palisadoes. As they were scorched and burnt with the flame [they] were deprived of their arms, [for] the fire burnt their very bowstrings, and so [they] perished valiantly: mercy they did deserve for their valour, could we have had opportunitie to have bestowed it; many were burnt . . . men, women, and children."

But Underhill's account does not turn sentimental. Those who came running out of the flames were "entertained with the point of the sword; downe fell men, women, and children . . . great and dolefull was the bloudy fight to the view of young souldiers that never had been in warre, to see so many soules lie gasping on the ground, so thicke in some places that you could hardly passe along."[71]

Surviving men and women were rounded up, killed, drowned, or sold into slavery. Many Puritan accounts linger on the slaughter, then explain it as a sacrificial offering to God. William Bradford repeats Underhill's description of the battle, then adds: "It was a fearfull sight to see them thus frying in the fire, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stinck; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice . . . to God."[72] Cotton Mather dwells on "the bodies of so many [natives] barbikew'd, where the English had been doing a good morning's work." After the battle, additional Pequot tribesmen came upon the ashes of their kinsmen and "they howl'd, they roar'd, they stamp'd and were the pictures of so many devils in desperation." To all this, remarks Mather, "Heaven smiled."[73]

But what happened to the Puritan theme of civilization versus savagery? Blood lust was supposed to be a heathen trait. When Underhill notes the hesitation of the younger soldiers, he adds defensively, "It may be demanded, why should you be so furious (as some have said)? Should not Christians have more mercy and compassion?" After some half-hearted discussion of scriptural warrant, he sidesteps the matter with "but we will not dispute it now."[74]

The Puritans' Indian allies, the Narragansett, protested the slaughter: "It is naught, it is naught, because it is too furious and slaies too many men." The natives had a very different conception of battle. After watching their Indian allies enter the battle to cover the English retreat back to their ships, Captain Underhill jeers. "They might fight seven yeares and not kill seven men: they came not neere one another but shot remote, and not point blanke. . . . This fight is more for pastime than to conquer and subdue enemies." The accounts invert the Puritan portrait of Christian and heathen. The savagery comes from the wrong side, and so do the calls for moderation. As Underhill acknowledges, criticism rose up immediately.[75]

John Robinson, the Pilgrims' minister back in Holland, condemned the violence as soon as it began with Miles Standish's raid: The "necessitie . . . of killing so many . . . of those poor Indians . . . I see not." It is "a thing more glorious in men's eyes than pleasing in God's . . . for Christians, to be a terrour to poor barbarous people." Robinson suggests that if the power relations had been reversed, the Indians would not have killed as many Englishmen. "How happy . . . if you had converted some, before you killed any; where bloud is once begune to shed, it is seldome stanched of a long time after."[76]

Roger Williams joined the critics. Williams had been distinctly solicitous of the Native Americans in Rhode Island. He had learned the Narragansett language and won over the tribe to the Puritan side in the war with the Pequots. Now, he wrote Winthrop, I "fear that some innocent blood cryes at Connecticut." He challenged the harsh treatment of Pequot captives and pointed Winthrop back to the Bible: "The children of the murderers he slew not . . . every man shall be put to death for his own sin."[77]

Four decades later, as another bloody Indian war convulsed New England, the Quakers jumped in with the critics. "Our officers," wrote Edward Wharton in 1675, "are like men in a maze, not knowing what to do. But the priests spur them on, telling them the Indians are ordained for destruction, bidding them go forth to warr." The Puritan officers "complain and say with tears, they see not God go along with them." Wharton reverses the Puritan conception of piety versus savagery. In his account, the natives "tell the English Warriors that God is against them and for the Indians; and that the English shall (for their unrighteousness) fall into Indian hands." To be sure, this is Quaker propaganda. But Wharton, like Thomas Maule and other Quakers, was joining a small but growing group of contemporary critics attacking the colonists for their brutality and challenging the basic Puritan account of civilization and savagery.[78]

Historians still debate the issue of Puritan savagery. Many observers see racial genocide behind the mask of religious piety. From this perspective, the colonists turned aside Indian friendship and attacked Native Americans whenever it suited their purpose. Some analyses read the Pequot war as a scramble for economic advantage, opening up the Connecticut River valley to the Puritans. Others see the assertion of white hegemony over New England. What-

ever the underlying explanation, the revisionists all agree: The Puritan attacks were horrific—even their own "heroic" war narratives convict the settlers.[79]

Others defend the Puritans. The saints meted out tough justice on both settlers and natives, often punishing Englishmen for crimes against the natives.[80] But the Puritan apologists have steadily given ground. Perhaps the foremost proponent of the Puritan perspective, Alden Vaughan, once assigned blame "more heavily upon the Pequots than the Puritans." Now, he acknowledges, "I am less sure than I was . . . that the Pequots deserve their burden of the blame." The defense of the Puritans has shrunk to this: "a brief but notable effort to avoid the violent confrontations that characterized most other 17th century colonies." Eventually, the Puritans failed, and in large measure because they would not respect the Indians, could not break out of the "heathen" mindset. By the 1670s, concedes Vaughan, the Puritans were indistinguishable from any other English colony: fighting the Indians along an advancing frontier, confining the defeated natives to reservations, slavery, and debasement.[81]

But these accounts all read the conflict only through European eyes. The Native Americans were hardly passive. Alfred Cave suggests that the entire Pequot war might be rewritten from the perspective of Native American politics and the balance of power among the tribes. From this angle, the war grew out of ambitions between rival clans, some of which were more deft at manipulating the Europeans. It is perfectly possible, suggests Cave, that it was the Mohegan, Narragansett, and River Indian sachems who engineered the downfall of the Pequots.[82]

If so, the tribes miscalculated. The Puritans were too powerful and used the war to subordinate native allies as well as enemies. The result was Puritan hegemony over lower New England. A lucrative (to the Puritans) system of tribute forced the Native Americans to finance the expansion of European settlement. Viewed this way, the Puritans took a petty Indian squabble, ended it with a terrible slaughter, turned it to their own geopolitical advantage, and then passed it through a propaganda machine that projected a meta-historical romance in which the people of God triumphed over satanic savages. The Puritan leap would evolve into a familiar national trait. Every American war would take on the same cast: an idealistic moral crusade against a satanic foe.[83]

God's Punishment

After the Pequot war, native grievances gradually accumulated. These finally burst into sustained violence in the summer of 1675, when Metacom (known to the settlers as King Philip) organized a broad alliance of New England tribes and led them against the English. By this time the Indians had adopted European technology and worked out effective guerilla tactics. Metacom and his allies threw New England into a panic. Of the ninety Puritan towns, fifty-two were attacked, thirteen destroyed, six partially burned. By the following spring Indian forces were fighting within seventeen miles of Boston. The seaboard cities were packed with refugees. English military superiority seemed to vanish in this bloody series of Indian ambushes.[84]

By winter, the contest had turned into a war of attrition and the tide turned. The Indians in southern New England capitulated by the end of 1676 (Metacom himself was killed in August). Fighting continued on the northern frontier till 1678. The losses were catastrophic. The casualty rate for the English is generally put at 10 percent of draft-eligible males—the highest rate for any war in American history. The Puritans would not fully reclaim all the territory they lost for another forty years. "The dreadful Indian war," summed up Cotton Mather, "has so nipt the growth of [the country], that its latter progress hath held no proportion with what was from the beginning." For the Indians, casualty rates were much worse. The war ravaged the New England tribes.[85]

There would be more bloodshed (King William's war broke out in New England in 1689). Metacom's war, however, was the last great domestic clash between Native Americans and Puritans. Afterward the Indians would ally with the French. For the next seventy years New England's Indian wars would be tangled up in old world power conflicts.

By the time of Metacom's war, the Puritans had changed their central Indian narrative. The holy war narrative had faded. God no longer operated through valiant saints in a battle with Satan over the fate of the new world. Now, in the golden age of the jeremiad, the Indians became instruments by which God punished his people. Even when the "English had the better of it," wrote Increase Mather, it was "not without solemn and humbling rebukes of Providence." Again and again the clergy explained what was really happening: God unleashed Indian wars—with all their misery and devastation—because His people had become too much like the heathens.[86]

Indian Echoes

On the theological surface, Amerindian sins look rather like the antinomian sins. Both tribes were lustful, undisciplined, and rebellious. But the sinners themselves were completely different. The Indians lived outside Puritan society—vividly and irresistibly other. Identifying their heresies would not require convoluted cross-examinations before the General Court.

Here was the new world's great social divide. American society never sustained the great European class divisions. Despite all Winthrop's talk about deference and order, the Puritan community was relatively homogenous. But the gap between Christian and heathen loomed larger than any social differ-

ences back in Europe. The Indians and, as we shall see, the slaves marked the limits of colonial society. They were the essential American outsiders.

The Puritans did not originally see the natives in racial terms. Rather, the cleavage that divided them was moral and cultural. More than anything else, the Indians provoked Puritan anxiety about virtue: a God-fearing European community resisted dangerous people—irrefutably different, impossible to assimilate—who were always threatening to drag the pious community down into lustful savagery. The Puritans spiced up these moral dangers with frightening narratives about women and children cast into Indian bondage.

With time, the Indian difference grew racial. (In fact, Native Americans, struggling to survive behind the New England frontier, married blacks in substantial numbers.) By the end of the seventeenth century, moral and racial lines began blurring. Racial and moral fears would keep overlapping and soon yield the most potent cleavage in American political culture.[87]

In the end, the Puritans' Indian wars offer one prototype for American race politics: this other could be kept apart—segregated on the frontier, steered into special villages, or sold into slavery. Europeans enforced the segregation by violence and justified it by imagining moral danger to a God-fearing people. This time, a vividly different tribe defined the Puritan community by showing its members what they must avoid becoming. That boundary, built of race and morals, would always haunt the United States. The people who found themselves by segregating others would prove to be America at its most illiberal, Americans at their most deeply un-American.

The Logic of the Witch-Hunt

Three centuries after the last hanging, witch-hunts remain fresh in the glossary of American politics. Do recent witch-hunts actually have anything in common with the Salem Village original? And what, finally, should we make of the seventeenth-century convulsion? Consider the witch question from three angles.

Economic Development as Moral Crisis

Cotton Mather thought that the devil was making a last attempt to hold on to New England. In fact, it was the Puritan establishment that was trying to hang on by forcing an emerging society into the jeremiad framework. Put abstractly, the great witch-hunt took social and economic tensions and transformed them into a moral crisis.

The covenants had envisioned peaceful, static, orderly communities marked by mutual love and deference to authority. That utopian dream faded as the society grew diverse and the economy complex. Boyer and Nissenbaum locate people who represented both the old ways and the new on the Salem Village map. Those who lived closer to Salem generally embraced the town's merchant economy, cosmopolitan outlook, and worldly comforts. On the other side of the village, rural yeomen clung to the traditional, communal norms. Put crudely, emerging capitalists squared off against faithful Puritans. Boyer and Nissenbaum draw a line, north to south, through the middle of the village. They then take a sample of the witches and their accusers. Almost every accused witch (12 of 14) lived in the eastern part of town, closer to Salem. Almost every accuser (30 of 32) lived in the rural, western side of the village.[124]

When the young women started shrieking, the more orthodox west villagers reached for a traditional explanation. Witchcraft did not simply explain the bizarre fits. It also channeled the anxieties and harnessed the anger that

these villagers felt toward their modernizing neighbors. And witchcraft is a perfect emblem of modernity. For better or worse (or both), people develop the "ability to do [and] know things" they could not have done or known before.

Salem Village was enmeshed in what contemporary social scientists would call a development crisis—a historical moment when social and economic changes outstrip the political order. The changes subvert traditional authorities and political institutions. All developing societies face these jolts. The lag between socioeconomic change and the construction of new political organizations, comments Samuel Huntington, is the "primary problem of politics."[125]

It was the underlying problem in 1692. Salem politics was organized for a tight, nuclear community, not a far-flung and diverse society. Greater Salem had outgrown its institutional forms. The Salem villagers knew it and had begged for independent organizations. Salem rebuffed them with outmoded covenant logic.

The entire Puritan federal structure faced precisely the same contradiction. The society had grown too big, too rich, and too complex for its governing philosophy. The orthodoxy flatly condemned controversies while the society was groping for institutions through which people could raise, debate, and settle conflicts. The leaders offered witches as proof of God's displeasure. The people seized those witches and used them to articulate their fears and fight their fights.

In 1692, the moral diagnosis of social trouble boomeranged right back onto the ministers. If a new political order was not yet visible, the witchcraft hysteria is a plausible place to mark the end of the classical Puritan regime. Never again, sums up Perry Miller, would a "governor of Massachusetts, in an hour of hesitation, formally and officially ask advice of the churches."[126]

Respectable citizens used the witchcraft embarrassment to fling Enlightenment notions into the ministers' faces. Thomas Brattle, an influential Boston merchant (and "no small admirer of the Cartesian philosophy") put it directly: "Salem superstition and sorcery" was "not fit to be named in a land of such light as New England is." The "ages will not wear off that reproach and those stains" that the "ignorance," "folly," and "barbarous methods" of Salem Village justice "leave . . . on our land."[127]

Robert Calef was harsher. His sustained refutation of the witch-hunt is best remembered for a single outrageous scene. In 1693, Cotton and Increase Mather both attended Margaret Rule when she began to suffer fits. Calef was part of a crowd that pushed in the door to watch the divines at work. He described their bedside manner: Cotton "brushed her on the face" and "rubb'd her stomach (her breasts not covered with the Bed-clothes) and bid others do so too." When she had another fit, "he again rub'd her breast" and "put his hand on

"It carries the face of a lie contrived . . . to make people believe a smutty thing of me," responded a furious Cotton Mather. Suddenly, the Mathers found themselves surrounded by demons of a different sort. From one side, Enlightenment lectures from an enthusiastic Cartesian. From the other, pornographic lampoons of the once heroic conflict with Satan.[129]

This time, the jeremiad sermons had exposed only a crumbling Puritan cosmos. The covenant framework was out of joint with the society. Moral solution would not meet New England's institutional needs. Still, the Puritan preachers set an important pattern. The jeremiad response would persist, an enduring American political reflex. The urge to read socioeconomic forces as moral failures runs down the years and still stands, as fresh and powerful as any social movement on the contemporary American scene.

Gender

The brute fact about witch-hunting violence is that it was mainly spent on women—both in the old world and the new. All told, four out of five accused New England witches were women. Even in Salem Village, 70 percent of the accused were women.[130]

Gender bias had been vivid in European witch lore. The great witch-hunter's guide, *Malleus Maleficarum,* sponsored by Pope Innocent VIII in 1484, warned: "Women are chiefly addicted to evil [witch] superstitions." Why? Because "all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable." Worse, "for the sake of fulfilling their lusts they consort even with devils." The text puts considerable emphasis on the Eve narrative: Adam "was tempted by Eve, not the devil, therefor she [woman] is more bitter than death."[131]

The raw misogyny of *Malleus* is rare in Puritan writing. On the contrary, Puritan writers resisted the notion of women as inherently evil. But they did keep returning to Eve, paragon of women's moral vulnerability. And Puritan thinking was ferocious on hierarchy and deference—woman must be subject to man. By 1692 the whole godly hierarchy was slipping away. In many ways, the struggle to shore it up set witchcraft's gendered dynamic into play.

Witches disrupted the natural order. Across time and place, the accused were women who had slipped out of their proper roles. Many witches were past menopause (though how far past remains in dispute). They had lost that defining role, procreation. In place of the real thing, witchcraft concocted a nightmare parody. Witches suckled their own misshapen demonic imps while they harmed the neighbors' children.

Carol Karlsen identifies a more subtle form of slipping roles. New England organized inheritance through males—widows did not control the disposition

offspring. Most of New England's witches, argues Karlsen, were women who had inherited estates, disrupting the "orderly transmission of property from one generation of males to another." And as women of independent means, they upset the sexual hierarchy.[132]

Midwives were another constant threat. These women managed the great mysteries of life and death, and there was always the danger they would invoke supernatural forces. Stillbirths, sickly infants, preternatural events (did the house shake?), or even unexpected recoveries could prompt questions about the attendants. At least twenty-two accused witches were midwives—Anne Hutchinson and her own midwife, Jane Hawkins, were notorious cases that we met above.[133]

Finally, there is no avoiding the sexual subtext. We saw Susanna Martin's specter lying atop Bernard Peach, Jarvis Ring, and Robert Downer. Hers was not an unusual case. Some confessed witches were perfectly explicit about fornicating with Satan. (*Malleus Maleficarum* speculates about just how they managed that "venereal delectation.") Suckling familiars, often on teats near their private areas, offered another round of almost hard-core sexual images. One sure sign of witchcraft, warned Cotton Mather, was a "lewd and naughty kind of life."[134]

The picture that emerges from the transcripts goes beyond fantasy or fear of fornication. There is a dread of uncontrolled carnality in women: suckling imps, jumping into strange beds and lying hard on men, living "lewd and naughty" kinds of lives. Ultimately, the witch's sin goes beyond sex and raises the danger of lost self-control, of social disorder. And that threat returns us to every Puritan enemy we have encountered. Antinomians, Quakers, and Amerindians all failed to crucify their lusts. They all challenged God and His agents, the Puritan fathers, by failing to control themselves.

Perhaps women who seemed to lose control became a greater menace as Puritan leaders lost their grip on the larger social world. Leaders rooted out the witches as if, somehow, patching up the little commonwealth—family hierarchy, gender relations—might restore traditional order from the chaos. We'll see this pattern again and again.

Some observers think the gender issues were muddled because women filled the ranks of both accuser and accused. But underlying anxieties—about gender roles, internal control, carnality, and social order—would operate on women as much as men, perhaps even more (after all, most church members were women). The gender issue cannot be read, simply, as men against women—either then or now. Still, the churchmen and magistrates were the ones who enforced, judged, and punished. They organized the system.

Why do witches disappear after Salem? Many scholars suggest that changing feminine ideals made the witch irrelevant. By the early eighteenth century, they argue, the middle-class woman had become the desexed, domesticated paragon of bourgeois virtue. Perhaps witches became less scary as women evolved into embodiments of moral purity.[135]

But disruptive sexuality lived on, especially outside the moralizing bourgeoisie. Working-class and black women would inherit the stereotypes—seductive, uncontrolled, carnal. We shall return to the stigma that marked these dangerous women, that marks some of them still. For now, note a final irony. As images of the subversive woman evolved, so did the descriptions of Salem's first confessing witch, Tituba. Although described as an Indian in every original document, she slowly turned black as scholars read their nineteenth- and twentieth-century stereotypes back into history. By the 1940s, John Indian had become a winking, common-law "so called husband." Americans gradually rewrote the Puritan stereotypes, transforming a devil-worshiping heathen into an African American with loose morals.[136]

Enemies

The Puritans split plenty of theological hairs, but, to them, one enemy was a lot like another. Perdition was perdition. Anne Hutchinson was both a heretic and (probably) a witch, Amerindians were both lustful and hellish. However, a good social policy analyst could have told them that the witches were different in a crucial way.

You could not miss Indians or Quakers. Witches were hidden. They could be anyone, anywhere. The distinctive feature about witch-hunts—then, later, and now—is the search for invisible enemies within the community.

The Salem Village panic set the standard. Witch-hunts plunge societies into social convulsions, into Cotton Mather's "blind man's buffet." In the panic, everybody becomes a potential suspect; friends dissolve lifelong ties, husbands testify against wives. The normal standards of justice—today we'd call them civil liberties—get tossed aside in the stampede. In 1692 the ministers all knew that spectral evidence was unreliable; but even Increase Mather sat through the Reverend George Burrough's trial without demurring.

The witch metaphor—scary, hidden subversives—would remain a political perennial. We will see plenty of examples: The panic over urban white slavers seducing and stealing country girls in the waning of the Victorian era. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's roundup of foreign-born radicals after World War I. The red scares following World War II—the attack against Communists ended up chasing homosexuals out of government offices. Many readers will recall the great wave of AIDS hysteria, when frightened Americans dreamed up all sorts of ways to keep unidentified homosexuals from slipping

"their" disease into mainstream culture. Like the Salem Village original, each bout involves widespread fear, uncertain (often invisible) enemies, lapses in due process, and a frightening sexuality running just under the official text.

Of course, people face real dangers: Communists sent secrets to the Soviet Union. Terrorists plant bombs on planes. For that matter, witches cast spells in early New England. Real dangers require firm action. It is not the witches who make a witch-hunt. What does? At least three factors: fears spread far and wide, a whole class of people falls under suspicion, due process evaporates. There is also usually a trace of self-interest—some group thinks the frenzy will serves its purpose. It rarely does.

The witches keep returning, but they make unreliable enemies. Hunting them does not effectively rally a community. Witches are too difficult to identify. They provoke too much uncertainty, and—most important—they subvert the very norms the community rises up to defend. Hunts against invisible others lurking in our midst are always difficult to control. Just about anybody might be fingered as a hidden subversive. In 1692 they named Lady Phips a witch, in 1954 they called the United States Army soft on reds.

The Amerindians proved a far better foe for rallying saints. Some colonies found a similar "other" in race slavery. White Christians could easily define themselves against such visible and unchanging opposites. In contrast, witch-hunts just keep bouncing right back at the hunters. They convulse the society, harm the community, and ruin the reputation of every generation that launches one.

The Puritans forged their own identity against three very different kinds of enemies. As analytic types, each remains familiar. Anne Hutchinson and her followers threatened the social order from within. They insinuated anarchy, rebellion ("disparaging all our ministers"), lost self-control ("quenching all indeavor"), and sexual disruption. The Quakers offered a variation of the same internal, moral rebellion. To this day we call people Puritans when they grow obsessed about making the neighbors toe the line; the "Puritan" watchword never changes: thou shalt "crucifie the lusts of the flesh."

The Amerindians provoked the fear of a different tribe. Outsiders threatened the city on a hill. The Puritans responded with warnings about falling to the native's low moral level—this other was lustful, savage, and ungodly. The great peril was that we would become like them. The settlers' defense against this enemy set the pattern for racial and ethnic conflicts; fear of mixing—blood and morals—would fire the nation's most bitter conflicts. An immigrant nation built partially on slavery would experience a constant political uproar about the boundaries between the tribes. There's another way to read the In-

dian conflicts, a different precedent for future American generations. The Puritan-Indian wars were like conflicts with a foreign power. Some ministers—we would probably call them the doves—preached peace, religious conversion, and even a kind of integration (at least into the praying villages). But the official epic imagined conflict between God and Satan, good and evil. The colonists marched and fought as agents of goodness, as the soldiers of God. The pattern, of course, reaches back to the Crusades. What is distinctively American may be the ambiguity of the crusade, the flight of both doves and hawks, the debate about whether to integrate—or fight. Recall the Pequot cries as the boats approached them: Are you here for trade or for war?

Finally, witches offer the frightening combination of both enemies: outsiders posing as members. They live within the good community, they are friends and neighbors. Yet they plot our destruction. And the good people can never be sure exactly who they are.

The Salem Village trials offer a common place to put the period on the Puritan story. But the demise of an old order brings the rise of a new one. The Puritans came in moral fervor. They built a society around a utopian quest for close-knit communities inspired by God. Eventually, Puritan fervor turned dry, and intimations of Enlightenment rationalism seeped in. However, the colonists would leave their Puritan era precisely as they had entered it: with great new gusts of moral fervor. A powerful religious revival sent the mission and the millennium bursting out of New England and across the colonies. The Great Awakening would renew the faith, revise the institutional framework, and tug Americans toward their greater revolution for the "sacred cause of liberty."