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Salem Obsessed; Or, *Plus Ça Change*: An Introduction

Jane Kamensky

FOUR decades ago Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, a pair of fresh-faced assistant professors toiling away in the same department, worked up a seminar they called "New Approaches to the Study of History." Following a model of hands-on learning favored by Nissenbaum's mentors at the University of Wisconsin and borrowing something of the sleeves-rolled-up, hands-dirty ethos of an archaeological dig, they set out to "give undergraduate students the opportunity to explore a single event in depth through the careful and extended use of primary sources."[1] The method—full immersion in the fast-flowing stream of history—was the point; the particular body of water into which these beginning students would be asked to jump was somewhat beside it.

Had Boyer and Nissenbaum set up shop in Detroit, or Los Angeles, or Miami, or Philadelphia, you would be reading a very different Forum. But as it happened, they worked at the University of Massachusetts, in a state that was once a British colony whose English settlers—those pious, probing, persnickety Puritans—had been maniacally devoted record keepers; their memory had been so venerated by nineteenth-century descendants that a treasure trove of documents from the late seventeenth century had survived time's ravages, remaining close at hand. Tugged by the archive, Boyer and Nissenbaum decided to focus their class around the infamous 1692 Salem witch trials.

Salem's documentary corpus—much of it published, with more to be painstakingly discovered by the diligent young professors—was perfect for a student's deep, quick inquiry. The materials were plentiful yet bounded; counting the pages of legal documents, sermon notes, petitions, and church records doesn't take you much past the high three figures. The texts were opaque enough to challenge yet forthcoming enough to tantalize. The story wasn't lying there in plain sight, prettied

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[1] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), ix.

up and predigested, *CliffsNotes* style. ("*The five leading causes of the Salem Witch Trials are . . .*") But if you worked them over hard and thoughtfully, the bits and pieces of evidence might give up their secrets. And what secrets! Salem circa 1692 offered love and death, magic and murder, vengeance, regret, and forgiveness, not always in equal measure. Great mysteries of the human condition paraded across a tiny stage: a town of fewer than two thousand souls, a small, proud, largely vanished society whose traces could still be glimpsed and even felt, if dimly. Here, in short, was precisely the sort of laboratory that other new social historians (John Demos, Philip J. Greven, Kenneth Lockridge, and Michael Zuckerman foremost among them) had mined to brilliant effect, using small worlds to plumb big questions.

Boyer and Nissenbaum quickly realized that these fragments from Salem's past contained the making of a great course and more. The professors began, "after considerable deliberation and some reluctance," to sketch an article. Though neither was a colonial historian by training, the pair contemplated submitting an essay about their experiment and its results to the flagship journal in that field, none other than the *William and Mary Quarterly.* But the outline they "scribbled on a lunch bag one afternoon in September 1970" grew too big. The classroom collaboration would become instead a monograph of extraordinary complexity, grace, and longevity. (Now in its twenty-sixth printing from Harvard University Press, it has sold more than 180,000 copies over its life and is still going strong.) In their modest and generous response to the sometimes heated criticism their efforts receive in this Forum, Boyer and Nissenbaum recall that when they "finally completed *Salem Possessed* in late 1972 . . . we knew we had written a good book." Perhaps even a definitive one, "the last word on Salem witchcraft."[2]

Salem Possessed was far more than a good book, but it hardly closed the book on Salem. Quite the opposite: Boyer and Nissenbaum's provocative interpretation of the *longue duree* behind the explosive conflict as well as their two documentary editions that put the raw materials of their research into hundreds of libraries around the country opened the floodgates to new waves of inquiry.[3] Since 1974 a river of books and articles exploring the historical meanings of New England witchcraft in general and the Salem trials in particular has flowed from the pens of Boyer and Nissenbaum's scholarly peers, the desktop computers of their graduate students, and the ultralight laptops of their graduate students' graduate students. A phalanx of doctoral candidates may be text messaging the latest salvos in the debate as you read these words.

In their quest to crack Salem's code, these studies, including the articles in the present Forum, have used a variety of interpretive tools, some of which require electricity (computer mapping systems, digital photography, spreadsheets, and even the wonders of eBay) and some of which generate it (feminist analysis, psychoanalytically informed interpretation, an Atlantic framework, and so on). The resulting explanations have differed often on points of emphasis and sometimes on points of fact. But whatever their disagreements, these works share an important, indeed inescapable, context: they were shaped by the life- and thoughtworlds of their authors. As Boyer and Nissenbaum remark, "all historical writing reflects the circumstances of its production and is the work of men and women who are citizens and social beings as well as historians." *Salem Possessed*, as its authors recollect in moving detail, danced to the music of the late 1960s, "a tumultuous era in the nation's history, with society torn by clamorous disagreements over what many saw as a disastrous and ill-considered war waged by an arrogant and blundering administration."[4] *Plus ça change.*

A great deal in the small world of early American history *has* changed since 1974. The most important studies of New England witchcraft published during the intervening decades (I can gesture toward only a few of them here) are reason to hope that some things have changed for the better. Appearing eight years after *Salem Possessed*, John Putman Demos's *Entertaining Satan* used multiple lenses—biography, psychology, sociology, and history—to create a picture of New England witchcraft that focused both on the inner lives of individuals and the broadest outlines of a culture, a portrait both more crowded and more intimate than Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's town study. Carol F. Karlsen's pathbreaking *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* followed five years later, forcefully demonstrating the need to think about gender when we think

[2] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, "*Salem Possessed* in Retrospect," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 503–34 ("after considerable deliberation," 514, "finally completed," 515, "last word," 533); Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, xiii ("scribbled"). Sales figures courtesy Harvard University Press Senior Editor Joyce Seltzer, e-mail message to author, Feb. 5, 2008.

[3] When it first appeared in 1972, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's *Salem-Village Witchcraft* made some of the manuscript materials used in their teaching and writing available to students and scholars outside eastern Massachusetts for the first time. See Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (Belmont, Calif., 1972). Three years after *Salem Possessed* came their compilation. See Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, 3 vols. (New York, 1977).

[4] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *WMQ* 65: 532 ("all historical writing"), 531 ("tumultuous era").

about witchcraft. Why, in the colonies as in Britain and Europe, had the overwhelming majority of those accused of witchcraft, and an even greater proportion of those convicted of the crime, been women of a certain age? Karlsen's answer, rooted in her close study of New England court, church, tax, and land records, reaffirmed the long-standing tradition of misogyny on both sides of the Atlantic and drew new attention to the economic and familial power wielded by many suspected New England witches.[5]

Demos and Karlsen took New England rather than Salem as their unit of study. To understand the society and culture of those colonies, they often looked across the vast and furious ocean to discern the intellectual inheritance of white New Englanders. But it was Mary Beth Norton's *In the Devil's Snare* that took the Atlantic turn in full, setting the events that unfolded in Salem in the context of empire and invasion, colonialism and Indian wars. As a result Norton's Salem was less a Puritan village than a place of refuge just south and west of a barbarous and bloody frontier of the first British Empire, a place whose haylofts and lean-tos housed witnesses of (almost) unspeakable trauma "at the Eastward." These survivors of imperial warfare, whose gossip and distress set the villages of Essex County together by the ears, consigned nearly a score of their neighbors to swing by the neck. For Boyer and Nissenbaum, the symbolic heart of the Salem witch trials was the Ipswich Road, the cow path that divided capitalism from its discontents. Norton instead located Salem's epicenter at Maine's Casco Bay and, at least by implication, in far-off London, as well as deep within Indian country. Sarah Rivett's comment in this Forum, drawn from new work situating the Salem trials amid the intellectual foment of Enlightenment empiricism, suggests the continuing vitality of such transatlantic links.[6]

[5] John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York, 1982); Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York, 1987), esp. chap. 3, "The Economic Basis of Witchcraft." Demos began his study of witchcraft some years before Boyer and Nissenbaum published *Salem Possessed*; he first presented his psychological interpretation in 1970. See Demos, "Underlying Themes in the Witchcraft of Seventeenth-Century New England," *American Historical Review* 75, no. 5 (June 1970): 1311–26.

[6] Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York, 2002), 80 (quotation); Norton, "Essex County Witchcraft," *WMQ* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 483–88; Sarah Rivett, "Our Salem, Our Selves," ibid., 495–502. For other key works that put the Atlantic intellectual inheritance front and center for the understanding of New England culture and the place of witchcraft and wonders within it, see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York, 1989); Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (New York, 1992).

Demos, Karlsen, and especially Norton have given readers a bigger New England and a bigger Salem than the one *Salem Possessed* depicted thirty-four years ago. The victims of witchcraft and their accusers are now known not just as budding merchants and hardscrabble farmers but as fully rounded people with rich, complicated inner lives, as gendered beings, and as creatures of a vast and violent Atlantic empire.

As Boyer and Nissenbaum suggest in their concluding remarks to this Forum, all these new directions are just fine with them. Their Salem was not a place to be understood through "easy polarities" but rather one marked by the ambiguity, fluidity, and multiplicity that were (and are) defining features of the human condition. Asked to weigh competing interpretations—religion versus economics, for example—the pair of no-longer-young yet still wise professors aver, "it is not an either-or choice."[7] History is an interpretive discipline, as much art as science. As Karlsen points out in her comment, the last half century of scholarship on New England witchcraft has been so fruitful in part because Salem has offered historians a big tent, a field of play as deep as the surviving records and as wide as the imagination.

Where does the cutting edge lie now? This Forum makes clear that scholars have come a long way from using adding machines and outlining courses on lunch bags. The tools Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal, Richard Latner, and Benjamin C. Ray deploy in their arguments are powerful, precise, and sometimes pointed. Yet readers may be forgiven for wondering whether the broad humanistic questions that drew generations of scholars and writers to the subject of New England witchcraft have given way to narrow technical ones.

In Burns and Rosenthal's piece, that fine-grained meticulousness serves as its own reward. The article heralds the publication of *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, a superb new edition of the legal records of Massachusetts witchcraft prosecutions in 1692–93.[8] This documentary resource, more than a decade in the making, supersedes Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's 1977 *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, which was based largely on the Works Progress Administration's transcripts dating from the 1930s, which in turn relied on a nineteenth-century compilation that repeated errors Cotton Mather, among others, had introduced more than two centuries earlier. As Burns and Rosenthal explain in considerable detail, they and their crack team of historians, editors, and linguists

[7] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *WMQ* 65: 522, 521.

[8] Bernard Rosenthal et al., eds., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (New York, forthcoming).

have gone back to the original manuscripts with renewed zeal, fresh eyes, and great care.

Numerous refinements result. The editors found new documents, purged old mistakes, and solved lingering puzzles. Using digital photography to bolster their old-fashioned paleographic detective work, they identified the handwriting of the two dozen men responsible for recording most of the documents. Knowing each clerk's hand allowed them to sequence the legal proceedings more fully than was previously possible. Indeed chronology is the main organizing principle of *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, which asks scholars to understand the Essex County witch hunts as they unfolded in time—as the people involved experienced them—rather than on a case-by-case basis, as older documentary editions presented them.[9] Historians make for poor predictors of the future, yet it seems safe to venture that the new *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* will quickly become the authoritative source for research on Salem and a great many other topics besides.

Though they constitute the bulk of the Salem corpus, the legal records of the 1692–93 witchcraft prosecutions barely figure in Richard Latner's article. His key sources are not trial records but tax lists, chief among the fragmentary records of economic life in seventeenth-century New England. Latner's emphatically revisionist account seeks to cast doubt on what he sees as one of the central conclusions of *Salem Possessed*: that Salem's witch hunters, rather than their prey, were economically marginalized as traditional land-based wealth yielded to a rising commercial society.

As part of their broader effort to understand the relative social standing of those who supported or opposed Salem Village minister Samuel Parris, Boyer and Nissenbaum analyzed the 1695 village tax assessment, levied the same year large numbers of village residents signed petitions for or against Parris. At that moment, Latner concedes, things stood much as *Salem Possessed* claims. But his close examination of seven tax lists spanning nearly twenty years, from 1681 to 1700, reveals a more complex economic picture. In the 1680s, Latner demonstrates, many pro-Parris taxpayers had greater assessed wealth than the minister's enemies, a position they lost in the early 1690s and largely recouped later in that decade.

The tax records matter a great deal more to Latner's argument than they did to that of Boyer and Nissenbaum, whose conception of status embraced biographical, familial, and social factors as well as economic ones. Moreover, as anyone who has worked with such records knows

[9] On the promise and pitfalls of a chronological organizing scheme, see Karlsen's and Norton's contributions to this Forum.

(indeed, as Latner himself admits), the data contained in these assessments are small, soft, and fragile. People move onto and off the rolls, up and down within them, or both; not enough whos and precious few whys survive in the record. Even when the subject is money and money alone, tax assessments hold up a blurry mirror to reality, one whose distortions remain largely unknowable. "There are limitations to what Salem Village's tax lists can say about the actual wealth of its inhabitants," Latner notes, "let alone how they derived their wealth . . . Moreover the tax rolls cannot address a person's involvement in or psychological relationship to capitalism or a market economy."[10]

Latner brings a great deal of care to his analysis of these records, identifying "persisters" who stayed on the rolls from year to year, sorting the taxpayers into percentiles, and so on.[11] Boyer and Nissenbaum's rough correlation of names on the 1695 pro- and anti-Parris petitions with names on the 1695 tax list seems quaint and crude by comparison. But are the data robust enough to withstand the power of the lens Latner uses to read them? Discovering that only 19 percent of pro-Parris persisters—the faction Boyer and Nissenbaum said was fighting a rear-guard action against modernity—fell by at least 10 percent in the tax rankings during the 1680s sounds quite definitive. But who constituted that 19 percent? Latner's quantitative apparatus ennobles the fuzzy traces left behind by the public lives of four men. On the whole the effect is rather like hunting a mouse with a howitzer. You might hit your target, but it's a challenge to read the remains.

Like Latner's essay, Ray's article pulls at a single strand of the dense fabric of evidence that Boyer and Nissenbaum wove: a map plotting the residences of accusers, suspected witches, and their defenders. To this "simple yet compelling" illustration Ray somewhat improbably attributes much of the enduring success of *Salem Possessed*.[12] The map, he explains, rendered the book's argument in graphic form, clearly marking with a black line the social gulf dividing accused witches, said to have lived closer to the growing entrepôt of Salem Town, from their accusers, who resided disproportionately in the interior reaches of Salem Village. In trenchant prose Ray declares the map to be an interpretive fiction.

Ray's method—the transparency, completeness, and objectivity of which he contrasts to Boyer and Nissenbaum's "highly interpretive" and

[10] Richard Latner, "Salem Witchcraft, Factionalism, and Social Change Reconsidered: Were Salem's Witch-Hunters Modernization's Failures?" *WMQ* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 423–48 (quotation, 446).

[11] Ibid., 431.

[12] Benjamin C. Ray, "The Geography of Witchcraft Accusations in 1692 Salem Village," *WMQ* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 449–78 (quotation, 450); "The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692," in Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 34.

mysteriously selective mapping techniques—sounds impressively high tech. He describes the painstaking process of "digitizing and georeferencing" the 1866 Upham map on which the *Salem Possessed* version was based, his use of a "geographic positioning system device" to plot features of the 1692 landscape and built environment in real space, and the subsequent correlating of the named households labeled on Upham's map with Boyer and Nissenbaum's "anonymous As, Ws, and Ds."[13]

Yet, in the end, it is not Ray's digital arsenal that distinguishes his maps from those presented in *Salem Possessed* but rather the evidence gleaned from his research and his sifting and weighing of that evidence. For reasons Boyer and Nissenbaum explained—and with which some scholars, Mary Beth Norton and Rosenthal among them, hotly disagree—they omitted from their calculations two subsets of accusers: eight afflicted girls and five individuals who acted as both accusers and defenders in the course of the Salem outbreak. For reasons Ray explains—and with which other scholars, including Carol F. Karlsen and John Demos in the present Forum, hotly disagree—he labels those thirteen as accusers on his maps. It is their presence, more than any other single modification, that blurs the neat geographic divisions Boyer and Nissenbaum placed before their readers. The choice is an interpretive one, perhaps even a highly interpretive one, in Ray's wording, but interpreting, after all, is what historians do.

The Salem whose legal manuscripts Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal scrutinize letter by letter, whose tax records Richard Latner sifts and sorts diachronically, and whose social geography Benjamin C. Ray plots with the aid of geographic information systems software threatens to shrink before our eyes, becoming an altogether smaller place than the one *Salem Possessed* revealed to readers the better part of a half century ago. Yet the minutiae probed in these articles—often "minor change[s]," as Burns and Rosenthal put it—will doubtless become the building blocks of big new questions yet to be asked about this little village.[14]

What conclusions should readers draw, for example, from the fact that Salem's clerks and magistrates seemed unsure of the name of Sarah Good's four-year-old daughter? "As in many cases," Burns and Rosenthal explain, "the authorities simply did not know the people brought before them, just as in many cases people making complaints did not know the

[13] Ray, *WMQ* 65: 452 ("highly interpretive"), 454 n. 7 ("digitizing"), 455 ("anonymous").

[14] Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal, "Examination of the Records of the Salem Witch Trials," *WMQ* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 401–22 (quotation, 411).

first names of those against whom they were complaining."[15] Our long-held verities about the face-to-face communities of early New England clearly need close scrutiny.

Latner's tax assessment time series marks another frontier for future research: the study of the Salem trials as cause, rather than effect, of local strife. Focused as they were on the hidden history of Salem before the witch trials, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum had little to say about the shattered world the trials left behind. Latner's investigation hints that the mid- to late 1690s saw rapid reversals of fortune among the Salem Village elite. The aftershocks of the trials, in religious, legal, political, and cultural as well as economic terms, deserve more sustained study than they have yet received.[16]

All the main articles and several of the comments in the Forum also suggest that the next big book about Salem will have to attend to struggles within as well as between the social groups whose outlines Boyer and Nissenbaum discovered and whose borders they drew more starkly than people would have in 1692. Whether imagined geographically, economically, or otherwise, it is clear that a neat division between accusers and defenders no longer suffices. As Ray persuasively argues, "some of the Salem Villagers appear to have genuinely believed certain accused were guilty and others were not." They spoke to specific charges leveled against specific, imperfect human beings, less often (if ever) to the justice of "the trials in general."[17] The situation of the afflicted accusers was yet murkier. For whatever one makes of their motivations—and the Forum authors disagree strongly—it seems clear, as Carol F. Karlsen insists, that each of these tormented girls and young women was divided against herself.

I teach a course on the Salem witch trials, an imitation of and homage to the one Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum devised back in 1969, that bears roughly the same relationship to their original as Disney's Celebration, Florida, does to an authentic seaside town. It seems only

[15] Ibid., 416.

[16] Gretchen A. Adams and Carol F. Karlsen are studying different facets of the history of witchcraft after Salem. See Adams, *The Specter of Salem in American Culture* (Chicago, forthcoming); Karlsen, "After Salem: The Transformation of the Witch in American Culture" (work in progress).

[17] Ray, *WMQ* 65: 464–65 (quotations). Contemporaneous exceptions include intellectuals such as Samuel Willard and Thomas Brattle. See [Willard], *Some Miscellany Observations On our Present Debates Respecting Witchcrafts, in a Dialogue Between S[alem] and B[oston]* (Philadelphia, 1692); Brattle, *Letter of Thomas Brattle, F.R.S.*, 1692, in George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648–1706* (New York, 1914), 165–90.

right that Boyer and Nissenbaum figure prominently in the assigned reading. Graduate students would merely sharpen their teeth on the tender, well-aged meat of *Salem Possessed*, for that is mostly what their mentors teach them to do. But mine is an undergraduate seminar, full of the delight of discovery. Year after year the students in the class confirm the book's status as a living, breathing classic.

Indeed Boyer and Nissenbaum's account of what happened in Salem Village more than three centuries ago presents something of a teaching challenge. Where in the roster does one put a book of such overwhelming explanatory power? I've programmed it first, asking it to serve as the straw man that latter-day work will tear down. I've set it head to head against Mary Beth Norton's *In the Devil's Snare* so students can see two distinct generations of scholarship going at it for twelve bloody rounds. I've placed it last, after a semester's hard labor in the archive. But it doesn't matter. My students look to Salem to get answers about how the world comes apart. And no matter where *Salem Possessed* appears on the syllabus, Boyer and Nissenbaum's explanation of why Salem happened when, where, and how it did emerges as the answer, the one students tell their parents at Thanksgiving.

Rereading my battered copy yet again, I see what they see. Nearly every page has come loose from the binding, so it's easy enough to pull out the map Benjamin C. Ray eviscerates and the tables with which Richard Latner takes issue. And still *Salem Possessed* stands, held together by the energy of the authors' collaboration, the inventiveness of their research, the depth of their insights, and the forcefulness of their prose. Doubtless Boyer and Nissenbaum would not write the same book today. Yet it remains, rightfully, an object not only of admiration and debate but also of envy.

Examination of the Records of the Salem Witch Trials

Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal

THE legal records of the 1692 and 1693 witchcraft prosecutions in Massachusetts are central to the historical understanding of those events. A new edition of these records has been in preparation for more than a decade and will soon be in print. *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* is more accurate, more comprehensive, and organized differently from all preceding collections of similar materials, emphasizing the chronological unfolding of the events and the legal procedures involved.[1] Aside from including more records than any previous collection—some newly discovered and some overlooked in previous editions—two features of the entries in this edition are unique: each document has been dated according to when the document was used and content added to it (some have as many as five dates), and each transcription notes where the handwriting in the manuscript changes, with twenty-four of the most prominent recorders identified by name across the entire collection. The discovery and printing of these identities open up worlds, enabling scholars now, for example, to investigate the patterns of participation of various individuals in the proceedings, to explicate the actual legal procedures used, and to articulate the sequence and concurrence of events with a degree of precision previously impossible.

Publications of the legal records in the past have essentially been organized as case-based collections. The first was by Cotton Mather, who transcribed the trial records of five selected cases and published them in *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1692) at the request of Governor William Phips in defense of the actions of the Court of Oyer

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[1] Bernard Rosenthal, Editor; Margo Burns, Project Manager and Associate Editor; Gretchen A. Adams, Peter Grund, Risto Hiltunen, Leena Kahlas-Tarkka, Merja Kytö, Matti Peikola, Benjamin C. Ray, Matti Rissanen, Marilynne K. Roach, and Richard Trask, Associate Editors, *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

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and Terminer. Additional documents appeared in John Hale's *A Modest Enquiry* (1697) and Robert Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700), which reproduced Mather's *Wonders* and added transcriptions of the indictments for these cases. Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson published several more documents in volume 2 of his *History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay* (1767). All these books included the documents as examples to illustrate points in a narrative and discussion about what happened. The first attempt to present a comprehensive collection of the primary sources did not occur until 1864, when W. Elliot Woodward published all the documents he found in the Essex County Court Archives in his two-volume *Records of Salem Witchcraft*. This edition did not, however, include the records held in other county court archives. In 1938 the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) produced a typescript set of transcriptions specifically of the records of the witchcraft cases that included the records from the Essex County Court Archives already published by Woodward in addition to records in the Boston Public Library, Massachusetts State Archives, New York Public Library, and Peabody Essex Museum. In 1977 Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum published *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, a slightly modernized version of the WPA typescript, adding transcriptions of sixteen manuscripts acquired by the Boston Public Library after the WPA project was completed and a few documents the WPA had overlooked at the Massachusetts State Archives as well as reproducing twenty-four texts that had been included by Mather, Hale, Calef, and Hutchinson.[2]

The first collection of the legal record of these trials should have been in an official court record book, which would have included the indictments on which the accused came to trial, the names of those on the juries, and the verdicts of the Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692. None is known to exist today. The only possible copy from a record book of the Court of Oyer and Terminer is a brief text included in copies of the records of the trial of Abigail Faulkner Sr. when she petitioned the General Court in 1700 to redress her wrongful conviction. On that petition is the following notation: "Boston Jun 13: 1700 ye Court orderd ye Reading of hir tryall."[3] Since she was tried by the Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692, this text strongly, though not conclusively, suggests that a no-longer-extant record book existed. The original

[2] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, 3 vols. (New York, 1977).

[3] Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 875. All documents in the edition are numbered.

record book of the 1693 Superior Court of Judicature had been missing for many years, and historians only knew of it through a nineteenth-century copy until staff located the original while cleaning out a file cabinet in the Suffolk County Courthouse in 1996.

As the number and nature of records in what constituted a definitive collection have grown, the strategy of organizing them by individual cases has remained unchanged. Mather, in treating his cases, presented a small selection of the trial evidence. His stated purpose was to "vindicate the country, as well as the judges and juries," and though the publication contained only five cases, his request to the clerk of the court, his friend Stephen Sewall, was for the records of "half a dozen or, if you please, a dozen, of the principal witches that have been condemned."[4] Mather's apparent second request for the records, on September 20, 1692, came two days before the final executions on September 22. The people whose cases he included—George Burroughs, Bridget Bishop, Elizabeth How, Martha Carrier, and Susannah Martin—were among those who had already been executed by the time he received the records. Whether Sewall chose which cases to send to Mather or whether Mather selected the cases from what Sewall sent is undeterminable.

When Woodward in 1864 made the first attempt to create a comprehensive edition of all the documents in the Essex County Courthouse, he produced a combined case-by-case and chronological edition, presenting the cases of forty-three people according to the date the arrest warrant was issued for each, followed by a section of sixty-eight pages of miscellaneous documents, including more arrest warrants, examinations, indictments, and some jail bills, in no discernible order. Aside from the fact that some of the dates used in the first section are incorrect, such as the date of John Procter's apprehension, this arrangement is unsatisfactory because it simply does not handle all of the documents in a consistent manner, and it is not apparent why certain documents were placed with one case and not with another. The case against Alice Parker, for example, is almost impossible to find in Woodward's book. Neither the warrant nor the summons for witnesses against Alice Parker and Ann Pudeator mentions Parker in the entry titles or index, though Parker's name comes first in both, and both women were convicted and hanged. The document detailing the physical examination of Alice Parker and five other women is titled and grouped with documents in the case of

[4] Cotton Mather to William Stoughton, Sept. 2, 1692, in Kenneth Silverman, ed., *Selected Letters of Cotton Mather* (Baton Rouge, La., 1971), 43–44 ("vindicate the country," 44); Mather to Stephen Sewall, Sept. 20, 1692, ibid., 44–45 ("half a dozen," 44). For some details on the discovery of the original record book, see John Ellement, "Misfiled Court Records Date from 17th Century," *Boston Globe*, July 10, 1996, 71.

one of the others (Bridget Bishop). Depositions against her by John Bullock, Samuel Shattuck, and John Westgate are titled and grouped incorrectly as being against Mary Parker.[5] Woodward introduced the confusion between Alice and Mary Parker; it was carried into the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*. In addition to such problems, Woodward's edition was severely limited in the number of cases it treated.

The WPA made the first attempt to bring all pertinent documents into a coherent, logical format under the supervision of Archie N. Frost, the clerk of the courts, who supervised the WPA transcriptions of all the files of the Essex County Quarterly Courts from 1636 to 1692. The WPA did a remarkably good job of producing a highly valuable typescript edition of the witchcraft cases, though it reproduced many of Woodward's errors. Who the transcribers were is not known, nor is their methodology in checking for accuracy, and their skills seem mixed. Some produced exceptional transcriptions, but others missed words or dropped lines. An incorrect transcription from the Suffolk Court Records, for example, had Tituba's case being brought to a grand jury in "1692" when in fact it was 1693. This mistake was subsequently continued in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* along with many other errors of varying degrees of importance for historians and some with more critical significance for linguists investigating features of the English language in early America.[6]

When Boyer and Nissenbaum published their edition in 1977, *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* performed a huge service to the scholarly community by bringing the valuable work of the WPA, which had languished in typescript, into print. At the same time, they also perpetuated many of the same errors that Woodward and the WPA had produced. Boyer and Nissenbaum corrected many of the most obvious mistakes in the WPA entry titles. How much they actually checked is hard to determine. They acknowledged that their edition was "not perfect" but were confident.

> Of course, the result was not perfect. Some documents were mis-labeled, others were included under the wrong cases. (We have corrected most of these obvious errors; a few perhaps remain.) And, in the process of transcribing from handwritten originals many of which are—as anyone who has examined them can testify—nearly illegible or almost illiterate, it may well be that some mis-readings crept in. Nevertheless, we are confident, both on the basis of our own work with these documents and our conversations with staff members of the Essex Institute and Essex County officials, that the transcriptions of 1938 were done with scrupulous care, and that the documents published here are, for all practical purposes, accurate verbatim renderings of the originals.[7]

It is hard to fault Boyer and Nissenbaum for not undertaking the complex task of revisiting all the manuscripts, considering that the enormous time and effort were well beyond what they set out to do—publish the work of the WPA—though they might have more rigorously tested their belief in the "accurate verbatim renderings." *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* reproduced the case-by-case structure used by the WPA, listing 153 cases alphabetically by the name of the accused. These cases are followed by a 185-page section of "Additional Documents, 1692–1750," arranged in various groups according to their purpose in the legal proceedings during different time spans in roughly chronological order within each group. Much recommends the WPA case-by-case approach. It is convenient, for example, when writing about George Burroughs, executed on August 19, 1692, to be able to pick up volume 1 of *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, look under "B," and find the case record. That can never be taken away from the organization used in the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, though Boyer and Nissenbaum acknowledged the difficulty presented when turning to documents that reference "two or three or even more accused witches." For rough use it often works, yet it is not reliable for many aspects of many cases. One such example is found in the first entry in Burroughs's case on page 151 of the first volume, which is the legal complaint against Burroughs dated April 30, 1692. The complaint is not simply against Burroughs, as Boyer and Nissenbaum inform the reader in the title of the document, but a complaint submitted against five other people: Lydia Dustin, Susannah Martin, Dorcas Hoar, Sarah Morey, and Philip English. Suppose the reader's interest is in Martin, who was also convicted and hanged. One turns to "M," finds her, and the case record begins on page 549 with the warrant for her arrest. Finding the complaint mentioned in the warrant becomes a matter of finding it in the index. Clearly, this approach is an improvement over Woodward, especially with the more complete index, but even so, if the reader's interest is in Hoar this requires going to

[5] W. Elliot Woodward, ed., *Records of Salem Witchcraft, Copied from the Original Documents* (1864–65; repr., New York, 1969). The table of contents for vol. 1 lists John Procter between Martha Cory and "Dorcas" Good, giving a date of "19th March 1691/2," though Procter was not apprehended until the day of his wife's examination on Apr. 11, 1692. For Alice Parker's case, ibid., 2: 13–14, 17.

[6] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 755; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 844. Tituba was Samuel Parris's slave and one of the first people to be formally accused in February 1692.

[7] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 32.

Burroughs's case to find this complaint against her, then to English's case to find the warrant for her apprehension, and finally to Martin's case to find a mittimus transferring Hoar to jail in Boston.[8] In one sense this search is satisfactory because the reader is directed where to look. Editors must place a string of people somewhere in the linear text of a printed book; if an index is good enough, a reader can follow the cross-referencing trail. That reader, however, cannot easily decipher the narrative.

When Deliverance Hobbs was examined in prison, she named Burroughs. This document does not appear in Burroughs's case record in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, nor is there a reference to it from there, yet it is significant. Granted, searching the online version of *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* for "George Burroughs" will make the connection that the print edition cannot, but the value in simply finding the document is limited by the absence of temporal context.[9] When did she name him? The text of her examination contains no date, and determining the date for it—April 23, 1692—requires reviewing other documents in her case to look for clues about when she entered prison. There is value in supplying access to all the documents that reference an individual. The principle of organizing by individual case has much to offer, yet it still has serious limitations. A chronological presentation, however, reveals this important feature of the beginning of the case against Burroughs.

Additionally, the alphabetical list of cases as presented in previous editions has another issue. How is a case defined? Four cases in the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* appear to be against some of the main accusers: Sarah Bibber, Elizabeth Hubbard, Mercy Lewis, and Abigail Williams. Boyer and Nissenbaum added a fifth to the list, Susannah Shelden. Including these five accusers is misleading because no charges, witchcraft or otherwise, were made against them as there were against confessors Sarah Churchill, Abigail Hobbs, and Mary Warren. The depositions and statements in these sections seem to have been submitted to impeach the accusers' credibility as witnesses in the cases of Rebecca Nurse, Elizabeth Procter, and others but are presented

[8] Ibid., 1: 33 (quotation). For the complaint against George Burroughs et al., ibid., 1: 151; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 96. The names are listed in the order they appear in the complaint document. For the warrant, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 313–14; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 99. For the mittimus, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 550; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 114. A mittimus is a warrant of commitment to prison also used to empower the sheriff to move prisoners, who were already in jail in Boston, to Salem for their appearance in court.

[9] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 423; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 153. A hypertext revised edition of *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* is available online at http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/texts/transcripts.html.

without references to the cases in which they were used. Another supposed case included in the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* is that of John Lee, based on a single four-line scrap of a manuscript that no one can prove had anything to do with any known witchcraft case, except that it had been displayed for many years in a frame with two witchcraft documents in the Essex County Courthouse. And then there is the case of the nonexistent "Jerson Toothaker," a name that first appeared in an entry title in Woodward's edition based on a misinterpretation of two surnames written on the docket of a single document against Mary Ireson and Mary Toothaker. Perpetuation of this mistake also gives the impression that the WPA transcribers may have simply copied some of the content from the Woodward edition without returning to all the manuscripts.[10] There are still too many false starts in this case-by-case organization even if a reader is adept at cross-referencing, be it in a printed book or digital text.

Even less satisfying is that 26 of the remaining 146 valid cases listed in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* consist of a single document and another 35 include only two. Though most of these brief cases include references to other documents pertinent to the case placed elsewhere in the volumes—a vast improvement over the Woodward and WPA compilations, neither of which includes this kind of cross-referencing—the references are incomplete, with entry titles suggesting more than is really included in the case and giving no indication as to what is excluded.

The definition of case even in regard to accused people is also problematic because some accusations came to nothing legally. Does Nehemiah Abbott Jr., who was arrested but released by the local magistrates, really count as a case? Yes, it was an accusation, yet the Court of Oyer and Terminer was never presented with formal charges against him. Calling his story a case suggests a parallel weight to the others that it may not deserve. Counting everyone accused of witchcraft, even in passing, as a case produces numbers that are deceptive because this practice fails to make distinctions about how far the accusations went in the judicial system: not all were pursued by the magistrates. There are a variety of anecdotes about people of higher social standing, such as

[10] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 765 ("Jerson Toothaker"); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 305. Enders A. Robinson picked up this error, discussed in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*. See Robinson, *The Devil Discovered: Salem Witchcraft, 1692* (New York, 1991), 350 n. 285. For the acknowledgment of the inclusion of accusers as cases, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 33. For information about John Lee, ibid., 2: 535; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 978. An appendix in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* will include Lee's evidence and two other documents reproduced in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* that the editors of the forthcoming volume have determined were not connected to the witchcraft trials.

Magistrate Jonathan Corwin's mother-in-law and Hale's and Phips's wives, being accused but never arrested. Do these really count as cases?

The gold standard when counting cases has always been conviction and execution, of which scholars can count nineteen by hanging, plus Giles Cory (who was not convicted of witchcraft yet pressed to death under heavy stones by order of the court when he refused to plead at trial), making twenty. Scholars are more likely to start with them because of their fates. Eleven other people were also wrongfully convicted but not executed. Their names are not as well known, though their petitions years later to reverse the attainders on their names because of those convictions were what initiated the official governmental redress of all the court's actions. Twenty-eight others were tried and found not guilty, yet they still had to settle their jailers' bills before they could be released and were never compensated. How do the stories of these people fit with the stories of the more famous victims? Because Sarah Cloyce was the sister of two of those executed, Rebecca Nurse and Mary Esty, and she was not executed, there is a temptation to tell her story in the context of what happened to her sisters, raising romantic possibilities about her escape. The extant evidence is much more mundane, putting her in the group of people against whom indictments were presented to a grand jury that then rejected them as "ignoramus" (meaning there were not sufficient grounds to proceed to trial).[11] The new edition makes it easy to find such information. Others were arrested but formal cases were never even brought to a grand jury, so they languished in jail. This group includes at least fifteen children from five to sixteen years old, six of whom were ten years old or younger.

As also happened in Woodward's edition, the text of many manuscripts in the WPA typescript and *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* is silently divided into multiple entries, likely with the intent to make the presentation more comprehensible, yet also with the understanding that different sections within individual documents were either about different people or added at a different point in the proceedings, which called for some kind of editorial separation. In *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, for instance, documents that contain the examinations of several people held on the same day are split and the parts put with the appropriate cases, which unfortunately decontextualizes the parts from the whole, eliminating the natural connections inherent in the original manuscripts. In other instances, especially with arrest warrants, the return of the arresting officers is often presented as a separate entry even when the return was written on the same piece of paper as the warrant, though

[11] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 221–23; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 809–11.

this practice is inconsistent. Other returns are printed with the warrants, which could suggest to the reader that the returns with separate entries are separate objects when in fact they are not.

One assumption of the case-based organizational principle is that scholars can count the people involved in these cases by the entry titles. Nevertheless historians have never agreed on the exact number of cases and point to the number of missing legal records and the lack of an official summary record book of the Court of Oyer and Terminer as an easy explanation. This defense is a red herring with respect to the grand juries and trials. Scholars know how many people were brought to trial and can see the *Jurat in Curia* (meaning sworn in court) notations in Sewall's handwriting, which are similar to Jonathan Elatson's *Jur. In Cur.* on the documents used in the trials before the 1693 Superior Court of Judicature, for which there is a summary record book. One can also identify all the people whose cases were heard or scheduled to be heard by grand juries. Boyer and Nissenbaum state, "of the actual deliberations of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, very few records remain."[12] On the contrary there are copious records of indictments, grand juries hearing cases, and documents used at trial.

Historians can also distinguish between the work performed by county magistrates and the provincial Court of Oyer and Terminer. Local authorities collected evidence and examined the accused, and the Court of Oyer and Terminer handled the grand jury inquests, arraignments, pleas, jury trials, and sentencing. Who was responsible for what work is perhaps blurred because some of the people changed positions when the court was formally commissioned: Corwin, Bartholomew

[12] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 36 (quotation). For Jonathan Elatson's appointment, see Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 729. For more on the deposition of *Elizabeth Hubbard v. Mary Whittredge*, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 858; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 653. The brief notation of *Jurat in Curia* was in almost all cases added to evidence at trial and not at some other hearing, such as grand jury inquests. This may be exemplified by the handwriting of this notation on the deposition of Elizabeth Hubbard against Mary Whittredge, a case that came before the grand jury in September 1692 but did not come to trial until January 1693. *Jurat in Curia* was written on this document not by Stephen Sewall, the clerk of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, but by Elatson, who was sworn in on Dec. 22, 1692, as the clerk of the Superior Court of Judicature. Among the variety of new texts appearing in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* are pertinent sources of information about the formation of the two courts hearing the witchcraft cases, as contained in entries from the Governor's Council Executive Records in 1692. The number of accused listed or totaled in books published from 1982 to 2002 by historians Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, John Demos, Richard Godbeer, Carol F. Karlsen, Mary Beth Norton, Marilynne K. Roach, and Enders A. Robinson ranges from 141 to 188. They have used different criteria to define the accused, in some cases any person named and in other cases only those considered in the judicial system.

Gedney, John Hathorne, and Thomas Wade had all signed warrants and conducted examinations in their roles as local magistrates prior to the court's commission in May 1692, when Gedney and Hathorne became justices of the new court, and Wade, Dudley Bradstreet, Daniel Epps Sr., and John Higginson Jr. were officially appointed as justices of the peace in Essex County. Corwin joined the new court when Nathaniel Saltonstall declined the appointment. Today scholars primarily have evidence in manuscript form that was collected at the local level by magistrates, some of which is admittedly missing, to which oaths and notations by the court were added when the evidence was presented in a superior court.

This process began when the Court of Oyer and Terminer first sat on June 2, 1692, to hear Bridget Bishop's case. Why hers was the only case that went to trial in early June is an important question often asked. Reading the records chronologically as the proceedings unfolded puts in clearer context what the court was doing even if the records do not indicate why she went first. A May 31, 1692, mittimus exists in the handwriting of the Crown's attorney, Thomas Newton, ordering the transfer of nine prisoners to Salem for the first sitting of the Court of Oyer and Terminer. Six women (not including Tituba) were subjected to physical examinations for witch's teats on June 2, suggesting that more prosecutions were planned for early June than actually took place. Boyer and Nissenbaum's conclusion that Bishop was "carefully selected for this first trial" in early June because there was "a particularly damning array of evidence" against her may be based on supposition rather than evidence.[13] Their conclusion does not allow consideration of the fact that she was not uniquely presented to a court that had other cases in process moving at the same pace as hers. Scholars may or may not decide that this context is significant, but they need to know of the other cases that were concurrently in process by the court before accepting Boyer and Nissenbaum's statement.

The day after Bishop's grand jury and trial, grand juries proceeded to hear evidence supporting eleven separate indictments against Rebecca Nurse and John Willard and returned true bills in at least eight. Though it is still valid to ask why Bishop was first, the question cannot be why she was the only person prosecuted at that time. Hers was not the only case the Court of Oyer and Terminer handled, though she ended up being the only one tried. The more interesting questions to ask about early June are why only two of the other eight transferred from the Boston jail had indictments against them brought to the grand jury at that point, why Nurse and Willard did not go directly to trial after the

[13] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 19.

grand jury returned true bills against them on June 3, and why nothing was done with the other six until much later.

Teasing out the narrative of each individual caught up in the events beginning in 1692 is complex, yet the *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* edition seeks to achieve that goal. The creation of this new edition has included a comprehensive review of every text, not only for letter-by-letter accuracy in transcription but also to determine the chronological context of each item. The editors of *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* have made the dating of the included texts a priority and have identified some of the men who recorded them. The editors have retranscribed and rigorously reviewed all manuscripts, though they recognize that errors may slip through. Historians will have an accurate record of the events in the order in which they occurred, though inevitably some will disagree with a given chronological decision. A time line of grand jury hearings and trials will allow them to look at a case-by-case form, and scholars will be able to consult a comprehensive index of all the names that appear in the documents. Linguists, too, will have the most accurate rendering of this corpus of early American English.

Early in the process of creating the new edition, it became apparent that the larger the sample of each recorder's handwriting, the more evidence would be available to confirm the accuracy of some of the "nearly illegible" aspects of the manuscripts that Boyer and Nissenbaum acknowledged would be difficult to decipher.[14] It also became obvious that there were many recorders whose handwriting appeared on multiple documents, and if the editors could keep track of which recorder's handwriting was on which document, they could improve the accuracy of all the transcriptions of texts in that handwriting.

With this degree of letter-by-letter review of the handwritten manuscripts, there came a range of subtler corrections within the texts themselves: content words, names of people, and dates that have been included in the traditional transcriptions began to change. Ezekiel Cheever's version of Tituba's examination, for example, always included a claim that Tituba saw "rats," yet a closer examination of his handwriting shows that Cheever's lowercase *c* resembles a modern-day *r*, which is evident in his identical letter form in words such as "children" and "came" (that have always been transcribed correctly). Tituba said she saw "cats," not "rats."[15] What are the implications of such a minor change? It really depends on the nature of a scholar's inquiry, but if a

[14] Ibid., 1: 32.

[15] Ibid., 3: 747–49 ("rats," 3: 748); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 3 ("cats").

folklorist, for example, were examining the familiars in witchcraft lore, the incorrect inclusion of rats would have unintended consequences.

Another record details one "afflicted" girl's story that a specter visited her, bringing a winding-sheet and, as Woodward had included it, a "cosen," printed with a long *s*, with an undecipherable meaning. The WPA rendered it as "bafen," with the archaic long *s* an *f.* In *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, however, the noun became more comprehensible: "basen." The potential exists for an interpretation of the basin as something used in a devilish baptism, but with careful analysis of the difficult handwriting the word on the stained manuscript has finally been interpreted as something quite different: "kofen" (coffin), which has a more obvious connection to the winding-sheet (Figure I). Another account by one of those claiming affliction includes the observation that John Procter's specter was sitting in someone's lap during the hearing. In the traditional transcription, this passage has been rendered as "Majstrats lap," which suggests a challenge to the judges that the actual claim, that the specter was in the "marshals lap," may not.[16] Examples of this kind of correction abound in the new transcriptions, including the correct rendering of a significant number of names.

Almost as soon as the editors started collecting information about the recorders, the possibility of using it to establish document dates as well as to furnish patterns of participation by various individuals involved in the trials became apparent. Use of digital images has also allowed for comparison of whole documents held in different archives. In one case it was easy to visually demonstrate that a deposition against Elizabeth Procter held by the Boston Public Library, which seemed to be in Samuel Parris's handwriting, was actually an exact tracing of a document with an identical text in the Essex Institute Collection at the Peabody Essex Museum.[17]

[16] Woodward, *Records of Salem Witchcraft*, 2: 202 ("cosen"); "Mary Warren & Mary Ireson vs. Jerson Toothaker," in "Salem Witchcraft, compiled and transcribed in 1938 by the Works Progress Administration under the supervision of Archie N. Frost, Clerk of the Courts, Essex County, Massachusetts," typescript, 3 vols., Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass., vol. 2, unpaginated ("bafen"); Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 765 ("basen"), 2: 677 ("Majstrats lap"); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 305 ("kofen"), no. 61 ("marshals lap").

[17] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 675–76, is a transcription based on the traced copy from MS Ch K 1.40 vol. 2, p. 500, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library. Compare with Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 52, which is a transcription based on the original manuscript in the Essex Institute Collection, no. 18, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum. The original document that was traced had been on display under glass for years at the Essex County Courthouse alongside the fragment about John Lee mentioned earlier.

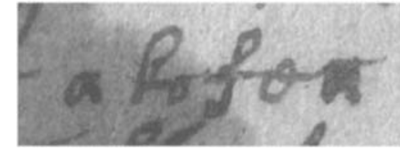

FIGURE I

Detail from the statement of *Mary Warren v. Mary Ireson and Mary Toothaker,* Essex County Court Archives, vol. 2, no. 117, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Judicial Archives, on deposit at the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

Other comparisons have allowed the editors to search for similarities and differences that can reveal chronological associations between documents, allowing for the dating of documents that otherwise have no dating clues in the content of the text. The editors compiled a database of the handwriting of more than two hundred unique recorders found across the nine hundred or so manuscripts transcribed in the new edition, which they could sort by scribe or by distinctive feature. The database kept track of the four classes of features: distinctive orthography, individual letter formation, abbreviation style, and idiosyncratic punctuation. These identifiers worked even in manuscripts where a recorder may have only contributed a few words or lines, offering otherwise unavailable insights into who was actively participating in the legal proceedings, when, in which cases, and on whose behalf.

Parris took down the accounts of the examinations of at least nineteen accused people (a figure based only on the extant manuscripts in his hand). He also wrote a variety of depositions against many of the people considered first for prosecution when the Court of Oyer and Terminer convened in late May 1692, but none after that. His handwriting also appears on matching testimony by his niece, Abigail Williams, against the same set of people. From comparing the documents across archives, this pattern of Parris's participation in and withdrawal from the proceedings becomes clear. Sergeant Thomas Putnam, father of "afflicted" Ann Putnam Jr., recorded 120 depositions on behalf of himself and thirty-eight others in cases against twenty-nine different people, nineteen of whom were convicted and fourteen executed. These depositions by the "afflicted" and their relatives describing the preternatural crimes that led to the examinant's arrest were sometimes mentioned in the accounts of the public examinations of the accused as having been read aloud to the accused so they could answer what was charged against

them during their interrogation.[18] These depositions by so many people are remarkable because they contain specific similarities in the descriptions of the afflictions and the phrasing of the accusations. This similarity seems likely to have been due to the influence of Thomas Putnam, who was the recorder and the one common element across the group of accusers.

When comparing these numerous depositions visually, something else curious becomes apparent: what may appear to be a simple change in ink color in the middle of a single deposition written by Thomas Putnam, a feature that could be attributed to any number of reasons, gains significance when a similar ink change occurs consistently at the beginning of a specific phrase, "also on the [day] day of [month], being the day of [his/her] examination," referencing spectral afflictions on the date of the public examination of the accused, which was appended to texts that described events and afflictions preceding the examination.[19] Many of these depositions carry a final few lines written by Simon Willard, Andrew Elliot, or a few other recognizable but as yet unidentified recorders specifying the date when the witness swore to the deposition before a jury of inquest. Because most of the bills of indictment presented to the grand juries specified that the crime occurred on the date of the examination of the accused, it may be that Thomas Putnam added these sections to the documents in direct support of the charges specified in the indictments on which the grand jury was to decide. What also became evident is that these records in general were not created one manuscript at a time, each completed in a single sitting by a single writer, but that most were texts coconstructed by two, three, or more people over time and used for multiple purposes on different occasions. The appending of the words *Jurat in Curia* in Sewall's hand indicates an additional date and use: the document was entered as evidence at the trial of the accused.

Each document in *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* has anywhere from one to five chronological markers associated with it. The date of grand jury hearings is often mentioned in the oath that people swore to their previous depositions, allowing the editors to determine when the grand juries sat in whose cases, but indictments presented to the grand juries are typically undated. Very rarely there is a date on one, usually in

[18] For examples see the accounts of the examinations of John Willard (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 823–29; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 173–74) and Martha Cory (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 248–54; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 16).

[19] For examples of the formulaic construction as it appears in context, see the deposition of *Ann Putnam Jr. v. Sarah Good* (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 373–74; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 9), and the deposition of *Mercy Lewis v. John Willard* (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 849–50; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 184).

Sewall's handwriting after a *Jurat* or *Jurat in Curia* notation next to a name on a list of witnesses, apparently indicating that the witness swore to his or her testimony at the trial itself.

The editors have also been able to dovetail this chronological information with the data about the recorders, leading to a high degree of certainty, for instance, that the handwriting of Newton, the first attorney general handling the cases for the Court of Oyer and Terminer, only appears in manuscripts from the end of May, when he was appointed to the position, until late July, when he departed. Anthony Checkley, his successor, was appointed in July. His handwriting does not appear on the indictments against George Burroughs, George Jacobs Sr., Elizabeth Procter, or John Procter, whose cases were brought to the grand jury on August 3 and 4, but it does appear on the indictments against Mary Esty and Martha Cory for their grand juries on August 3 and 4. Being able to isolate the contributions to the witchcraft documents by the two attorneys general offers a clearer picture of the duties of the office.

In some cases there have been only a few or small samples of individual handwriting. Two recorders from the same town, Mary Bradbury's husband, Thomas, and their son-in-law, John True, have strikingly similar handwriting, making it difficult to differentiate between their contributions. The timely appearance of an eBay auction in April 2006 of several signed seventeenth-century documents in the handwriting of both men helped enormously.[20]

Another aspect of the new transcriptions is the consistent reclamation of text that had been crossed out. In one document the name "Wiluam procter" is crossed out in a list of names. The first name in that list has previously been transcribed as "Wm procter," supporting the plausibility that the second name was deleted because William was included twice by mistake. Previous transcriptions have not included the deletion. Further investigation has revealed that what has been traditionally rendered as "Wm" is actually "beni," a reference to William's brother, Benjamin, revealing that William was not named in this evidence. In other documents the names of some of the accusers are crossed out, including Betty Parris's name deleted as an accuser in a deposition against Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn, and Tituba; Shelden's name removed as one of the "afflicted" in a deposition by Hubbard against Hoar; and the excision of any mention of the afflictions of Ann Putnam Jr., Mary Walcott, and Williams from a deposition by Lewis against Elizabeth

[20] "Rare and Important 17thc American Documents Salisbury MA: T. Bradbury Salem Witch Husband, Found in Rare NE Book," eBay auction no. 7025483354, Apr. 22–May 2, 2006, for sale by "merrymagpie."

Procter.[21] Identifying the actual Procter brother named is clearly beneficial in this kind of reclamation of text, yet the implications of the removal of accusers' names may be significant and certainly warrants further research.

Another correction pertains to the name of Good's four- or five-year-old daughter. Startlingly, Dorcas was not the girl's name. It was Dorothy. An examination of all references to this child by name across all the documents reveals that though Magistrate Hathorne initially recorded her name as "Dorcas Good" on the warrant for her apprehension on March 23, 1692, and the same name was copied farther down the document in the return of the constable when she was arrested on March 24, in every other document that uses her first name she is called Dorothy (Figure II). The singularity of the appearance of "Dorcas" may seem convincing enough, at face value, but two other documents in Hathorne's handwriting, a census of prisoners on May 23 and a mittimus on May 25 that include the girl, show evidence that he corrected her name from Dorcas to Dorothy (Figures III–IV).[22] As in many cases, the authorities simply did not know the people brought before them, just as in many cases people making complaints did not know the first names of those against whom they were complaining. Previously, historians only followed Hathorne's initial error.

The meaning and significance of the Salem witch trials will not stand or fall on these discoveries, though they give valuable insight into the judicial meticulousness of the proceedings. When names were not known, as was often the case, they were subsequently filled in. It is revealing that names were not known; either the scholarly impression of the communities as close-knit needs revisiting or some other aspect of the culture needs more investigation. Though *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* demonstrates some examples of people not knowing names, *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* reveals much more fully the extent of this situation as well as the bureaucracy at work in seeking to make

[21] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 688–89 ("Wm," 2: 688); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 502 ("beni"). For more on Betty Parris, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 612–13; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 207. For more on Susannah Shelden, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 395–96; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 403. For more on Ann Putnam Jr., Mary Walcott, and Abigail Williams, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 670; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 51.

[22] For more on the warrant for Dorothy Good's arrest, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 351; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 22. For more on the census and mittimus, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 873–74, 1: 255; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 216–17.

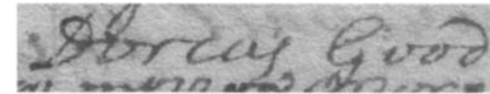

FIGURE II

Detail from the arrest warrant of Dorothy Good, Essex County Court Archives, vol. 1, no. 61, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Judicial Archives, on deposit at the Phillips Library.

proper identifications in a legal system that was anything but haphazard. This judicial system was far from being hysterical.

The judiciary, though not fair by modern standards, was meticulous by the standards of its day. There were two ways a person could be charged with the crime of witchcraft in these proceedings: either for specific malevolent acts using witchcraft to afflict a person or for covenanting with the devil. The best supporting evidence for conviction for the former charge was a statement from two or more "Humane Witnesses" to the same criminal act.[23] Typically, the best supporting evidence for the latter charge was a defendant's own sworn confession.

Indictments on their face look fairly boring. They were created with a boilerplate fill-in-the-blank form and contain formulaic language that is repeated in each text. When looking at the manuscripts in person and in color digital images, the fill-in-the-blank design of these documents is immediately apparent, often because different ink used to fill in the blanks with the defendant's name and residence and the particulars of the crime stands out more visibly. The grand jury decided on separate indictments presented to it by the attorney general, charging the accused for each person they allegedly "afflicted" in addition to a charge of covenanting if the accused had confessed during an examination. At that point the grand jury had to decide whether to return a true bill, which led to arraignment and trial, or an ignoramus. Indictment boilerplates drawn up in 1692 contain slightly different language from those of 1693, specifically near the end of the document, where the 1692 boilerplate refers to the "forme of the Stattute," whereas the 1693 boilerplate refers to the "Law." Some indictments were apparently drawn up in 1692 but not presented to a grand jury until 1693 and have the words "forme of the Stattute" crossed out and "Law" written in.[24] This difference helps determine when these undated documents were initially prepared.

[23] [Samuel Willard], *Some Miscellany Observations On our present Debates Respecting Witchcrafts, in a Dialogue Between S[alem] and B[oston]* (Philadelphia, 1692), 6.

[24] For an example of the 1692 boilerplate, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 87–88; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no.

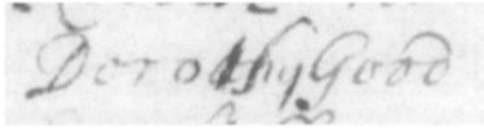

FIGURE III

Detail from a census of prisoners, Essex County Court Archives, vol. 2, no. 134, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Judicial Archives, on deposit at the Phillips Library.

Newton, as attorney general, filled in the indictments against John Willard and Nurse on June 3, 1692. The ink Newton used has, over the years, turned bright orange. This same ink is also seen dotting many of the i's and capitalizing a T in the boilerplate form, giving scholars additional insight into the meticulousness of his practice.

When a person was arrested in June, July, and August, he or she was examined, and once the Court of Oyer and Terminer was convened and a grand jury returned a true bill on the indictment, the person was usually tried swiftly, sometimes on the same day as the true bill. In September, however, the number of cases being handled by the court multiplied, and though the court's precedents generally continued, deviation in the pattern of addressing some cases occurred. Public examinations by local officials and grand juries and trials before the Court of Oyer and Terminer of numerous people were all being conducted concurrently, which means that following the chronology of events is more challenging, complicated by the number of legal records that are apparently no longer extant.

The first of two grand juries in September was seated early in the month, September 6–10. Based on dates of sworn testimony, this grand jury appears to have met on the cases of Mary Bradbury, Giles Cory, Abigail Hobbs, Rebecca Jacobs, Alice Parker, William Procter, and Pudeator. The presence of the same handwriting in the notation of "bila uera" and "bil a uera" on the reverse of the indictments confirms this group; the notation differs from the notation of "Billa vera" (variant spellings of *billa vera*, all meaning true bill) on the indictments of the cases heard by the second seating of the grand jury, during the week of September 13–17, that decided on the indictments against Sarah Buckley,

273. For an example of the 1693 boilerplate, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 77; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 748. For an example of an update made to a boilerplate, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 315; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 791.

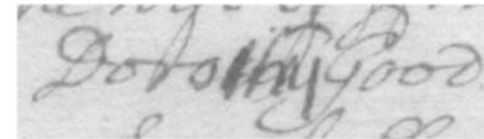

FIGURE IV

Detail from a mittimus, Essex County Court Archives, vol. 1, no. 36, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Judicial Archives, on deposit at the Phillips Library.

Rebecca Eames, Abigail Faulkner Sr., Ann Foster, Margaret Jacobs, Mary Lacey Sr., Mary Parker, Wilmot Redd, Samuel Wardwell, and Mary Whittredge.[25] All these people had to face the charges in court, some before the Court of Oyer and Terminer that month and others before the Superior Court of Judicature the following January.

The pleas as well as the grand jury decisions were written in Latin: the notation of "Ponet Se," short for *Ponit Se Super Patriam* (he puts himself before the country), indicated that the accused entered a plea of not guilty and agreed to be tried by jury. The notation of a plea of *Cognovit* (acknowledging the charge) was a formal confession of guilt to the charges in the indictment, and the defendant would go directly to the sentencing phase of the proceedings.[26] Four women pled guilty in September: Rebecca Eames; Ann Foster; her daughter, Mary Lacey Sr.; and Abigail Hobbs, but they were not executed with the others who were convicted at trial in September, which likely caused much of the discord and the dissolution of the court soon thereafter.

By comparing the handwriting of just these few Latin words on the backs of the indictments, the editors have been able to discern patterns that reveal more about the time line of cases against various people such as Cloyce, William Procter, and Job Tookey, though there is no testimony

[25] For examples of *billa vera* notations on indictments, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 414 ("bil a Vera"), 1: 146 ("Billa Vera"); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 607 ("bila uera"), 618 ("Billa vera").

[26] For an example of a "Ponet Se" notation on an indictment, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 291; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 460. For an example of a *Cognovit* notation on an indictment, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 414; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 607. For an example of a *Cognovit* notation missing from an earlier transcription, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 414–15; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 606.

dated as sworn to any grand jury for any of them. These three are not as well known today as some of their relatives who had been condemned and hanged during the summer.

William Procter, a son of Elizabeth and John Procter, offers a useful example for the way in which the edition tracks a case. William was first complained against on May 28, 1692, with ten other people from nearly as many towns across Essex, Middlesex, and Suffolk counties. Joseph Holton and John Walcott, who filed the complaint, knew the first names of only four of the eleven people they accused of afflicting Lewis, Ann Putnam Jr., Mary Walcott, and Williams, though a separate document, in the handwriting of Thomas Putnam and Hathorne, contains a list of exactly who was supposed to have "afflicted" whom. Five of the people named in the complaint are noted on the bottom of the complaint, including William. Warrants were issued that day by Hathorne and Corwin for the apprehension of William, Martha Carrier of Andover, How of Topsfield, Redd of Marblehead, and Sarah Rice of Reading, instructing the various constables to bring the accused to Nathaniel Ingersoll's tavern in Salem Village for examination on May 31. A warrant for another person named in the complaint, John Alden of Boston, was issued on May 31, bringing the total number of people examined that day to six.[27] All these warrants specified Mary Walcott as one of those "afflicted," and the warrant for William alleged that he had also "afflicted" Susannah Shelden. Accounts exist of the examinations of Carrier, How, and Redd, all of whom were convicted and executed, but the account of William's first examination on that day does not.

Three indictments against William survive, all of which were returned ignoramus by the grand jury, but the handwriting indicates that grand juries from two different courts heard charges against him. The later indictment drawn up against him for allegedly afflicting Mary Walcott during his examination on September 17, 1692, was returned "IgnoRamus" by a grand jury that is easily identified as being the first grand jury of the Superior Court of Judicature in January 1693. The docket is endorsed by Robert Payne, the foreman of other January grand juries. The examination from September is notated as having been sworn to by William Murray, the recorder of the examination, and was attested to by Justice of the Peace Higginson on January 7, 1693. The boilerplate form of this indictment itself confirms this dating, the handwriting and language used in the template being identical to those in other indictments known to have been created in 1693. The earlier two

[27] For more on the list, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 871–72; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 222. For more on the warrant, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 695; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 226.

indictments against William—those for afflicting Hubbard and Warren on May 31, 1692, the day he was initially examined (curiously, not the same two girls he was arrested for allegedly afflicting)—are somewhat more difficult to date. On September 8, 1692, Hubbard swore to her evidence against William before a grand jury for the Court of Oyer and Terminer, indicating that a grand jury was hearing his case then. The handwriting and language used in the boilerplates of both these other indictments match thirty-five other indictments in the cases of twenty-two others, as does the handwriting of the unknown recorder of the grand jury's finding of "Igno Rama" on the dockets. Whether he was released when the grand jury failed to indict him in September is not known, but he was apparently accused again and reexamined on September 17, and the whole process started over for him.[28] Indictments in both years notwithstanding, he never went to trial.

One area of speculation by researchers has been why Cloyce never came to trial. The best clues are found by examining what happened during the grand jury inquest. Witnesses were called on September 5, 1692, to a grand jury regarding the charges against her for afflicting Mary Walcott and Williams at her examination on April 11, 1692. Some of those summoned included her sister-in-law, Mary Towne, and four of her children. They failed to show up, tendering the excuse that they were too ill to travel to court. The three indictments drawn up against Cloyce, including the one charging her with afflicting one of her nieces on September 9, a date when the grand jury was seated (two days after the girl failed to show up), all appear to have been created at the same time, with boilerplates all written in the same handwriting and filled in by then–Attorney General Checkley.[29] Still, no grand jury made a decision in September: the grand jury that officially rejected all three extant indictments against Cloyce as ignoramus was the one convened in January 1693 with Payne as foreman. Further evidence that the indictments were not addressed until 1693 is that one of them has some of the boilerplate language from 1692 crossed out and corrected to match the different boilerplate language of 1693.

[28] For the ignoramus notations on William Procter's indictments, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 697–98 ("Ignoramus," 2: 698), 695–97 ("IgnoRamus," 2: 696–97); Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, nos. 776 ("Ignoramus"), 581–82 ("Igno Rama"). On the September examination, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 2: 698–99; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 663.

[29] On the summons of witnesses for Sarah Cloyce's inquest, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 257–58; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 549. For the excuse, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 292; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 576. On the three indictments, see Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 222–23; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, no. 809.

Regarding the first five cases that were tried in January 1693 by the Superior Court of Judicature, those of Rebecca Jacobs, Margaret Jacobs, Buckley, Whittredge, and Tookey, the handwriting on the indictments indicates they were not connected to Payne's January grand jury. The hand of the recorder of the words *billa vera* and ignoramus on the extant indictments matches the handwriting found on the indictments that the editors know were addressed by the second September grand jury (September 13–17). No other evidence has ever been available to determine a likely date for Tookey's grand jury hearing.

When the Court of Oyer and Terminer was dismissed in the fall, everything was apparently put on hold. Four people who had pled guilty to a capital crime had not been executed, five people who stood indicted had not been arraigned or tried, and at least three were still being held and charges pursued against them even after a grand jury had failed to return a *billa vera* on any of the original charges against them, all in addition to the many people who were waiting in jail for the court to initiate proceedings against them.

No doubt scholars could have reached some of the conclusions in these previous discussions, some with great difficulty, using one of the previous editions. They could not have reached others, especially those addressing chronology, assessing the roles of the recorders of documents, and clarifying which grand jury was hearing which case. Individual readers will decide whether the organizational principles behind *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* and the execution of those principles are more useful than those of past editions. There is no doubt the editors have raised matters in the new edition that simply have not been addressed before. Previously unpublished manuscripts will appear in print for the first time and important previously published documents, such as Giles Cory's examination, omitted in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, will be part of a comprehensive collection of the legal records. The edition will identify recorders' handwriting systematically and the presumably missing documents used at trial will be visible to all. Not everything will be news to all scholars, but a lot will be news to most.

Salem Witchcraft, Factionalism, and Social Change Reconsidered: Were Salem's Witch-Hunters Modernization's Failures?

Richard Latner

THE 1692 Salem witchcraft outbreak has had an enduring capacity for attracting popular and scholarly attention. It combines a compelling and sometimes heroic narrative with the dark allure of subverting American exceptionalist assumptions of tolerance, compromise, conciliation, and harmony. Richly complex and layered, it is continuously amenable to fresh investigation. Thus, though the harvest of books and articles on Salem may deter researchers from this well-trodden terrain, ample rewards may result not only from formulating new interpretations but also from reexamining prevailing conceptualizations.

Recent Salem scholarship has moved significantly beyond the traditional accounts associated with Charles W. Upham and Marion L. Starkey, who viewed the witchcraft outbreak as an exceptional yet all-too-understandable manifestation of Puritanism in an "age of superstition." Since the 1970s scholars have applied social and cultural history, geography, anthropology, and gender studies to reveal Salem not only as an intricate tale of woe but also as an integral part of the landscape of early American history. Studies of witchcraft, magic, and religion have demonstrated the widespread nature of magical beliefs and practices in early modern America and England. Other accounts, focusing on women's preeminent role as witchcraft's victims, confessors, and afflicted, have applied psychological insights to illuminate the social-structural context of witchcraft in New England. Meanwhile a commendable biography of Samuel Parris, Salem Village's minister at the time of the outbreak, and the publication of Parris's sermons have located Salem more precisely within the era's religious developments, complementing research that has underscored the distinctive religious,

Richard Latner is a professor of history at Tulane University. For their comments and constructive suggestions, he thanks David Allmendinger, John Diem, Larry Gragg, Janet Hughes, John Liukkonen, Kenneth Lockridge, Steven Mintz, Benjamin Ray, and Bernard Rosenthal as well as the anonymous readers for the *William and Mary Quarterly*.

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demographic, and geographic patterns of settlement in Salem Town and Village. Mary Beth Norton has fitted the Salem outbreak into a "broader crisis that produced the trials," contending that without an ongoing frontier battle between colonists and Native Americans, the "Essex County witchcraft crisis of 1692 would not have occurred." Salem witchcraft, an episode that eminent colonial New England historian Perry Miller labeled "peripheral" and discounted as having "no effect" on New England's ecclesiastical, political, institutional, or ideological development, continues to be a case study in creative historical investigation.[1]

Within this seemingly inexhaustible world of modern Salem scholarship, one study holds a special place and continues to influence and shape the discussion of Salem witchcraft. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's 1974 *Salem Possessed* revitalized New England witchcraft studies and won the American Historical Association's John H. Dunning Prize. A decade later, in his historiographical assessment of witchcraft studies, David D. Hall claimed that witchcraft investigations had "entered a new phase" with this work and that the book's argument was "too well known to need restating in detail"; another prominent witchcraft historian upholds its authoritative status as the "most ambitious modern attempt to explain the Salem episode."[2]

[1] Charles W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft: With an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects* (1867; repr., New York, 1959), 1: 6 ("age of superstition"), 2: 345–47; Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York, 2002), 4 ("broader crisis"), 298 ("Essex County witchcraft"); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), 209 ("peripheral"), 191 ("no effect"). Marion L. Starkey depicted the Salem outbreak as a "capitulation of reason" by "a people whose natural impulses had long been repressed by the severity of their belief." See Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Inquiry into the Salem Witch Trials* (New York, 1950), 28–30 (quotation, 29–30). Especially noteworthy works that offer different perspectives on witchcraft and Salem include Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (London, 1970); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971); John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York, 1982); Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York, 1987); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); Larry Gragg, *A Quest for Security: The Life of Samuel Parris, 1653–1720* (New York, 1990); Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (New York, 1992); James F. Cooper Jr. and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris, 1689–1694* (Boston, 1993); Cedric B. Cowing, *The Saving Remnant: Religion and the Settling of New England* (Urbana, Ill., 1995).

[2] David D. Hall, "Witchcraft and the Limits of Interpretation," *New England Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (June 1985): 253–81 ("entered a new phase," 263); Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge, 1993), 3 ("most ambitious modern attempt"). Stanley N. Katz and John M. Murrin note that in applying "to Salem Village the techniques of community study that were already transforming the social history of early New England," Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum "dramatically shifted the terms of the debate" over Salem witchcraft. See Katz and Murrin, eds., *Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development*, 3d ed. (New York, 1983), 344. Mary Beth Norton, almost thirty years later, still refers to "the influential *Salem Possessed*." See Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 4. An examination of leading publications about the Salem outbreak shows that whatever their reservations, historians continue to consult and even rely on Boyer and Nissenbaum's study. For example the excellent synthesis by Bryan F. Le Beau draws directly on their discussion of Salem Village factionalism and reprints their map locating accusers, witches, and defenders in the village. See Le Beau, *The Story of the Salem Witch Trials: "We Walked In Clouds and Could Not See Our Way"* (Upper Saddle River, N.J., 1998), 57–60. By inspiring new research, Boyer and Nissenbaum also generated critiques and conflicting interpretations.

Minimizing the singularity of the Salem witch hunt, Boyer and Nissenbaum grounded the outbreak in the "prosaic, everyday lives of obscure and inarticulate men and women" whose "lives were being shaped by powerful forces of historical change." The specific nature of this historical change was nothing less than the inexorable movement toward commerce and capitalism embodied in the increased bustle and prominence of Salem Town. *Salem Possessed* deftly subsumed the petty personal quarrels featured in many early accounts into an archetypal clash between the agricultural hinterland of Salem Village, an area grounded in "pre-capitalistic patterns of village existence," and its ever more cosmopolitan neighbor, Salem Town. Constrained by diminished land availability, the village's economy was, at best, holding its own; relative to the increased wealth of Salem Town, it was falling behind.[3]

One of the excitements of the book was its iconoclastic revision of the popular idea that witch-hunters attacked the weak, vulnerable, and powerless. Instead, according to Boyer and Nissenbaum, it was the witch-hunters who were actually in retreat. Outstripped by their rivals, they launched a "fleeting offensive—counter-offensive, really—in the midst of a general and sustained retreat." Like German troops at the Battle of the Bulge, the traditionalists' advance was only temporarily successful; soon, they and their society were swept to defeat.[4]

Boyer and Nissenbaum marshaled an array of evidence to support their basic contention, including portraits of leading participants in the Salem affair, such as the rival Porter and Putnam families. They were able to reconstruct Salem Village's factionalism in astonishing detail, primarily through church and village records. This factionalism preceded and precipitated the events of 1692. Though rooted in an overarching economic transformation, factionalism revealed itself in the

[3] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), xii ("prosaic, everyday lives"), 86–90 ("pre-capitalistic patterns," 88).

[4] Ibid., xiii.

village's deep division over its church and Parris's ministry even before charges of witchcraft began. Boyer and Nissenbaum uncovered two petitions of particular value dating from 1695, three years after the trials: one signed by a group urging the dismissal of Parris and the other, a larger one, defending the minister. The number of men and women signing these lists totaled 189 and constituted, in Boyer and Nissenbaum's words, a "strikingly high" number of the village's estimated 215 adults.[5] By linking petition names with church and tax records, the authors were able to offer information about ordinary members of the community as well as leaders and to examine how factional affiliation was associated with church membership, wealth, and geographic location.

Their analysis revealed that the pro-Parris faction was more strongly linked to membership in the village church and was distinctly less affluent than the anti-Parris opposition. Salem Village's wealthiest residents opposed the minister two to one, and the average tax of the anti-Parris group was 67 percent higher than that of the ministry faction. Moreover the pro-Parris contingent lived away from the commercialism of Salem Town, in a more westerly direction, whereas Parris's enemies were concentrated in the village's eastern section adjacent to Salem Town, to which they were economically and politically tied. Though the pro- and anti-Parris petitions circulated years after the conclusion of the trials, Boyer and Nissenbaum contended that the structure of village factionalism was continuous throughout the witchcraft era, contributing to its outbreak and persisting afterward. Signing the pro-Parris petition was therefore indicative of support for Parris before and during the trials, whereas the anti-Parris faction was associated with earlier opposition to Parris and the witch prosecutions. To demonstrate the continuity of Salem Village's dissension, the authors identified forty-seven petition signers who took a position during the trials, either by supplying evidence against an accused witch or by offering some kind of defense of an accused person; they found a clear-cut association between support for the trials and signing the pro-Parris petition, and vice versa.[6]

[5] Ibid., 80 n. 2.

[6] Ibid., 35, 82–86, 97, 100, 185. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's contention that the two petitions supply evidence of prewitchcraft factionalism in Salem Village is problematic. A petitioner's stand regarding Samuel Parris in 1695 does not necessarily indicate a position prior to or during 1692. My own reexamination of the petition lists, however, confirms Boyer and Nissenbaum's claim. Of the 105 male and female signers of the pro-Parris petition, only 10 expressed any reservations about the trials in 1692 by defending an accused person, and 4 of these 10 also presented testimony against an accused witch. At the same time, 32 of these signers aided the prosecution of witches in some way. The pro-Parris petition is also replete with names of the village church's leaders and their relatives, Parris's principal support in the community. As for the 67 adults who signed the anti-Parris petition, only 9 offered support for accusations against witches, and 2 of these 9 also defended an accused witch. Others made accusations only at the outset of the episode but then ceased to participate. Furthermore, 19 additional anti-Parris petitioners defended an accused witch, and 4 found either themselves or their spouses accused. Most significantly, every leading opponent of Parris's ministry prior to 1692 later signed the anti-Parris petition. Many others on the anti-Parris petition were close relatives of these men. In short the 1695 petitions are imperfect yet defensible evidence of Salem Village's pre-1692 factional divisions. See Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, 3 vols. (New York, 1977); Benjamin C. Ray, "Salem Witch Trials: Documentary Archive and Transcription Project," http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/texts/transcripts.html.

Though innovative, *Salem Possessed* had limitations and problems that became apparent over time. Its emphasis on factional conflict rooted in economic transformation did little to explain women's special prominence in Salem and New England witchcraft incidents. And little was said about events beyond Salem. Did the geographic and economic conditions revealed within Salem operate in Andover or the more than twenty other Massachusetts communities that participated in 1692? Perhaps these communities, too, were involved in the turmoil provoked by commercial capitalism; if so, Boyer and Nissenbaum presented no evidence.[7]

Critics also faulted *Salem Possessed* for imposing an artificial model of social development on a more complex historical reality. It depicted a society moving from a covenant community of subsistence agriculture to one based on merchant capitalism. But as Christine Alice Young has noted, Salem Town did not show a smooth developmental continuum "from simple to complex, homogeneous to heterogeneous, horizontal to vertical." The town was diversified from the outset, and merchants, rather than constituting a corrosive element to social harmony, acted as "the most significant unifying force for this early New England town." Perhaps, then, it should not be surprising that during the 1692 trials magistrates and judges such as John Hathorne, Jonathan Corwin, and Bartholomew Gedney, who upheld a staunchly conservative interpretation of spectral evidence and the powers of witches, were associated with mercantile activity and with Salem Town, not the agricultural hinterland of Salem Village. As one historian notes of Hathorne, it was possible in

[7] Cedric B. Cowing, review of *Salem Possessed*, by Boyer and Nissenbaum, *American Historical Review* 80, no. 5 (December 1975): 1381–82; Chadwick Hansen, "Andover Witchcraft and the Causes of the Salem Witchcraft Trials," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow (Urbana, Ill., 1983), 38–57; Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1997), 5–7; Mary Beth Norton, "Finding the Devil in the Details of the Salem Witchcraft Trials," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jan. 21, 2000, B4–B5. An excellent critique of *Salem Possessed* is found in Hall, *New England Quarterly* 58: 263–66.

seventeenth-century Massachusetts to simultaneously be a merchant and "a leader of the orthodox, anticommercial party in colonial politics."[8]

Similarly, the depiction of Salem Village as a simple agrarian society insufficiently accounted for the village as a fast-growing center of commercial agriculture with portions of its farmland owned by townspeople. Indeed the movement of farmers away from town centers in seventeenth-century New England was increasingly associated with a decline of traditional values and a threat to cohesive institutions such as the church. "Outlivers," those who moved beyond town centers, were often reproached for placing land and material rewards above God and community. Though Boyer and Nissenbaum identified the outlivers of Salem Village with anticommercial values, they were not necessarily considered that way in late-seventeenth-century Massachusetts.[9]

To date, however, no one has challenged the economic data that Boyer and Nissenbaum supplied to support their claim of the rising economic fortunes of the witch hunt's opponents and the declining condition of Salem Village's resolute supporters of Parris and the trials. Though an investigation into this one evidentiary building block may seem of marginal value, the data Boyer and Nissenbaum used are critical to their modernization argument about the origins of Salem witchcraft. Challenging their economic interpretation, therefore, encourages a search for alternative, better explanations. Moreover a reexamination of their evidence offers a necessary and useful reminder that basic quantitative reasoning—not necessarily expertise—remains an essential tool for historical discourse.

To demonstrate the "comparative economic standing of the two factions" in Salem Village, Boyer and Nissenbaum primarily relied on a tax assessment undertaken by the village in December 1695. Linking the names of villagers who signed the 1695 pro- and anti-Parris petitions to this tax record, they found that the average tax of those favoring Parris was 10.9 shillings whereas the average tax of his opponents was substantially higher, 15.3 shillings. At the upper end of the economic scale, eight of the twelve highest taxpayers signed the anti-Parris petition whereas only four backed him. The bottom of the economic scale revealed the relative lack of wealth of the Salem Village traditionalists; the "poorer men of the Village" approved of the minister's conduct by a margin of two to one.[10]

[8] Christine Alice Young, *From "Good Order" to Glorious Revolution: Salem, Massachusetts, 1628–1689* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1980), 7 ("from simple to complex"), 52; Richard P. Gildrie, *Salem, Massachusetts, 1626–1683: A Covenant Community* (Charlottesville, Va., 1975), 138 ("leader of the orthodox").

[9] Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982), 243–45 ("Outlivers," 244); Young, *From "Good Order" to Glorious Revolution*, 157.

[10] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 81–83 (quotations, 81), 98–100.

But can one tax list bear the weight of this sweeping thesis of rising and falling economic groups? Even if the 1695 tax list shows disparities between Parris's supporters and opponents, it cannot address changes over time, for instance whether one group's wealth was rising while the other's was falling. Boyer and Nissenbaum's conclusion was diachronic; their evidence, synchronic. Clearly, it would be more appropriate to use multiple tax lists rather than one to measure the economic mobility of individuals and groups in Salem Village. Fortunately, Salem Village's Book of Record contains, in addition to the 1695 list Boyer and Nissenbaum used, a number of tax assessments for years preceding and following the 1692 outbreak. Specifically, the village recorded assessments for the years 1681, 1690, 1694, 1695, 1697, 1699, and 1700.[11]

The 1690 tax list is especially significant. Originally adopted for the year July 1, 1689–July 1, 1690, the rates were reauthorized in July 1690 and remained in effect until July 1691, less than a year before the first formal accusation of the outbreak occurred, at the end of February 1692. Since there was no assessment for 1692, when virtually the entire witchcraft episode took place, this roll supplies the closest approximation of the economic standing of Salem Villagers at that time.[12]

[11] The assessments, which extend beyond 1700, have been published in the *Historical Collections of the Danvers Historical Society*. Some but not all appear in Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's splendidly edited document collection, *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (Belmont, Calif., 1972). Beginning in 1672 Salem Village maintained its own minister. Though the village still constituted, in effect, a parish of the town until 1752, it possessed the power to tax inhabitants for their church. Each year the village elected a five-member committee that determined the cost of maintaining the ministry and assessed the inhabitants according to their developed and undeveloped landholdings and other property. The basis for taxation did not change during this period. See "A Book of Record of the Severall Publique Transa[c]tions of the Inhabitants of Sale[m] Village Vulgarly Called the Farme[s]," in *Historical Collections of the Danvers Historical Society* (Salem, Mass., 1925–26, 1928–29), 13: 91–122, esp. 13: 99–102, 14: 65–99, esp. 14: 81–83, 93–99, 16: 60–80, esp. 16: 75–78, 17: 74–103, esp. 17: 76–79, 87–90; Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years, Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636–1736* (New York, 1970), 101–2; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, 321–22, 331, 353–55, 363–67; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 41–44; Young, *From "Good Order" to Glorious Revolution*, 49. The original documents in photocopy form are available in the Danvers Archival Center, Peabody Institute Library, Danvers, Mass.

[12] The assessment for the year beginning July 1, 1689, and ending July 1, 1690, was entered in the Book of Record following entries for Dec. 30, 1690, and Jan. 6, 1691, but the words preceding the tax list establish that this assessment was made for the 1689–90 tax year, though the information was apparently not inserted in the Book of Record at that time. Immediately following the register of taxpayers is this notation: "This Ratte was made for the maitenance of Mr. Parise for the yeare beginning Juley the first 1690," indicating that the rate remained in effect until at least July 1, 1691, only about seven months before the first afflictions broke out in Samuel Parris's home. See "Book of Record," in *Historical Collections*, 14: 81–83.

Using these tax records, it is possible to create a data set containing the names of all Salem Village taxpayers from 1681 to 1700 with their assessment on each tax list and whether they signed the pro-Parris or anti-Parris petition.[13] One hundred five villagers signed the pro-Parris petition; fifty-four were either adult male householders or church members who were qualified to pay village taxes for the ministry. Of the eighty-four anti-Parris petition signers, forty were adult householders or church members. An additional seventeen signers of the 1695 anti-Parris petition were sixteen-year-old men, too young to be assessed in the period of the outbreak.

Two hundred taxpayers appeared on one or more of the seven assessments taken during the two decades. Fifty-three of the fifty-four adult male signers of the pro-Parris petition appeared on the tax rolls at some time. Of the opposition group, thirty-seven of the forty adult male petitioners appeared on the rolls at some point. In addition one widow of a male petitioner and seven of the seventeen anti-Parris young men showed up on the rates beginning in 1697.[14]

There are a number of considerations to keep in mind about these data. They supply information only about Salem Village taxpayers. The assessments are also only an approximation of wealth; the documents are imprecise about whether the rates reflected all components of wealth, such as personal property or any property held outside the village. Moreover tax assessments in general can be misleading. A low rate may signal humble or modest circumstances, yet it could also mean that the taxpayer was the young son of a well-to-do resident who stood to inherit considerable property in the near future. Similarly, an adult with a high assessment on one tax list but whose position plummeted in the next record may have granted portions of his estate to his children and, though holding less land himself, retained the ability to tap the resources of his family.[15]

[13] A common problem with quantitative data is the proper linking of a name with its associated variables. Constructing the Salem data set is no exception. There are, however, too few uncertain cases to affect the analysis. This data set and the analysis that follows are part of a larger Web site project that will make these data available to researchers and students and present an interactive interpretation of various geographic and socioeconomic dimensions of Salem witchcraft.

[14] Rebecca Preston, who signed the anti-Parris petition, was assessed as Thomas Preston's widow on the 1697 list after her husband died. I have treated Thomas and Rebecca Preston's taxes as a continuous series, since both signed the anti-Parris petition. Five female taxpayers in all appeared at one time or another on these tax lists; all were widows. Four appeared on only a single year's list, and only the widow Preston signed a petition. Mary Putnam, mother of anti-Parris leader Joseph Putnam, may have sympathized with her son's cause, yet unlike her son she did not sign the anti-Parris petition. She paid taxes in the 1689 and 1690 assessments but not in 1694, the first assessment following the witchcraft episode.

[15] Distributing property to a son could result in a lower tax rate and economic ranking, though not always. Fathers might, for example, acquire new land to distribute to a son so that when the son first appeared on the tax list, the father's tax rate remained relatively constant. John Buxton, who signed the anti-Parris petition, appeared on each village tax list from 1681 to 1700. His rank among village taxpayers ranged from the top eighty-eighth percentile to the ninety-first percentile. His son John Jr., who signed the anti-Parris petition under the category of "young men 16 years old," first appeared on the village tax rolls in 1697, paying a tax for land that placed him in the bottom 10 percent of the roll. His father's ranking did not significantly change in that year. Many other cases, such as the Fuller family and the family of Samuel Nurse, showed a similar lack of effect on a father's economic rank when sons appeared on the tax rolls for the first time.

Finally, to compare tax levels across years, readers must recall that the total tax levied by Salem Village on the community fluctuated from year to year as the ministry's expenses changed. Thus variations in a taxpayer's assessment from one year to another do not necessarily signify changes in economic standing; it may simply indicate that different amounts of money were required by the community in different years. Therefore a person's economic standing must be measured relative to others on the same tax list. Such changes in relative wealth indicate how members of the village's two factions fared over time compared with each other.[16]

Despite interpretive and methodological difficulties, the rates Salem Village's committee established remain a valuable means for ascertaining the relative economic standing of the village's pro- and anti-Parris factions over time. A first step is to trace their movement in the years before 1692 by comparing information from the tax list of 1690, the rate most proximate to the witchcraft outbreak, with the assessment of 1681, the earliest extant recording of Salem Village taxes. These two records cover the entire decade prior to the outbreak. The results of using a variety of measurements paint a different picture of factional mobility in Salem Village from that portrayed in *Salem Possessed.* Though Boyer and Nissenbaum argued that the minister's traditionalist supporters were falling behind their modernizing opponents, the tax records reveal almost the reverse: the mainstays of the church were the ones who improved their standing while those who opposed the ministry barely held their own and, indeed, may well have declined in standing.

The most direct way to compare the experiences of the members of the pro- and anti-Parris factions is to identify those who were persisters, defined as taxpayers who appeared on both tax lists and also signed one of the 1695 petitions. Calculating the relative position of these partisans during a decade furnishes evidence about whether as individuals and as a group their standing improved, declined, or remained stable. Fifty

[16] Changes in a villager's relative standing do not necessarily denote changes in absolute wealth. A declining community, for example, could lower everyone's economic condition, though a person's relative position improved.

villagers were assessed taxes in 1681 and 1690, of whom forty-five signed one of the petitions, thus qualifying them as persisters. These forty-five persisters represent almost half the adult males who signed petitions in 1695. The twenty-four persisters who eventually signed the anti-Parris petition constituted an especially impressive 60 percent of the adult male signers of that petition. The twenty-one persisters who eventually signed the pro-Parris petition, on the other hand, constituted only 39 percent of the adult male signers.[17]

One way to determine persisters' economic mobility during the 1680s is to locate and compare each taxpayer's ranking on the two tax lists through a rank and percentile analysis. This technique reveals whether persisters changed their standing in the community during the 1680s, moving, for example, from the middling sixty-fifth percentile of taxpayers to the elite ninetieth percentile. If one selects a minimum of 10 percent change in ranking as a standard by which to measure the movement of a persister, the results show little evidence that those associated with opposition to the Parris ministry were advancing relative to others in Salem Village during the 1680s. Of the twenty-four anti-Parris persisters, almost 30 percent (seven of twenty-four) declined at least 10 percent in their percentile ranking during the decade. More than one-third (four of eleven) of the anti-Parris persisters who began the decade in the top quartile of village taxpayers experienced a decline of at least 10 percent in their percentile ranking. Even more compelling, three of these affluent anti-Parris persisters dropped from the top quartile of taxpayers into the middle ranks, defined as the two middle quartiles (ranging from the twenty-fifth to the seventy-fifth percentiles) of village taxpayers during this period; not a single middling anti-Parris persister rose to the top quartile of village taxpayers during the decade. Declines in percentile ranking often translated into noticeable drops on the taxpayer roll. Joseph Holton Sr., one of those who fell from the top quartile, ranked fifteenth among taxpayers in 1681 but only fiftieth in 1690. And Joseph Herrick Sr. dropped from eighteenth to thirty-ninth by 1690.[18]

[17] Since not all adult male signers of the 1695 petitions appeared on Salem Village tax lists, the percentage of persisters in both groups somewhat understates their relationship to the petitioners for whom there is tax data. There were ninety-four taxpayers on the Salem Village list for 1681 and one hundred taxpayers on the 1690 list.

[18] The groups of pro- and anti-Parris persisters are too small for these changes to be statistically significant. Even so the data reflect the experience of actual people, and the changes in their ranking, whether statistically significant or not, do not support the argument made by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum in *Salem Possessed.* I would like to thank Professor Janet M. Hughes, acting chair of the Department of Biostatistics of Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, for statistical assistance.

A close examination of the anti-Parris persisters whose ranking dropped during the 1680s even suggests the possibility that their decline was partly due to allocations of land to their sons, the kind of land scarcity that Boyer and Nissenbaum attributed to their opponents. Henry Kenney Sr., for example, ranked in the sixty-seventh percentile of taxpayers in 1681 but only in the twenty-first percentile a decade later, which coincided with the appearance of his son Henry Kenney Jr. on the tax rolls on the 1690 list. The son, likely with some landed assistance from his father, was in the fortieth percentile. A similar story holds for the wealthier Job Swinnerton, whose ranking fell from the eighty-ninth percentile to the seventy-eighth percentile during the 1680s. Swinnerton's two sons Jasper and Joseph (born in 1659 and 1660, respectively) first appear on the 1690 tax list. Both held only enough property to be in the twenty-fifth percentile of taxpayers. If, as Boyer and Nissenbaum contended, land scarcity and the division of estates contributed to an economic squeeze in Salem Village, there is evidence that the anti-Parris group felt its effect more than the minister's supporters.[19]

The percentage ranking of most anti-Parris persisters did not decline, and seven anti-Parris persisters improved their economic ranking at least 10 percent, the same number as those who declined. But such upward movement concentrated within the two middle quartiles of taxpayers. All but two of the seven started the decade in the lower range of middling taxpayers, initially ranking from the twenty-fifth to the fiftieth percentile of taxpayers in 1681, and none rose into the top quartile of taxpayers by 1690. The largest group of anti-Parris persisters, consisting of ten people, remained stable during the decade, moving neither up nor down at least 10 percent in the ranking of village taxpayers. These ten, constituting 40 percent of anti-Parris persisters, hardly supply evidence of a group on the leading edge of economic change. Indeed, given that 70 percent of the anti-Parris persisters either remained stable or declined in rank during the 1680s, there is little evidence of upward mobility of the anti-Parris group prior to 1692.

The fortunes of the twenty-one persisters who later signed the pro-Parris petition also do not conform to their depiction in *Salem Possessed.* There is little evidence that members of this group were declining relative

[19] Sidney Perley, *The History of Salem Massachusetts* (Salem, Mass., 1924), 1: 439, viewed at Ray, "Salem Witch Trials," http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/Perley/vol1/images/p1-439.html. None of the four pro-Parris persisters whose standing significantly declined during the 1680s had sons who made their first appearance on the 1690 list. The tax list supplies only indirect evidence about land succession and can only be suggestive of land distribution's effects within Salem Village families. In any event these cases involve a small number of the anti-Parris persisters, thus minimizing the explanatory effect of land allocation on mobility.

to other Salem Villagers in the decade preceding the outbreak. Only 19 percent (four of twenty-one) of the pro-Parris persisters declined at least 10 percent in their ranking among village taxpayers during the 1680s, compared with almost 30 percent of anti-Parris persisters. More impressive is the number of pro-Parris persisters who improved their standing or remained stable. Forty-three percent (nine of twenty-one) improved their ranking at least 10 percent, and eight others neither rose nor fell. Therefore, more than 80 percent of the pro-Parris persisters (seventeen of twenty-one) showed no decline, either rising or remaining stable. Significantly, not a single pro-Parris persister who began the decade in the top quartile of taxpayers fell out of that rank; of their adversaries, three dropped into the two middle quartiles by decade's end. Even more impressive, five of the seven pro-Parris persisters who began the decade in these middle ranks of taxpayers and improved their position at least ten percentage points finished the decade in the top quartile of village taxpayers. No anti-Parris persister showed a similar leap into the village's upper echelon. Throughout the 1680s almost all pro-Parris persisters showed no decline in their position in Salem Village. The wealthiest pro-Parris men at the decade's beginning were not squeezed out of the top ranks of village society, either by land scarcity or other means. And by decade's end they were joined at the upper end of the scale by others who had begun in more modest circumstances.[20]

[20] As with the anti-Parris persisters, these changes in percentile ranking by pro-Parris persisters often translated into marked shifts in a taxpayer's numerical standing. Two members of the Putnam family, Edward and Jonathan, for example, began the 1680s ranked thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth, respectively. They began the next decade ranked eighteenth and fifteenth, both in the top quartile of taxpayers. Using a lower percentile standard accentuates these movements whereas a higher standard mutes them. If a change in rank order of only 5 percent is adopted, the upward mobility of the pro-Parris persisters is more evident; using a 20 percent standard emphasizes the stability of the group. Evidence that the ministry's loyalists were not in decline does not directly address the contention that they were traditional agrarians locked in conflict with those associated with an emerging capitalistic order. But it encourages a more skeptical look at the evidence that such a conflict existed. Even in Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's own account, for example, the Putnam family, most of whom were prominent supporters of the ministry, engaged in commerce and manufacturing, though they did so unsuccessfully, and Thomas Putnam Jr., whose house was the epicenter of witchcraft enthusiasm, "had every hope . . . of making his way . . . into . . . [the] varied commercial activities" of his wife's family. See Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed,* 124–25, 135. The Putnam farmland included extensive apple orchards, suitable for commercial activity, and Thomas Putnam Sr.'s will of 1686 referred to his "mill stone and cider mill and appurtenances." See Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft,* 210; Harold Putnam, *The Putnams of Salem Village: Including an Index of Putnam Deeds and Wills from 1626 to 1699* (Rockland, Maine, 1996), 32. Samuel Parris had been a merchant before turning to the ministry. In short there are reasons aside from the tax data to question a thesis that identifies Salem Village's farmers and church supporters with resistance to commerce and capitalism. Perhaps aware of this conflicting evidence, the authors adjust their thesis at various points by arguing that the pro-Parris villagers were being "lure[d]" and "transform[ed]" by the forces they resisted. Thus they were "at war with themselves" as well as with the forces and representatives of modernization. See Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed,* 107, 212–15. Aside from its speculation about the psychological state of the pro-Parris group, the divided-mind argument undercuts the main thesis of a battle between traditional agrarians and commercial capitalists. Within its own explanatory framework, the evidence might better fit an interpretation that tension existed between different forms of capitalism, an agrarian-based capitalism represented by the pro-Parris forces and a commercial capitalism represented by the anti-Parris group.

Other evidence, such as the average (mean) and median taxes of persisters as a group, confirms the idea that Salem Village's factions were not experiencing the pattern of mobility presented in *Salem Possessed.* Because the amount of revenue required for maintaining the village's ministry was not constant and the number of taxpayers also varied from list to list, a change in a person's assessment may reflect higher (or lower) charges applicable to all taxpayers rather than an actual change in his assessed wealth. One can control for such variations in the general tax burden by establishing a ratio of taxes paid by the members of each faction relative to the entire village tax list. In comparing the average tax of the pro-Parris persisters with the average for the entire village tax roll, for example, the ratio 1.5 would mean that the average tax of the pro-Parris persisters was 1.5 times higher than the village average. Similarly, the relative position of one faction to another is established by a ratio of the members' taxes. If the ratio of the average tax paid by the pro-Parris group relative to the average tax of their rivals increased over time, for instance, the economic standing of the pro-Parris group would have improved compared with the anti-Parris group.[21]

Information gleaned from the average and median taxes paid by the two persister groups prior to 1692 supports the notion of improvement by the pro-Parris faction during the decade before the witchcraft outbreak. During the 1680s the ratio of the average tax of the pro-Parris persisters compared with that of the entire village increased from 1.3 to 1.4. The ministry faction on average was not just better off than Salem Villagers in general but became somewhat more so. On the other hand, the twenty-four anti-Parris persisters did not do as well during this period. The ratio of their average assessment actually declined compared

[21] Means (or averages) and medians capture somewhat different aspects of a group's central tendency. The average is subject to extreme values, whereas the median better represents the central tendency of a group. Each tool, however, furnishes useful information to supplement the rank and percentile findings for individuals. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum presented only tax averages when comparing Salem Village's two factions.

with that of the village from 1.5 to 1.4. As a result the pro-Parris persisters, whose average tax was only 90 percent of that of their anti-Parris neighbors at the beginning of the 1680s, established themselves as their equals shortly before the onset of witchcraft accusations: the ratio of the two groups' mean tax in 1690 was 1.0. A comparison of the two groups' median tax offers even more compelling evidence. The ratio of the pro-Parris persister median tax compared with the village's median tax rose from 1.4 to 2.5 during the 1680s while the ratio of the anti-Parris persister median tax to the median village tax rose less, from 1.7 to 1.8. As a result the pro-Parris median tax, which had been only 83 percent of the median tax of the anti-Parris group in 1681, actually exceeded the anti-Parris median tax by 1690. It was 1.3 times higher than that of the anti-Parris persisters. The anti-Parris group remained better off than Salem Villagers in general, yet they were not outpacing their rivals; more likely, they were watching the ministry faction gain and perhaps surpass them (Table I).[22]

Admittedly, one must proffer these conclusions with an abundance of caution. The numbers involved are small and the persisters constituted less than half the adult males who signed the petitions in 1695. But incorporating the names of members of Salem Village's factions who did not appear on both the 1681 and 1690 tax records strengthens these data. With one exception this addition involves new taxpayers who first appeared on the 1690 tax list and eventually signed one of the petitions. Combining these names with those of the persisters has drawbacks in that dissimilar groups are being compared: the pro-Parris contingent now found on the 1690 roll, for example, is not identical to the pro-Parris group on the 1681 roll. Nevertheless identifying all petitioners appearing on either tax list yields a collection of names that is a larger representation of the two factions. The pro-Parris group now includes twenty-two taxpayers appearing on the 1681 assessment and thirty-eight on the 1690 roll. The anti-Parris group now consists of the twenty-four anti-Parris petitioners on the 1681 list (all of whom, incidentally, reappeared on the 1690 list) and thirty-four taxpayers on the 1690 roll.

Comparing the characteristics of these expanded groups generally substantiates the idea that Parris's supporters were not outstripping their rivals prior to the outbreak. The pro-Parris average tax compared with the village average tax declined from 1681 to 1690, from a ratio of 1.3 to 1.1, yet the anti-Parris average assessment declined even more, from 1.5 to 1.2. Both factions remained somewhat better off, on average, than Salem Villagers in general, but the minister's supporters were catching up to their opponents throughout the 1680s. Their advance is readily seen by directly comparing the two groups: the ratio of the pro-Parris average tax to the anti-Parris average tax, which stood at 0.88 in 1681, climbed to 0.93 in 1690. Thus the pro-Parris group narrowed the gap in wealth during the 1680s so that as the witchcraft outbreak approached, their average tax was 93 percent of their opponents' average assessment.

The median data, which smooths out the effect of extreme cases, present better evidence that Parris's supporters were not declining relative to their position in the village or compared with their rivals. The pro-Parris median tax compared with that of Salem Village rose from a ratio of 1.4 to 1.8 during the decade, indicating that the pro-Parris group was improving its economic position in Salem Village. Since the anti-Parris median assessment increased more modestly in the same period from 1.7 to 1.8, when the two groups are compared directly, the ratio of pro- to anti-Parris median assessments went from 0.8 to 1.0. Thus, by the time of the witchcraft outbreak, the ministry faction had achieved virtual parity with Parris's opposition. Far from being outclassed, the so-called traditionalists centered around the village church were outpacing the anti-Parris faction (Table II).[23]

[22] That the ratio of the anti-Parris average tax, compared with village taxpayers, declined whereas the group's median ratio rose may be partly explained by the dampening effect of those anti-Parris persisters who began the decade of the 1680s in the top quartile of taxpayers but fell into the two middle quartiles of taxpayers by its end.

TABLE I
PERSISTER TAX RATIOS

	1681		*1690*	
	pro-Parris	*anti-Parris*	*pro-Parris*	*anti-Parris*
Mean tax (shillings)	56.55	62.89	18.67	18.04
Ratio	0.90		1.00	
Median tax (shillings)	42.50	51.00	20.00	15.00
Ratio	0.83		1.30	

Notes: With pro-Parris tax ratios, N=21 for 1681 and 1690; with anti-Parris tax ratios, N=24 for 1681 and 1690.

Sources: "A Book of Record of the Severall Publique Transa[c]tions of the Inhabitants of Sale[m] Village Vulgarly Called the Farme[s]," in *Historical Collections of the Danvers Historical Society* (Salem, Mass., 1925–26), 13: 99–102, 14: 81–83; Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (Belmont, Calif., 1972), 261–63.

[23] One can attribute differences between the mean and median trends for the pro- and anti-Parris factions in part to the additional taxpayers who compose the

TABLE II
GROUP TAX RATIOS

	1681		*1690*	
	pro-Parris	*anti-Parris*	*pro-Parris*	*anti-Parris*
Mean tax (shillings)	55.20	62.89	14.76	15.82
Ratio	0.88		0.93	
Median tax (shillings)	40.75	51.00	14.00	14.00
Ratio	0.80		1.00	

Notes: With pro-Parris tax ratios, N=22 for 1681, N=38 for 1690; with anti-Parris tax ratios, N=24 for 1681, N=34 for 1690.
Sources: "Book of Record," in *Historical Collections*, 13: 99–102; 14: 81–83; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, 261–63.

Salem Village's tax records for the period before 1692, then, place the stark economic disparities found by Boyer and Nissenbaum in a different light. In 1690, though the average wealth of the thirty-eight pro-Parris petitioners was somewhat lower than that of the thirty-four anti-Parris petitioners, the discrepancy was not glaring. Five years later, however, when Boyer and Nissenbaum measured it, the average tax of the thirty-six pro-Parris petitioners had dropped from 93 to only 72 percent of the average assessment of the fifty-two anti-Parris petitioners. Similarly, whereas the pro-Parris median tax in 1690 equaled that of their opponents, five years later the figure had dropped to only 71 percent. And though Boyer and Nissenbaum found that the twelve most prosperous petitioners (taxed at more than twenty shillings) sided overwhelmingly against Parris in 1695, with eight opposing and only four supporting him, the equivalent eleven most prosperous Salem Villagers in 1690 were almost evenly divided, with six opposing and five supporting Parris. Had Boyer and Nissenbaum considered the economic structure of Salem Village based on the tax list closest to the time of the

two assessments. As new and likely younger taxpayers, their assessments were often on the lower end of the scale. The seventeen pro-Parris taxpayers who appeared for the first time on the 1690 roll, for example, came almost exclusively from the lower and middle ranks. Their inclusion mutes the distorting effect of a small number of well-to-do pro-Parris taxpayers. The larger drop in the average tax of the anti-Parris faction is likely attributable to a decline in ranking by a number of wealthy members of this faction as well as to the addition of ten new anti-Parris taxpayers, only one of whom was in the top quartile of taxpayers and two of whom were in the bottom 5 percent of taxpayers, which would lower the average tax and allow the median to rise slightly.

witchcraft trials, they would have found the disparities between the factions considerably less sharp. The 1695 data Boyer and Nissenbaum used strongly suggest that between the 1690 and 1695 lists, the forward progress of the ministry faction was thrown into reverse, leaving the pro-Parris group distinctly disadvantaged compared with their opponents. At the same time, a closer look reveals that their setback, so prominent a feature in *Salem Possessed*, was not as severe as the 1695 data indicate. Perhaps more important, it was not permanent.[24]

There is little question that the relative position of the pro-Parris faction declined perceptibly after the witchcraft episode. One can trace the fortunes of thirty-seven pro-Parris petitioners who appeared on the 1690 and the 1695 tax lists.[25] Only 16 percent of this group of pro-Parris persisters (six of thirty-seven) improved their percentile rank in the community by 10 percent or more during this period, a distinct change from

[24] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's data for the 1695 assessment are close to mine. They identified fifty-one pro-Parris petitioners on that tax roll who were taxed an average of 10.9 shillings. My analysis found fifty-two pro-Parris petitioners on the roll taxed at the same average rate. For the anti-Parris group, they considered thirty-five petitioners on the 1695 roll assessed at an average of 15.3 shillings compared with my count of thirty-six petitioners assessed at an average of 15.1 shillings. Their ratio of the pro-Parris average tax compared with the anti-Parris tax stands at 0.71; my calculation is 0.72. The advantage of using the 1695 tax roll is that it includes a larger number of petitioners than that of 1690, particularly for the pro-Parris faction. But it also registers economic shifts that followed 1692. See Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 81–83. The possibility exists that changes in taxpayers' assessments may have resulted not from their changing economic circumstances but from the different partisan alignments of the committees in charge of assessments. Though Salem Village maintained consistent criteria for taxing property, the personnel of the committee that oversaw taxation changed annually. Were the relatively low rates paid by the pro-Parris faction in 1695, for example, the result of a partisan committee that levied higher taxes on Samuel Parris's opponents? An argument can be made for this contention: four of the five members of the 1695 committee signed the pro-Parris petition; one member did not sign either petition. Other evidence, however, strongly suggests that partisanship played little or no role in village assessments. Of the five tax rolls consulted for this article, signers of the pro-Parris petition constituted a majority on four committees and had equal representation on the remaining one. The 1689 and 1690 committees, which produced the 1690 tax list, had three pro-Parris members; the 1694 committee, which placed the two factions on a more equal footing than in 1695, filled all five positions with pro-Parris signers. The 1700 committee contained four pro-Parris signers and one anti-Parris petitioner. The 1681 committee had two members who later signed the pro-Parris petition, two members who later signed the anti-Parris petition, and one nonsigner. When the anti-Parris faction took firm control of the taxing committee in 1691, its response was not to manipulate the tax system to punish its enemies. Instead the meeting that elected this group simply voted not to levy any taxes to support the ministry! Parris later sued the village to recover his salary. See "Book of Record," in *Historical Collection*, 17: 87–91; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, 320, 323, 331, 348–49, 351, 356, 359, 363.

[25] One hundred five Salem Villagers appeared on the 1695 tax list.

the previous decade when more than 40 percent of the persisters improved their standing. In contrast more than one-quarter of the persisters (ten of thirty-seven) moved downward at least 10 percent. One member of this group dropped out of the top quartile into the two middle quartiles, but the primary casualties came from the nine Parris supporters whose assessments lay within the fortieth to seventy-fifth percentiles of villagers in 1690. Two of these men fell into the bottom quartile of taxpayers by 1695 and four others barely escaped that fate, falling into the 26.9 percentile.

These losses, however, were offset to a degree by the large number of pro-Parris persisters whose situation remained stable. More than one-half (twenty-one of thirty-seven) retained their ranking in the community, moving neither up nor down 10 percent. Moreover two persisters advanced into the top quartile of village taxpayers during these years. The two men were third-generation members of the Putnam family, a clan that was prominent in the village church and in pursuing witches; one rose into the top quartile of taxpayers from the middling ranks, the other emerged from the bottom quartile. The economic and political elite of the pro-Parris faction, men such as Thomas and Edward Putnam, escaped largely unscathed. Eleven of the thirteen pro-Parris petitioners who began the decade in the top quartile of taxpayers remained in this group five years later, and one experienced only a minor downward movement, remaining in the top 71 percent of taxpayers in 1695.

Despite these stable elements, the years following the witchcraft outbreak halted, and likely reversed, the relative progress made by the ministry faction in Salem Village during the 1680s. Though these persisters remained somewhat wealthier than the village as a whole, their average tax compared with that of the village only held steady at 1.1, a reversal from the previous decade, when their average income increased compared with that of the village. Moreover the distinct possibility that their situation deteriorated after 1690 appears in their median tax, which, compared with the village rate, declined from 1.6 to 1.1 in 1695. As a result the pro-Parris persisters were no longer close to their rivals by 1695. Compared with the anti-Parris persisters in this period, the ratio of their average assessment fell from 0.92 in 1690 to 0.79 in 1695; the median ratio fell even more precipitously from 0.93 to 0.75.[26]

[26] The composition of pro- and anti-Parris persister groups for the 1690–95 period is not the same as the persister groups for the 1681–90 period. A pro-Parris persister, for example, who appeared on both the 1690 and 1695 tax lists might not have appeared on the 1681 and 1690 tax lists because he was absent from the 1681 list. Therefore the average tax of the pro-Parris persister group in 1690 differs depending on whether one is considering the 1681–90 persisters or the 1690–95 persisters. Despite the changing composition of these groups, the relevant comparisons are consistent within each time span.

Further evidence of a pro-Parris reversal after 1690 emerges when investigating all pro-Parris petitioners who appeared on either the 1690 or 1695 tax rolls. This analysis expands the pro-Parris group to thirty-eight signers on the 1690 list and fifty-two for the 1695 assessment. The pro-Parris average assessment compared with that of Salem Village fell from 1.1 in 1690 to 0.93 in 1695, placing the pro-Parris average tax below the average tax of the village. The pro-Parris median tax, more reflective of the group's general condition, also fell perceptibly from 1.8 to 1.0 by 1695, indicating that its median was now no higher than the village's. By 1695 the ministry supporters could no longer claim they were an economically advantaged group in Salem Village.

Whereas the pro-Parris setback is evident, the anti-Parris experience during this period is harder to establish. From 1690 to 1695, many more anti-Parris persisters improved their economic standing compared with those whose fortunes declined. But this advance was largely limited to those who were less well-to-do at the start of the decade, and there are suggestive indications that many members of the anti-Parris faction actually experienced some deterioration in their standing, though less than Parris's supporters.

Thirty-three anti-Parris petition signers appeared on both the 1690 and 1695 tax lists. Almost 30 percent (ten of thirty-three) improved their ranking by at least 10 percent, a considerably higher figure than that of their opponents. Much of this improvement came to those at the lowest end of the tax roll. Five of the ten taxpayers whose assessments placed them in the bottom quartile of taxpayers in 1690 not only improved their ranking by at least 10 percent but also were securely positioned within the middling ranks of taxpayers in 1695.

Nevertheless improvement was hardly a pronounced characteristic among the anti-Parris persisters. Though two who began the decade in the two middle quartiles of taxpayers joined the top 25 percent in 1695, two others headed in the opposite direction and ended up in the bottom quartile. One additional middling persister narrowly escaped the same fate, ending up just above that mark (26.9 percent). And though the ten wealthiest opponents of Parris, those in the top quartile of the 1690 tax list (74.7–100 percent), generally weathered this tumultuous period without damage, two declined at least 10 percent and found themselves in the two middle quartiles of taxpayers in 1695. With 70 percent of the anti-Parris persisters either holding their position or falling 10 percent among village taxpayers, there is little evidence of marked improvement during this period.

Group characteristics confirm the lack of noticeable advancement by anti-Parris persisters. Though their mean tax ratio compared with the entire village increased during this period from 1.2 to 1.4, the more representative median ratio declined from 1.8 to 1.5. The only good news for them was that their adversaries' misfortunes were greater.

Expanding the anti-Parris group to include all the petitioners who appeared on either the 1690 or 1695 tax list confirms these findings. The modestly enlarged group now consists of thirty-four signers of the anti-Parris petition for 1690 and thirty-six signers for 1695. Though the anti-Parris average tax ratio compared with the entire village again rose, this time more slightly (from 1.2 in 1690 to 1.3 in 1695), the likelihood that many members of this faction experienced difficulties is evident from the noticeable decline in their median tax ratio, from 1.8 in 1690 to 1.4 in 1695. By both measures the anti-Parris faction's position within Salem Village in 1695 was less favorable than it had been in 1681. The ministry opponents remained an affluent group, yet their average and median taxes were now below the point at which the group stood fifteen years earlier. In absolute terms they may have been equally well off but, relative to the rest of the community, their situation had deteriorated.[27]

Parris's defenders could ill afford to cheer. Their opponents remained wealthier than Salem Villagers and, more to the point, were now much better off than the pro-Parris group. The pro-Parris average tax, which had reached 93 percent of the anti-Parris average tax just prior to the witchcraft outbreak, now fell to only 72 percent. Similarly, the pro-Parris median tax, which had reached equality with that of their opponents in 1690, now plummeted to 0.71. Thus the anti-Parris ascendancy that Boyer and Nissenbaum found by examining the 1695 tax list reflects the relative standing of Salem Village's factions in that year. But the situation did not result from the anti-Parris group's rising fortunes as much as from the recent diminished circumstances of their opponents.

The sharp economic disparities of 1695 were genuine but not typical. That year was something of an anomaly: no other village tax roll reveals such a wide gap between the groups. Less extreme distinctions are evident not only for the assessment levied in 1690 but also for the 1694 assessment.

[27] The ratio of the anti-Parris average tax to that of Salem Village stood at 1.5 in 1681; in 1695, it had dropped to 1.3. The ratio of the median anti-Parris tax to that of the village stood at 1.7 in 1681 but only 1.4 in 1695. The anti-Parris group retained its wealthier status compared with the village as a whole, yet this evidence during a fifteen-year period does not support Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's contention in *Salem Possessed* of relative economic advancement.

The 1694 tax list actually supplies the fullest representation of Salem Village's factions. It contains the same total number of village taxpayers (105) and the same number of pro-Parris petitioners (52) as the following year, yet it includes one more anti-Parris member, thirty-seven compared with thirty-six on the 1695 list. The pro-Parris faction's median tax (compared with the entire village) in 1694 was the same as the following year (1.0), confirming the likelihood of a downturn after 1690. Its average tax ratio stood at 96 percent of the village average in 1694, lower than in 1690 but somewhat higher than the following year, indicating that 1695 represented its weakest position in the community. Meanwhile the anti-Parris group's mean and median ratios compared with Salem Villagers were lower in 1694 than in 1695, which accounts for the lessened difference between the two factions on the 1694 tax roll. The anti-Parris petition signers' dramatic drop in their median tax from 1.8 in 1690 to 1.2 in 1694 supports the notion that they, too, suffered in the aftermath of the trials. Though their median tax ratio rose to 1.4 the following year, it still remained below the figure for 1690.[28]

The same story holds true for Boyer and Nissenbaum's claim that Salem Village's most affluent citizens opposed Parris. The claim was true for the 1695 list but, as in 1690, in 1694 it was less evident. Of the wealthiest 10 percent of villagers in 1694 (those assessed at twenty-four shillings or more), five opposed Parris and four supported him. On the 1695 assessment, the gap was considerably wider: seven anti-Parris partisans compared with only three of Parris's friends appeared among the village's elite 10 percent of taxpayers. Just as was the case for 1690, had Boyer and Nissenbaum relied on the 1694 list rather than the 1695, their claims about the relationship between wealth and factional affiliation would have been more modest.[29]

It is not this article's purpose to explain the apparent changing fortunes, especially of the ministry faction, in the post-1691 period. No doubt many events in the late 1680s and early 1690s posed challenges to Salem Village and may have differentially affected its residents. The

[28] The anti-Parris average tax in 1694 remained the same within the village compared with 1690; its ratio stood at 1.2 in both years. It rose modestly in 1695 to 1.3. Like the 1695 tax roll, that of 1694 does not point to any substantial economic advancement following 1690, though the anti-Parris contingent remained more affluent than its rivals and Salem Village taxpayers generally in the period following the witchcraft trials.

[29] Since Salem Village made no assessments for the period July 1691–July 1694, it is theoretically possible that, in the years from 1691 to 1693, the relative standing of the pro-Parris group advanced while that of the minister's opponents fell and that these results were suddenly reversed after 1693 so that by 1695 the pro-Parris group was worse off than in 1690, and vice versa for the anti-Parris group. There is no evidence, however, to assume such an extreme and sudden reversal of fortunes after 1693.

period surrounding the witchcraft outbreak was unsettled. There were continuing Indian wars as well as turmoil associated with the revocation of the charter of Massachusetts, the imposition and fall of the Dominion of New England, and the establishment of a new royal government. The general distraction and economic disruption of the witchcraft events of 1692 also contributed to Salem Village's economic troubles. That these elements seemed to weigh more heavily on the pro-Parris contingent presents a twist to the Boyer and Nissenbaum thesis: the faction they identified as having tried to thwart their opponents' economic advancement by launching a witch hunt found their own economic progress arrested.[30]

In any event the pro-Parris downturn was temporary. Tax assessments made throughout the later 1690s disclose that by 1697 a rebound by Parris's supporters was well under way as they again began to advance their standing relative to their opponents. The village tax rate for 1700 reveals that the pro-Parris group had regained substantially the same position it had achieved by 1692. During this period the economic position of its opponents remained largely static.[31]

[30] A number of historians have linked the 1692 witchcraft episode to contemporary conditions in New England, most recently Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*. See also James E. Kences, "Some Unexplored Relationships of Essex County Witchcraft to the Indian Wars of 1675 and 1689," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 120, no. 3 (July 1984): 179–212; Godbeer, *Devil's Dominion*, 181–97; Larry Gragg, *The Salem Witch Crisis* (New York, 1992), 39–40; Le Beau, *Story of the Salem Witch Trials*, 43–48. The historical record indicates that the witchcraft outbreak contributed to a period of economic difficulty in Salem Village and in Massachusetts generally. Governor William Phips, as a justification for his shutting down the witchcraft trials, reported that their "dismall effects touched the lives and estates of many of their Ma'ties Subjects" and "clogged and interrupted their Ma'ties affaires." See George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648–1706* (New York, 1914), 201. At the close of 1696, the Massachusetts General Court called for a day of fasting and prayer in repentance for actions taken during the "late Tragedy, raised among us by Satan and his Instruments" (ibid., 386). Prominent among the evidence that "the Anger of God" required such a humbling of the people was that "God is pleased still to go on in diminishing our Substance, cutting short our Harvest, [and] blasting our most promising undertakings more ways than one" (ibid., 385). Charles W. Upham's classic nineteenth-century history of the Salem witchcraft crisis called the outbreak's effects "disastrous . . . The material interests of the people long felt its blight." He continued, "Fields were neglected," a scarcity of food "amounting almost to a famine" persisted for a time, farms were mortgaged or lost, burdensome debts incurred, and people dispersed. See Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, 2: 380 (quotations), 473–74. More recently, Larry Gragg asserted that "the witchcraft trials clearly interrupted the normal work routine of many villagers." See Gragg, *Quest for Security*, 173 n. 1.

[31] For reasons of economy, I will focus only on the group characteristics for all petitioners who appeared on the tax roll for the year 1700. Detailed analyses, whether of individual taxpayers or persisters for the assessments of 1697 and 1699, would not change this analysis. By 1700 Samuel Parris was no longer minister of Salem Village. He had stepped down from his position when his contract expired in the middle of 1696. A new minister, Joseph Green, was hired in late 1697 to replace him. With Parris's departure and the fading of contention over the village church, it becomes anachronistic to use terms such as pro- and anti-Parris, except regarding the positions taken earlier. See "Book of Record," in *Historical Collections*, 16: 73–74; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 217; Gragg, *Quest for Security*, 168–72.

Thirty-eight signers of the pro-Parris petition still appeared on Salem Village's tax rolls in 1700.[32] Though the pro-Parris average tax had plunged below the average tax paid by all village taxpayers after the witchcraft outbreak, by 1700 the pro-Parris average tax was again higher than the average village tax, just as it had been before the outbreak. Indeed the ratio of the pro-Parris mean tax to the mean village tax now stood at 1.2, higher than it had been in 1690 (1.1). Similarly, the pro-Parris median tax, which was equal to the median village tax on the 1694 and 1695 lists, was now higher than the median village tax (1.3). The ministry faction had clearly improved its position from the more immediate postwitchcraft years; by 1700, it was, as it had been before the witchcraft crisis, more affluent than the village average.

The condition of the forty-one anti-Parris petitioners who paid taxes in 1700 showed little change from 1695 and no indication of any upward movement from 1690. The ratio of their mean tax in 1700 compared with the entire village stood at 1.2, modestly down from 1695 and the same as in 1690 and 1694. The ratio of their median tax in 1700 compared with the village measured 1.3, also somewhat lower than in 1695, when their median rate was 1.4, but noticeably lower than in 1690, when the anti-Parris median tax was almost twice that of the village (1.8).

As a result of these varying trajectories, the 1700 tax roll shows that the ministry group had once again narrowed the wealth gap, just as they had done in the decade preceding the witch trials. The average tax of the pro-Parris faction, which was only 72 percent of its opponents' in 1695, reached 99 percent in 1700. And the pro-Parris median in 1700 equaled that of the anti-Parris group, just as it had in 1690. Thus, eight years after the witchcraft disturbance, the village's remaining pro-Parris petitioners were, as a group, similarly situated relative to the village and to their opponents as they had been just prior to the outbreak.[33] From the

[32] One hundred fourteen taxpayers appeared on the 1700 tax list.

[33] The forty-one anti-Parris taxpayers in 1700 included seven men who had signed the 1695 petition as "young men—sixteen years old" but were not assessed taxes in that year. They appeared on the village tax rolls in 1697. Since six of the seven "young men" were in the bottom quartile of taxpayers in 1700, including them in the list of anti-Parris taxpayers somewhat suppresses the anti-Parris average and median rates and may therefore understate this faction's economic standing in 1700. But excluding them from the calculation would not change the general findings that the anti-Parris faction was not outpacing the ministry faction by decade's end and that, if anything, the reverse held true. Excluding the seven young men, the results

broader chronological perspective of the twenty-year period 1680–1700, it becomes evident that those associated with Salem Village's ministry faction were not undergoing a long-term decline, at least relative to their opponents. Instead this group experienced a wavelike movement: advancement until the witchcraft crisis erupted, followed by an almost certain relative deterioration in their position, and finally a return to upward momentum that left them close to where they had stood in the village in 1681. In 1700, as in 1681, they could claim to be an economically advantaged group in Salem Village (Figure I).

Equally striking was the antiministry group's failure to demonstrate any noteworthy upward movement. Compared with Salem Village's taxpayers, the anti-Parris faction actually declined during this period. In 1681 its average tax was 1.5 times greater than the village average. Twenty years later it was only 1.2 times greater. The group's median tax registered the same decline, dropping from 1.7 to 1.3 times the village median tax. As a result the anti-Parris faction not only failed to surge ahead of the ministry faction during this period, as Boyer and Nissenbaum contended, but also lost ground to Parris supporters. The pro-Parris median tax in 1681 had been only 80 percent of the anti-Parris tax, but by 1700 the median taxes were equal. The ratio of the average tax, which had stood at 0.88 in 1681, rose to 0.99 twenty years later.

There are limitations to what Salem Village's tax lists can say about the actual wealth of its inhabitants, let alone how they derived their wealth. Even discounting the methodological problems of tracing the fortunes of villagers who moved in and out of the tax rolls, the lists cannot delineate with certainty whether inhabitants actually improved their standard of living or fell on hard times during these twenty years. Moreover the tax rolls cannot address a person's involvement in or psychological relationship to capitalism or a market economy.

Despite these drawbacks the records are valuable indications of the relative standing of Salem Village taxpayers during two decades. And by a variety of approaches and measurements, whether focusing on individual or group characteristics, the data undermine the Boyer and Nissenbaum thesis at virtually every point. If the anti-Parris forces were at the forefront of mercantile capitalism, they were not gaining any special advantage. More significantly, their initial clear-cut edge over Parris's supporters eroded as that group improved its relative economic position over time. The tax rolls do not support the claim that the pro-Parris

still show that the pro-Parris faction was catching up. Where the pro-Parris group's average tax was 72 percent of the anti-Parris group's tax in 1695, it stood at 87 percent in 1700. The pro-Parris median tax had gained as well, advancing from 71 to 89 percent of its rivals'.

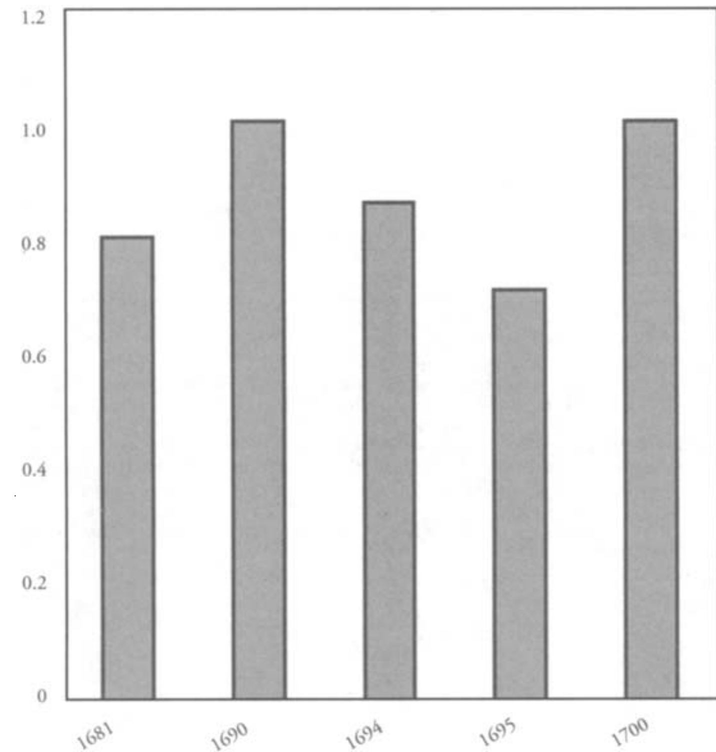

FIGURE I

The ratio of pro- to anti-Parris median taxes during twenty years demonstrates the oscillating standing of the minister's supporters in relationship to his opponents.

group lashed out in resentment in 1692 against those who represented the superior forces of modernization. If any group had reason to complain, it was the minister's opponents.[34]

[34] Using geographic information systems technology, Benjamin C. Ray failed to find a geographic division in Salem Village separating a poorer western area from

Though Boyer and Nissenbaum's identification of Salem Village's factional divisions remains one of their lasting contributions to the scholarship of Salem witchcraft, their reliance on the anomalous 1695 tax assessment exaggerated the village's class divisions and suggested a broader economic dynamic that is not supported by the evidence. Explaining what happened in Salem Village in 1692 will take a different sort of thesis from that offered in *Salem Possessed.* Most certainly, it should not make the mistake of assuming that those associated with religion, such as the supporters of Parris's church, were necessarily engaged in a battle against economic improvement, the market, or modernity.[35]

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the wealthier east that bordered the commercial Salem Town. Instead wealth was distributed "fairly homogeneously across the community." See Ray, "Teaching the Salem Witch Trials," in *Past Time, Past Place: GIS for History*, ed. Anne Kelly Knowles (Redlands, Calif., 2002), 19–33 (quotation, 25).

[35] I have suggested elsewhere that religious discord concerning Salem Village's church better explains the village's factionalism and its contribution to the events of 1692 and that the geographic and chronological pattern of accusations in 1692 is best explained by the persistence of traditional witchcraft beliefs rather than conflicts stemming from capitalism's advance. See Richard Latner, "'Here Are No Newters': Witchcraft and Religious Discord in Salem Village and Andover," *New England Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (March 2006): 92–122; Latner, "The Long and Short of Salem Witchcraft: Chronology and Collective Violence in 1692," *Journal of Social History* 42 (forthcoming).

The Geography of Witchcraft Accusations in 1692 Salem Village

Benjamin C. Ray

The alleged witches and those who accused them resided on opposite sides of the Village.[1]

PAUL Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's influential study, *Salem Possessed*, appeared a little more than one hundred years after the publication of Charles W. Upham's classic two-volume work, *Salem Witchcraft.* Like Upham's work *Salem Possessed* dealt almost exclusively with Salem Village, and like Upham, Boyer and Nissenbaum made significant use of a 1692 map of the village. Upham's map showed the locations of virtually all the households in Salem Village, and Boyer and Nissenbaum used this same map to plot the household locations of the accusers and the accused (Figure I). As a geographically based socioeconomic study keyed to this map, *Salem Possessed* succeeded so well in explaining the witchcraft episode in Salem Village that it was not significantly challenged by another scholarly account until the appearance of Mary Beth Norton's innovative and more comprehensive work, *In the Devil's Snare.*[2]

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[1] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 35.

[2] Charles W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft: With an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1867). Upham's valuable map, based on historic deed books and local information, was made by his brother W. P. Upham and published as the frontispiece of vol. 1. For digitization purposes I used an enlarged copy of this map printed by the Danvers Alarm List Company. Mary Beth Norton's book is the most comprehensive account

FIGURE I

"Map of Salem Village, 1692," frontispiece from Charles W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft: With an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects* (Boston, 1867). Courtesy, Danvers Alarm List Company.

One can attribute the long-term success of *Salem Possessed*, now in its twentieth printing, not only to its socioeconomic approach but also to its simple yet compelling use of a map of the accusations in Salem Village. Drawing on Upham's accurate and detailed map of village residences, Boyer and Nissenbaum created a Salem Village map that used letters to mark locations of individual accusers (As), accused witches (Ws), and defenders (Ds) (Figure II). The map appeared near the beginning of the book and presented a surprising picture of a village geographically divided between accusers and accused. Boyer and Nissenbaum wondered, "What are we to make of this pattern?"[3] The rest of the book furnished the answer.

Supported by their map, Boyer and Nissenbaum argued that underlying the neighborly quarrels was a deep-seated economic difference

of the Salem witch trials to date, covering the twenty-two different towns and villages involved. See Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York, 2002).

[3] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 36.

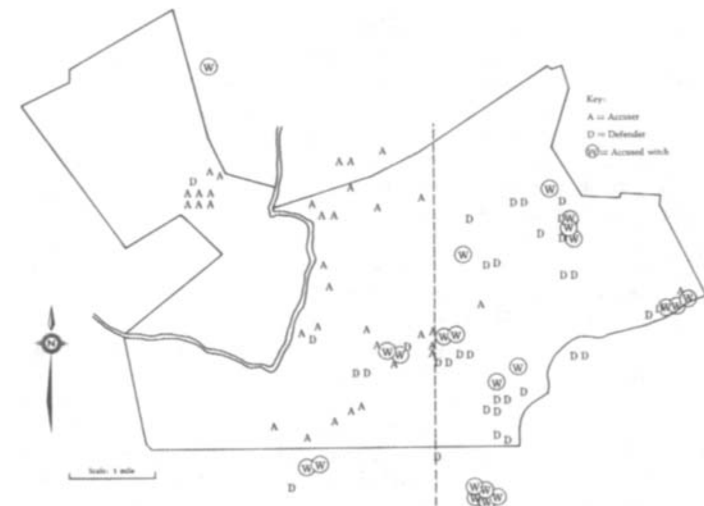

FIGURE II

"The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692," in Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 34. Courtesy, President and Fellows of Harvard College.

between the village and the neighboring commercial Salem Town (of which Salem Village was a separate parish). And it was an economic difference that eventually divided the village geographically into two conflicting groups. Boyer and Nissenbaum suggested that the poorer agrarian householders who lived on the western side of the village set their hearts and fears against their more prosperous and commercially minded neighbors who lived in the eastern part of the village, nearer the town, and economically benefited from it. Ultimately, according to Boyer and Nissenbaum, the conflict between the two groups was between differing visions of community: an agrarian-based, older Puritan sense of the public goodwill contrasted with a later emergent capitalist sense of private interest. This clash led the frustrated westerners to respond by charging the easterners with witchcraft. One summary of *Salem Possessed* put it this way: "The Salem trials can be seen as an indirect yet anguished protest of a group of villagers whose agrarian way

of life was being threatened by the rising commercialism of Salem Town."[4] Several other maps in *Salem Possessed* reinforced this argument. They depicted the geography of the conflict in Salem Village over the new minister, the Reverend Samuel Parris, and showed the locations of the landholdings of the influential Putnam and Porter families as evidence that the village was divided into eastern and western economic factions. But it was the striking witchcraft accusations map that appears to have been the most effective device in supporting Boyer and Nissenbaum's economic interpretation of the witchcraft episode. This map reduced the whole complex event to a single graphic image: As on one side of the village, Ws on the other. Finally, it seemed, scholars had solved the mystery of the Salem Village witchcraft accusations by means of an objective historical method.

Several American history textbooks employ Boyer and Nissenbaum's interpretation and some also reproduce the map, which is now part of the Salem story in many classrooms. At the more popular level, a current Salem visitor's guidebook recommends *Salem Possessed* as "a seminal work that established the socioeconomic and political factors that brought about the witch hunt" in a divided village. Versions of this map have also appeared in television productions to show that the village was geographically "divided into two angry factions." But, as Mark Monmonier points out in *How to Lie with Maps*, the general public seldom questions a mapmaker's work and often fails to realize that "cartographic license is enormously broad."[5] Perhaps it is not surprising that scholars have also never thoroughly examined the Boyer and Nissenbaum map.

A review of the court records shows that the Boyer and Nissenbaum map is, in fact, highly interpretive and considerably incomplete.[6]

[4] James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, 3d ed. (New York, 1992), 41 (quotation); Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 103–9.

[5] Frances Hill, *Hunting for Witches: A Visitor's Guide to the Salem Witch Trials* (Beverly, Mass., 2002), 136 ("seminal work"); *Witch Hunt*, DVD, directed by Lisa Wolfinger (New York, 2004) ("divided"); Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago, 1991), 2 ("cartographic license"). For American history textbooks, see for example Alan Brinkley et al., *American History: A Survey*, vol. 1, 8th ed. (New York, 1991); Paul S. Boyer et al., *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People*, 2d ed. (Lexington, Mass., 1993); Ronald P. Dufour, *Colonial America* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1994); Carol Berkin et al., *Making America: A History of the United States, Brief Edition* (Boston, 1997); John Mack Faragher et al., *Out of Many: A History of the American People*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J., 2005). The accusations map has also received attention in television programs, including *Three Sovereigns for Sarah*, DVD, directed by Philip Leacock (1985; Alexandria, Va., 2005), and *Witch Hunt*, DVD.

[6] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*,

Contrary to Boyer and Nissenbaum's conclusions in *Salem Possessed*, geographic analysis of the accusations in the village shows there was no significant villagewide east-west division between accusers and accused in 1692. Nor was there an east-west divide between households of different economic status. Equally important, eastern village leaders were not opposed to the village's attempts to gain independence from Salem Town. Though Salem Village suffered from years of internal conflict over its ministers and replaced them at an unusually frequent rate, these conflicts did not have an east-west geographic or economic character. The village was remarkably homogeneous in its geographic distribution of wealth at almost all economic levels during this period. The same distribution holds true of the village's religious and social demographics.

Though it may appear that the *Salem Possessed* map carries the burden of the argument about the socioeconomic and geographic foundation of the witchcraft accusations, the map does not supply all the evidence. A note to the map in *Salem Possessed* explains that for different reasons a total of thirteen accusers were omitted, thus indicating that the map is incomplete and does not represent all the accusers. The map is more properly understood as an illustration of the socioeconomic argument; it is not its proof. Indeed the authors introduce the map to the reader as a kind of geographic clue to the rest of the book's findings. Nevertheless Boyer and Nissenbaum's use of the map confuses these two purposes, clue and proof. On the one hand, the quantitative comparison of the numbers of As, Ws, and Ds that appear on the eastern and western sides of the map suggests that it presents objective evidence of a geographically divided village and that it reveals a straightforward numerical pattern. On the other hand, the explanatory note states that the map deliberately omits a number of well-known accusers, some because of their youth and others because of their support for some of the accused. These omissions indicate that the map involves an important interpretive component, in this case concerning the accusers' ages and motivations. The note also implies that the map is complete except for the specified omissions, which is not the case. Thus the map's relationship to the information contained in the court records is unclear: it is interpretive and incomplete yet seemingly offered as objective and exhaustive.

It is necessary to create a map as objective and complete as possible based on the court records before presenting any extrapolations about

3 vols. (New York, 1977). As one of the editors of the new edition of the Salem court documents, I have had the benefit of examining the fifty-odd Salem court records that were overlooked or unknown when Boyer and Nissenbaum published *Salem Witchcraft Papers*. See Bernard Rosenthal et al., eds., *The Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

the Salem Village accusations. All maps involve some interpretation, but there is a difference between necessary selection and adaptation of a data set and interpretations built into the map that already present a perspective on the data the map represents. The selection of data and methodology should be as transparent as possible. Working with databases makes transparency easier because of the explicit database requirement to document every data point that appears on the map. With a comprehensive map, scholars can then ask some questions about the data presented. By examining the locations of the most frequent accusers, for example, one may wonder what they have in common, geographically or otherwise, and then pose the same question about the accused. The basis for any such geographic questions, however, must be an accurate map of accusers and accused.

Explaining the errors and assumptions involved in Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's map of the village accusations requires understanding how the map was made. Boyer and Nissenbaum tell the reader that they used the Salem Village map from Charles W. Upham's book, a detailed and fairly accurate rendering of the house locations and geographic boundaries of Salem Village and its immediate environs in 1692 (Figure III). Upham placed numbers and symbols on the map to designate the locations of 150 houses and structures in Salem Village and neighboring townships. Each square marker on the map stood for the location of a house and each number correlated with Upham's 1692 list of property owners, which was based on Salem deed books and local knowledge. Number twenty-four, for example, designated the location of Thomas Putnam's house, which was the home of two adult accusers: Putnam and his wife, Ann. Boyer and Nissenbaum placed two As at this location on their map to represent these two accusers.[7]

[7] A close-up of Thomas Putnam's house (number twenty-four) on Upham's map with Boyer and Nissenbaum's superimposed As is available on http://oieahc.wm.edu/wmq/Jul08/ray.html. In the process of digitizing and georeferencing Upham's map using geographic information systems (GIS) software, I gave each of Upham's numbered house locations a black dot (see Figure III). The dots indicate geographic points with coordinates in real geographic space. Some of the extant 1692 houses represented by numbers on Upham's map are still standing on their original foundations. I used a geographic positioning system device to determine the latitude and longitude of these houses on site. These known coordinates served as control points that linked the digital version of Upham's map to real geographic space for purposes of georegistering the map and rectifying its errors as best as can be done using GIS software. The process resulted in a slight warping and stretching of the digital version of Upham's map. The consequent offset between Upham's paper map and geographic accuracy averages approximately five hundred feet, which is sufficiently accurate for these purposes. See Mike Furlough, "The Salem Witchcraft GIS: A Visual Re-Creation of Salem Village in 1692," http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/libsites/salem.

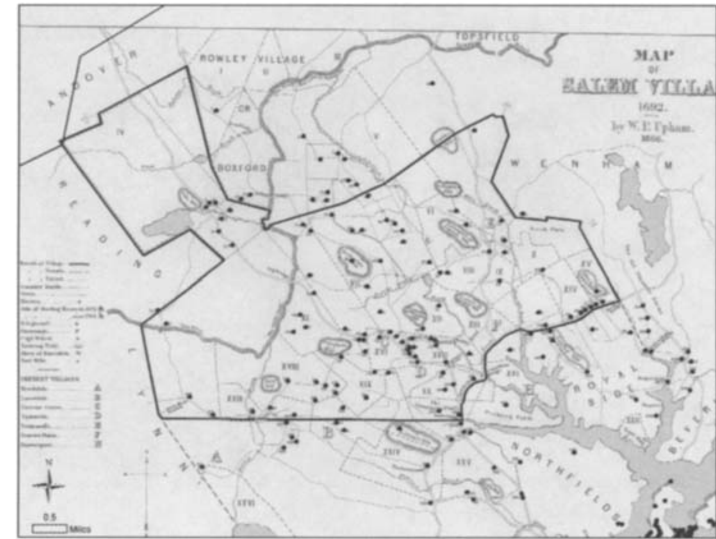

FIGURE III

Georegistered version of Upham's map with geographic information systems data points.

Placing the Boyer and Nissenbaum map, with its As, Ws, and Ds, over the georegistered Upham map offered a useful means for checking the *Salem Possessed* map's accuracy and also served to correlate its otherwise anonymous As, Ws, and Ds with Upham's household markers and numbers, thus identifying the people represented by letters on Boyer and Nissenbaum's map (Figure IV). The correlation between the letters, markers, and house numbers turned out to be fairly close in most areas, except near the center of the map where the correspondence was inexact. Nevertheless, by using the court documents and Boyer and Nissenbaum's census of the Salem Village households, it is possible to identify the people in those households and their roles in the witch trials as accusers, accused, and defenders and to locate them with sufficient accuracy on the map.[8]

[8] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (Belmont, Calif., 1972), 383–93. I follow Boyer and Nissenbaum's use of the term "accuser" to refer to anyone

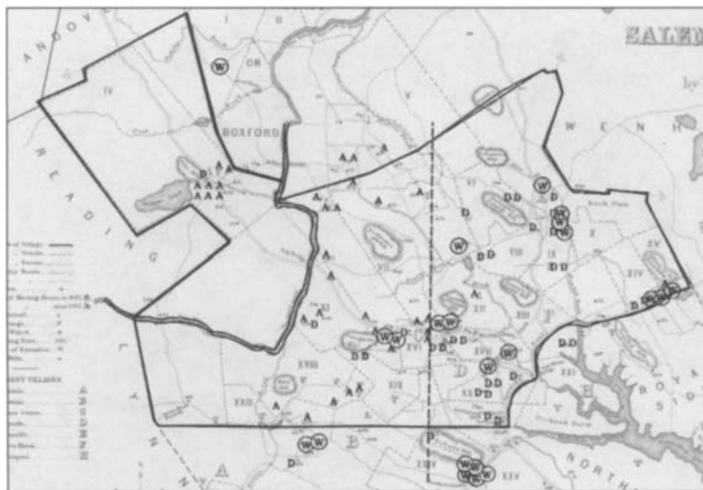

Figure IV

"The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692" superimposed on Upham's georegistered Salem Village map. "The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692," in Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 34. Courtesy, President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Boyer and Nissenbaum placed an all-important east-west demarcation line at the center of their map without explaining its precise location. The lack of explanation is curious because positioning the line slightly to the west would have made a significant difference in the crowded center of the map, shifting several As to the eastern side of the village. A close-up view of Boyer and Nissenbaum's dotted demarcation line neatly dividing As and Ws (overlaying the Upham map) highlights this area (Figure V).

The numerical count of As, Ws, and Ds that accompanies the *Salem Possessed* map refers to accusers, accused, and defenders located within

whose testimony in support of a charge of witchcraft was recorded in a court document, including those who initiated complaints on behalf of those who claimed to be victims of witchcraft. Like Boyer and Nissenbaum, I use the term "accused" to refer to anyone named in a court document on the basis of testimony by an accuser. I do not include people who were said to have been "cried out" but never formally charged or who do not appear in any of the surviving records as accused.

Figure V

Enlarged center section of "The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692" superimposed on Upham's map. "The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692," in Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 34. Courtesy, President and Fellows of Harvard College.

the Salem Village boundaries, though the map itself shows a number of people in these roles outside the village in neighboring settlements. The map indicates that there were fourteen accused witches, thirty-two accusers, and twenty-nine defenders in Salem Village. Elsewhere Boyer and Nissenbaum give different tallies of accusers and accused in the village. For example their documentary source book *Salem-Village Witchcraft* lists twenty-six accused witches as village residents. Included in this list are eight people shown on the map in *Salem Possessed* as living outside the village boundaries. A subsequent map, published in Boyer's cowritten *Enduring Vision*, shows only eleven accused witches within the village borders.[9] There is a similar problem with the number of accusers in the village. The *Salem Possessed* map displays twenty-nine As in Salem Village, whereas the numerical count that accompanies the map says there are thirty-two accusers. This number includes three As located just across the village's northern boundary in Topsfield.

For the sake of completeness, corrections to the As and Ws on revised maps presented here include those located both inside and outside Salem Village boundaries within the same geographic area as Boyer

[9] Ibid., 376–78; Boyer et al., *Enduring Vision*, 49.

and Nissenbaum's map. Though it is evident that the village accusers' social network reached far beyond the village's borders, making local geographic boundaries largely irrelevant to understanding all but the initial stage of the episode, the revised map retains Boyer and Nissenbaum's focus on Salem Village and its immediate environs, including adjacent areas of Rowley, Topsfield, and Salem Farms. Extending the map's geographic coverage would introduce issues that go beyond Boyer and Nissenbaum's interpretation of the outbreak of accusations in the village. The revised map also stays within the same time frame of accusations as the *Salem Possessed* map, from the end of February to the end of May 1692, the first three months of the nine-month accusation period.

Boyer and Nissenbaum do not identify the accused by name on their map. One can infer their identities from the position of the Ws in relation to Upham's household markers and numbers and also from an unpublished version of Boyer and Nissenbaum's map that assigns names to each of the accused (Figure VI). To rectify errors on the *Salem Possessed* map, eight large Ws designate corrected, deleted, or added accused (Figure VII). The large W to the east represents Bridget Bishop. Scholars have determined that she did not live in Salem Village but in the Salem Town, and hence this W is incorrectly placed and should be deleted. The large W near the center of the map is one of an accused pair identified on the unpublished map as Tituba and John Indian (see Figure VI). Both were Indian slaves who lived in the Reverend Samuel Parris's house. Two Ws appear in the same location on the published map, positioned in the approximate location of Parris's house, and clearly represent the same two people. John Indian, however, was never accused of witchcraft, though he was an active accuser in some of the preliminary examinations. Nor is John Indian identified as one of the accused witches in Boyer and Nissenbaum's list in *Salem-Village Witchcraft*. The W representing him on the *Salem Possessed* map is therefore incorrect and should be deleted (see Figure VII). All the other Ws located within the village boundaries on Boyer and Nissenbaum's map are correct according to the court records and Upham's map.[10]

[10] Figure VI bears the names of Paul S. Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum in the lower left-hand corner. I found this map in a folder of miscellaneous papers relating to the Salem witch trials at the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass. The map includes the names of two accused witches, George Jacobs Sr. and Rebecca Jacobs, located in the Northfields section of Salem to the east of the village. Boyer and Nissenbaum omitted these names from the published map in *Salem Possessed*, perhaps because they lie somewhat outside the published map's geographic frame. For Bridget Bishop's full genealogical and marital history, see David L. Greene, "Salem Witches I: Bridget Bishop," *American Genealogist* 57, no. 3 (July 1981): 129–38. According to the arrest warrant, Sarah Good and her husband, William, lived in Salem Village, probably in rented rooms. But no records give their

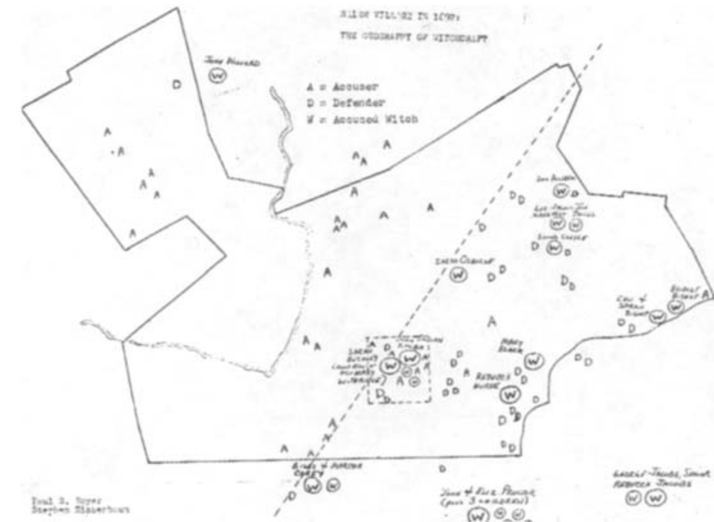

FIGURE VI

Boyer and Nissenbaum's unpublished map of the accusations in Salem Village. Courtesy, Paul Boyer, Stephen Nissenbaum, and the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

Turning now to the accused outside the village, the cluster of five located to the southeast just below the village boundary represents five members of the Procter family (John Procter; his wife, Elizabeth; and three of their children, William, Benjamin, and Sarah). The Procters lived in the area called Salem Farms, an inland segment of Salem Town immediately to the south of the Salem Village boundary.[11] Thus John

specific place of residence at the time and therefore I cannot represent Sarah Good or her accused four- or five-year-old daughter, Dorothy, on a revised and corrected map.

[11] Salem Village was originally part of Salem Town and often referred to as "Salem Farmes" or simply "the Farmes." In 1672 the Farms succeeded in petitioning the town and the General Court for permission to organize a separate parish called Salem Village for the purpose of hiring a minister and building a meetinghouse of its own. To support the new ministry via taxation, leaders geographically defined the Salem Village parish boundaries at this time as represented by Upham's map. The remaining area of the Farms located south of the village continued to be part of the town and came to be known as Salem Farms. The property owners living within the boundaries of Salem Village were first listed on the village tax rolls in 1681; the

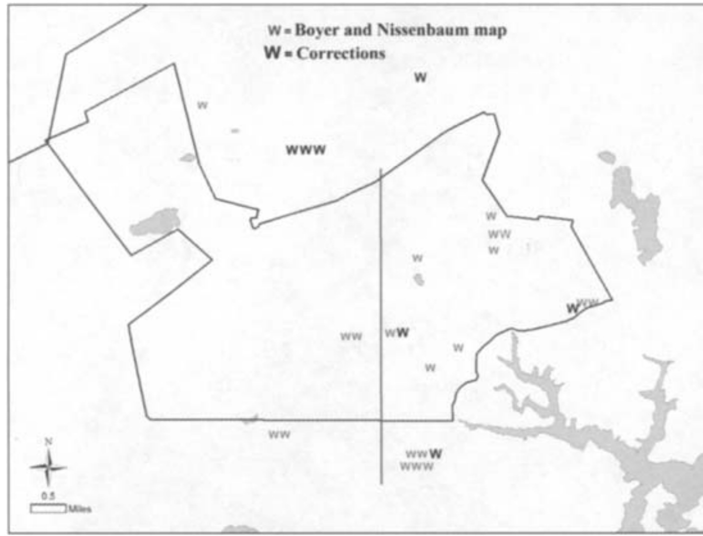

FIGURE VII

Corrections to those accused of witchcraft on "The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692."

Procter was never listed on the village tax rolls. He was a prominent member of the church in Salem Town from 1667 and remained so until his excommunication and execution as a witch in 1692.

During the witchcraft episode, Procter's great mistake was to denounce the accusing girls and scoff at their afflictions, especially those of his twenty-year-old servant, Mary Warren, whom he is said to have beaten to stop her fits. Warren lived in the Procter house and was a close friend of the young female accusers in the village. She was an active accuser in her own right but was also accused of witchcraft herself when she confessed in the court, saying that the other afflicted girls "did but dissemble."[12] An additional W needs to be placed at the location of the Procter house to represent Warren's accused status (see Figure VII).

rolls were updated every two or three years and thus constitute a record of the property owners in the village. The village inhabitants met regularly in the meetinghouse to handle their affairs, which mainly concerned the village ministry and taxes and, later, petitions for independent town status, which was not granted until 1752.

[12] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 3: 793.

The W located to the far northwest just beyond the Salem Village boundary in the area of Rowley Village (now Boxford) marks John Willard's house, as indicated on Upham's map. Property deeds show that some of Willard's large holdings lay within the Will's Hill area of Salem Village in the northwest corner, and hence Willard's name regularly appears on village tax lists. Willard served as a deputy constable at the time of the witchcraft accusations and was involved in arresting several villagers, but he is said to have quit this work out of conscience and mocked the arrests. He was subsequently accused, arrested, and eventually executed. Curiously, Boyer and Nissenbaum did not include Willard in their numerical tally of accused village witches in *Salem Possessed*, though he is consistently identified as a resident of the village in the court documents and tax records.[13]

Also curious is their omission of four accused witches who lived just to the north of Salem Village in the neighboring town of Topsfield. In this same area, Boyer and Nissenbaum placed three As to represent Topsfield accusers Phillip and Margaret Knight and Lydia Nichols, who accused their immediate neighbors, William, Deliverance, and Abigail Hobbs (who were also accused by several residents in the village). In response to the accusations, Abigail Hobbs freely confessed to being a witch and, in turn, accused the Reverend George Burroughs, a former village minister disliked by the Putnam family and who lived in Wells, Maine. In the same week, several village residents, including members of the Putnam family, accused Topsfield resident Mary Towne Esty, Isaac Esty's wife, whose two sisters, Rebecca Towne Nurse and Sarah Towne Cloyce, had already been accused in the village. All four Topsfield residents were well known to the accusers in Salem Village and quickly ensnared in the early phase of the village accusations. The four large Ws in Topsfield represent them (see Figure VII). The fully corrected map represents the locations of those accused of witchcraft in Salem Village and the bordering areas of Topsfield and Salem Farms within the same geographic area as Boyer and Nissenbaum's map (Figure VIII).

[13] Charles W. Upham indicates that the location of John Willard's house is uncertain. See Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, 1: xix. Based on analysis of property deeds, Marilynne Roach has suggested that John and Margaret Willard may have been living in the Will's Hill area, perhaps with Margaret's maternal relatives, near the large Wilkins clan who lived in this part of the village (Roach, e-mail message to author, October 2005). Robert Calef's book is the only source for Willard's role as a deputy constable. See Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible Word*, 1700, in George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648–1706* (New York, 1914), 289–393. Compare with Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, 2: 173.

FIGURE VIII

Revised map of the accused residents of Salem Village and environs.

In regard to the large number of accusers, Boyer and Nissenbaum tell the reader that they decided not to represent two categories of accusers on the map. The first was a group of "five Villagers who were both accusers and defenders in 1692," whom Boyer and Nissenbaum do not otherwise identify. The second was the most active group of accusers in the village, "the eight 'afflicted girls,'" as the authors call them, whom they list by name. Boyer and Nissenbaum explain that they omitted the afflicted girls because the girls were not "decisive shapers of the witchcraft outbreak as it evolved."[14] Thus thirteen accusers were excluded from the map, the afflicted girls because of a perceived social insignificance due to their age and the accusers who were also defenders because of their apparent inconsistency, suggesting a lack of full support for the witch trials.

[14] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 34n ("five Villagers"), 35 ("eight 'afflicted girls'"), 35 n. 26 ("decisive shapers").

Omitting these thirteen accusers makes an important geographic difference. Ten lived on the eastern side of the village, thus significantly changing the east-west ratio of accusers. The decision not to represent these thirteen well-documented accusers clearly indicates that Boyer and Nissenbaum did not intend their map to represent information as recorded in the court documents. Instead they created a map that incorporated their interpretation of the court records based on assumptions about attitudes toward the trials or the social importance of the accusers. It turns out that many more accusers were omitted, it would seem, by oversight.[15] A revised map shows the locations of all the accusers within this geographic area and lists their names (Figure IX). The small As represent the accusers that Boyer and Nissenbaum placed on their map; the large As represent the accusers that they omitted.

Boyer and Nissenbaum do not tell the reader who the five omitted accusers who were also defenders were, only that they did not mark them on the map as As or Ds. From the list of defenders presented in *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, it is clear that by defenders Boyer and Nissenbaum have in mind three categories of people who appear in the court records: "individuals testifying in defense of those accused witches who lived in Salem Village," anyone "who signed a petition in favor of an accused witch living in [Salem] Village," and "everyone giving skeptical testimony designed to cast doubt on the credibility of the afflicted girls."[16] By examining the court documents, it is possible to identify five defenders who were also accusers—Joseph Herrick Sr., James Holton, James Kettle, Nathaniel Putnam, and Samuel Sibley—who do not appear as As or Ds on the *Salem Possessed* map. All were accusers of village residents who were examined by the magistrates and held for trial. Herrick, Putnam, and Sibley defended Rebecca Nurse. Holton was both an accuser and a defender of John Procter, and his testimony against Procter was used as evidence at Procter's trial. Kettle cast doubt on Elizabeth Hubbard's truthfulness. None appear on the *Salem Possessed* map as As or Ds, and all except Holton were accusers of other people.

The decision to omit these accusers from the map, though perhaps appealing to a modern sensibility about accusers' attitudes, imports an

[15] Working with the nearly one thousand documents published in the three-volume edition of *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* is not an easy task. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's index to these volumes includes only about one-third of the names mentioned in the court records, and some documents pertaining to accused people are only found in the case records of other people. Finding all the people named in the court records is easier and more accurate when using the search tools associated with the digital text edition, http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/texts/transcripts.html.

[16] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, 381.

FIGURE IX

Corrections to the accusers delineated on "The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692." Numbers after the householders' names indicate the number of accusers in the households (if more than one).

interpretation into the otherwise objective purpose of the map. Some of the Salem Villagers appear to have genuinely believed certain accused were guilty and others were not, and they acted on their convictions. Boyer and Nissenbaum could not visually represent Salem Villagers' state of mind or moral conscience concerning the witch trials per se. Their complaints, depositions, and courtroom testimonies appear in the court records, and many of these documents were marked *Jurat in Curia* and used as evidence in the trials to convict the accused.

Nanthaniel Putnam was one of the complainants against John Willard and Sarah Buckley. He also initiated a complaint against Elizabeth Fosdick and Elizabeth Paine, two women who lived in nearby Malden. Yet Putnam stood by his old neighbor Nurse; he submitted his own petition on behalf of her innocence and also signed a testimonial in her favor circulated by the Nurse family, along with thirty-eight other villagers. Samuel Sibley testified against Sarah Good and John Procter

but later signed the Nurse petition. Joseph Herrick Sr. was a constable in Salem Village and apprehended a number of suspected witches. He accused Good and Sarah Bishop yet, like Putnam and Sibley, came to Nurse's defense. James Holton contributed testimony supporting Mary Walcott's and Hubbard's depositions against John and Elizabeth Procter yet also signed a petition of John Procter's innocence. Though neither of Holton's documents is dated, his testimony against Procter is marked *Jurat in Curia* and was used as evidence at Procter's trial, indicating that the court had no doubt about Holton's charges and used them to convict. James Kettle's testimonies present a complex situation. He initiated a deposition against his neighbor Sarah Bishop, based on spectral testimony from Hubbard, and he contributed evidence in support of the Reverend John Hale's deposition against Bishop. But Kettle also testified that when he spoke with Hubbard she told him "severall untruthes."[17] None of Kettle's testimonies are dated, so it is difficult to address a change of mind. The case against Bishop, which was not strong, never came to trial. Nevertheless Kettle's testimony, like that of others, became part of the record and lent support to the momentum of the accusations occurring in the village even if he changed his mind. In all these cases, there is no indication that accusers were skeptical about the trials in general, and only Holton appears to have had doubts about the guilt of the person he accused. These five accusers appear as As on a revised map to reflect the court records (see Figure IX).

In addition to these five omitted accusers, there are six individuals who appear on the *Salem Possessed* map as Ds who were also accusers of other people but do not appear on the map as As. They are Jonathan Putnam; Joseph Hutchinson Sr. and his wife, Lydia; John Putnam Sr. and his wife, Rebecca; and Joseph Holton Sr. In light of Boyer and Nissenbaum's comment about the omission of individuals who were accusers and defenders, it would appear that the reader should assume that any of the accusations made by these defenders should not be taken seriously (hence their omission as As), though Boyer and Nissenbaum do not discuss this omission. Each of these accusers was a defender of Nurse, who was a close neighbor. Nevertheless the documents do not give any reason to ignore the accusations that these same accusers made against others.

Jonathan Putnam accused sisters Mary Esty and Nurse but later signed the petition in Nurse's defense, though he did not change his testimony against Esty. Joseph and Lydia Hutchinson were among the original

[17] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 57.

complainants against Tituba, Sarah Osburn, and Sarah Good, yet both stood by their neighbor Nurse. Joseph Hutchinson also submitted a deposition that cast doubt on the reliability of Abigail Williams, one of Nurse's young accusers, pointing out that she told him she could easily converse with the devil. John Putnam Sr. and his wife, Rebecca, testified in court against former Salem Village minister George Burroughs, but both came to Nurse's defense. John Putnam Sr. also complained against Martha Carrier and contributed testimony against John Willard and Sarah Buckley. He accused Nurse of afflicting his son Jonathan but later signed a petition in Nurse's defense as did Jonathan. Nevertheless John Putnam Sr.'s testimony against Nurse was used in court at her trial. Finally, Joseph Holton Sr., who signed the Nurse petition, was one of the chief complainants against William Procter and several Andover people. There is no indication in any of the documents that these seven accusers "publicly showed their skepticism about the trials" in general, as Boyer and Nissenbaum suggest, or that they doubted the accusations they made against others.[18] These six accusers appear on a revised map as large As (see Figure IX).

The eight afflicted girls were Sarah Churchill, Elizabeth Hubbard, Mercy Lewis, Elizabeth Parris, Ann Putnam Jr., Mary Warren, Abigail Williams, and Mary Walcott. The residences of these eight accusers are well known. Boyer and Nissenbaum apparently omitted two more, eighteen-year-old Susannah Shelden and ten-year-old Jemima Rea, because they did not think the young accusers decisively shaped the witchcraft outbreak. Subsequent scholarship, however, has made it clear that this assumption, based on the view that the afflicted girls were merely mouthpieces for adult male villagers, is unsupportable. Bernard Rosenthal's careful analysis of the court documents in *Salem Story* illuminates the constant collaboration among the young accusers (quite independent of adult control) as well as their deliberate acts of lying and deception. Mary Beth Norton's illuminating study of these same young women in *In the Devil's Snare* deepens current understanding of their reduced social status and the traumatized background of some who were the victims of Indian attacks in the 1675–76 King Philip's War.[19] Norton's and Rosenthal's accounts make it abundantly clear that the afflicted girls played key roles in the progress of the accusations in the village and that they helped to maintain control of the dynamics of the legal process inside and outside the courtroom on an almost daily basis. As Norton points out, two or three

[18] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 35.

[19] Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge, 1993); Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*.

of the youngest girls were initially prompted by adults to name certain people as witches, yet nothing in the record demonstrates that these girls and their older female friends did not initiate most of the accusations on their own, relying on personal confrontations, village gossip, and frequent collaboration.

The court records show that the young female accusers played an especially critical role in the preliminary and grand jury hearings. In all preliminary hearings, the young accusers were pitted against the accused in face-to-face encounters, and their eagerness to denounce, often spontaneously during the hearings, produced hundreds of subsequent written depositions and testimonies about the afflictions they suffered during these courtroom interrogations. Most depositions and testimonies were later gathered together, marked *Jurat in Curia*, and used in the trials to condemn the accused.

The importance of the young girls does not minimize the role of the adults who were heavily involved in enabling and supporting the accusations. Norton emphasizes that without leading village men (the most active being former village clerk Thomas Putnam) who recorded and filed complaints and depositions on behalf of most of the young female accusers, the legal proceedings would never have occurred.[20] Samuel Parris, who was responsible for initially raising the subject of demonic activity in his sermons well before the accusations began, supported the accusers from the beginning and gave the afflicted girls initial exposure through group prayer sessions and fasts. Parris also recorded dozens of depositions by his niece Abigail Williams. The records indicate that the girls and young women took the initiative in naming names and, most importantly, in performing their afflictions in numerous preliminary hearings. The magistrates called on them repeatedly to give dramatic testimony against the accused during the seven months of hearings and trials, and they obliged the court with ever-escalating effect, naming new victims in a progressively widening social and geographic circle through the spring, summer, and fall of 1692.

The young accusers' actions also reflected the interests of some of the leading adults and families in Salem Village. It is therefore important to place them on a corrected map to give a geographic location to

[20] Handwriting analysis has revealed that Thomas Putnam recorded most of the dozens of depositions of his active daughter, Ann, as well as those of two other active accusers: Mercy Lewis, who was Putnam's household servant, and Mary Walcott, the stepdaughter of his sister. See Peter Grund, Merja Kytö, and Matti Rissanen, "Editing the Salem Witchcraft Records: An Exploration of a Linguistic Treasury," *American Speech* 79, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 146–66.

the interests they represented. For example two of the most active accusers, Ann Putnam Jr. and Mercy Lewis, were members of Thomas Putnam's household, and Putnam was one of the most active of the village complainants. Placing all ten junior female accusers on the corrected map as As makes a difference in the east-west pattern because seven of them lived on the eastern side of the demarcation line: Sarah Churchill, Elizabeth Hubbard, Elizabeth Parris, Jemima Rea, Susannah Shelden, Mary Warren, and Abigail Williams (see Figure IX).[21]

Boyer and Nissenbaum also apparently overlooked thirteen mostly adult accusers, now added as larger As to the revised map (see Figure IX). Their omission is surprising because three of them, Samuel Parris, John Indian, and Tituba, were residents of the prominent Parris household, and all three figure significantly in the court documents. All three are placed at the Parris house, located just to the east of the Boyer and Nissenbaum demarcation line, and grouped with the two As representing Abigail Williams and Elizabeth Parris. In the Parris household, there was a total of five accusers, more than in any other village household. Ten other As represent Deliverance Hobbs and her daughter, Abigail, who confessed and accused several villagers who had already been accused; Lydia Nichols's two daughters Lydia and Elizabeth, who accused Abigail Hobbs, and her son Thomas, who accused John Willard; Sarah Holton, who accused Rebecca Nurse; Bathshua Pope, who became afflicted at several grand jury hearings and cried out at the accused; Joseph Pope, who testified against John Procter; and Joseph Herrick Sr. and his wife, Mary, who both accused Sarah Good.

In sum the corrected map of the accusations in Salem Village shows an additional thirty-four accusers, most of whom lived on the eastern side of the village (Figure X). Putting accusers and accused together on the same map shows that there is no pronounced east-west division. Twenty-eight accusers appear on the eastern side of the east-west line and forty on the western side. The east-west distribution of accused witches is less even, but there are enough in the west so that the situation is not one sided. Clearly, accusers and accused did not live on opposite sides of the village as Boyer and Nissenbaum stated. Mapping all who made accusations in the same geographic area as Boyer and

[21] Sarah Churchill's location is not indicated on Figure IX because George Jacobs Sr.'s residence, where she lived, was located in Northfields, an area that lies outside the range of Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's map. There were several additional accusers in Salem Farms. For example, in the house of widow Alice Schafflin there were three accusers, Alice's daughters Alice and Elizabeth Booth and daughter-in-law Elizabeth Booth. The Schafflin house also lies just outside the frame of the Boyer and Nissenbaum map.

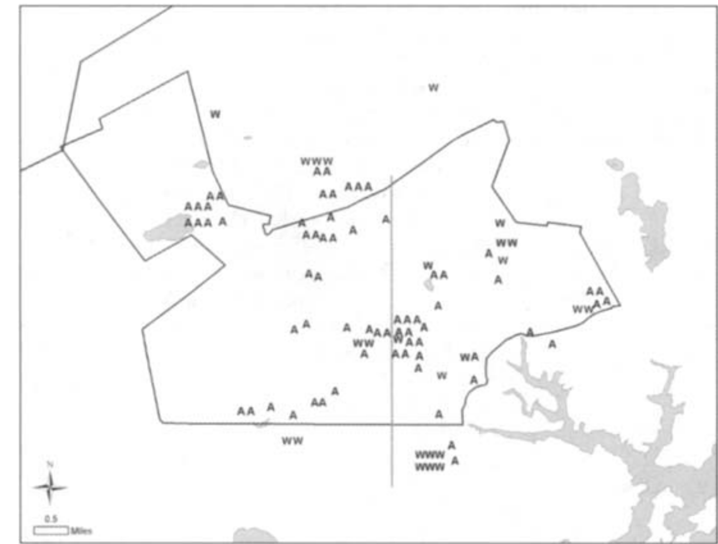

Figure X

Accusers (A) and accused (W) in Salem Village and environs.

Nissenbaum's map does not reveal a community geographically divided against itself.

The depiction of a geographic division depends in part on the location of the east-west demarcation line, yet Boyer and Nissenbaum do not explain the placement of that line in *Salem Possessed*. If it were a strictly geographic demarcation, dividing the village into two equal parts, the authors would have located the line farther to the west to adjust for Will's Hill, the large geographic appendage in the northwestern corner. But a strictly geographic division does not appear to be what Boyer and Nissenbaum had in mind.

They placed the dividing line nearer to the meetinghouse, which was the symbolic center of all Puritan communities. If this position was their intent, the line should be moved slightly to the east to the actual meetinghouse location. The meetinghouse site was selected in 1673 by Joseph Hutchinson Sr., who donated a plot of land from his own property. This location was suitable because it placed the meetinghouse more or less

equidistant from most of the village residents and thus at the village's approximate demographic center. Moving the line closer to the meeting-house would not significantly change the east-west ratio of accusers to accused as Boyer and Nissenbaum represented it.[22]

The unpublished version of the accusations map, interestingly, shows a diagonal line instead of a vertical one and divides the village in half from northeast to southwest (see Figure VI). This line appears to have been drawn so that it placed as many Ws as possible on the eastern side of the village. This strategy, however, left eight As on the eastern side. Comparing the diagonal version to the vertical one, which shows only two As in the east, suggests that the purpose of the vertical arrangement was to keep as many As in the west and as many Ws in the east as possible. Placing the vertical line so that it almost too neatly separates the closely clustered households at the center and thus keeping several As to the west of it strengthens this interpretation. It seems, therefore, that the location of the vertical demarcation line on the map was intended to show as dramatically as possible that Salem Village was geographically divided against itself, with nearly all As in the west and most Ws in the east.

According to *Salem Possessed*, there was a deep-seated economic division between the more prosperous and commercially minded "Town-oriented" farmers and "entrepreneurs" on the eastern side of the village and along the Ipswich Road and the poorer, conservatively minded agrarian farmers in the more isolated, less fertile land in the west. "In at least two important respects—quality of land and access to market—those farmers on the eastern (or Town) side of the Village had a significant [economic] advantage." One can use the tax rate information from the Salem Village Record Book to show the three different tax levels in a single display for the year 1689–90, two years before the outbreak of the accusations (Figure XI). At the lowest tax level, there are twenty-six households on the western side and thirteen on the eastern; thus about twice as many of the poorest families (in terms of landholdings) lived in the western area. The middle tax range shows twelve households in the west and fifteen in the

[22] The Salem Village map in Boyer et al.'s *Enduring Vision* appears to locate the dividing line somewhat to the east of the meetinghouse. By contrast historian George Lincoln Burr refers to Ingersoll's Tavern as the "recognized centre of the 'Village'. The meeting-house [property] adjoined it to the east, to the west the parsonage, where lived Mr. Parris." See Burr, *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases*, 153 n. 1. If Ingersoll's Tavern, marked on Upham's map by the symbol "+" (see Figure V), were the village center, the location of the demarcation line would be farther to the east, thus shifting a number of the accusers and accused in Samuel Parris's house to the west.

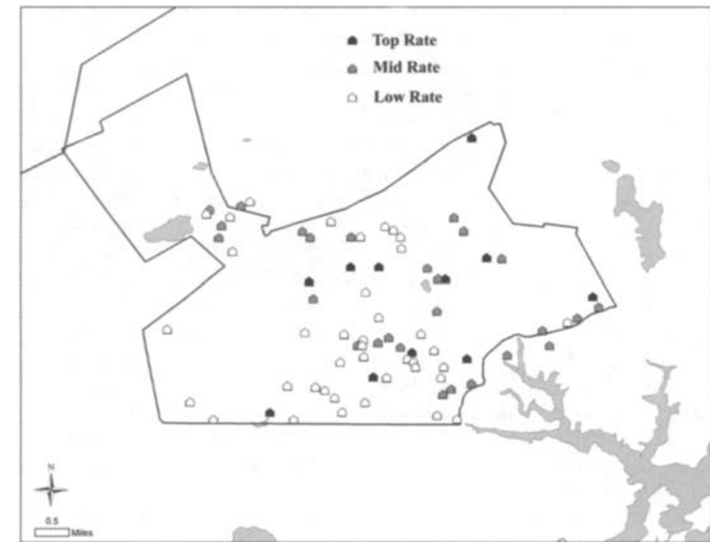

FIGURE XI

Tax rates in Salem Village, 1689–90.

east, an almost even distribution. The top level tax range includes six households in the west and seven in the east, again, an almost even distribution. Except for the lowest economic level, the map reveals a fairly homogeneous distribution of wealth across the village. Salem Village was not therefore divided into radically different eastern and western economic groups, and, as Richard Latner has shown, a comparison of the tax records over time also does not reveal any significant change in the geographic distribution of wealth over the years.[23]

[23] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 93 ("Town-oriented"), 97 ("entrepreneurs"), 94 ("two important respects"). All the residents of Salem Village paid annual taxes toward the minister's salary, and new tax rates were drawn up every few years and entered into the village records. See "Salem-Village Book of Record, 1672–1697," in "A Book of Record of the Severall Publique Transa[c]tions of the Inhabitants of Sale[m] Village Vulgarly Called the Farme[s]," *Historical Collections of the Danvers Historical Society* (Salem, Mass., 1925–26, 1928–29), 13: 91–122, 14: 65–99, 16: 60–80, 17: 74–103, in Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, 353–55; Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 82. Curiously, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum use the tax rate list for the year 1695, three years after the witch trials

It is important to also look at the distribution of social, political, military, administrative, legal, and religious leadership in the village during 1680–92 (Figure XII).[24] The map markers represent the households of men who were church deacons, village committee men, constables, Salem Town selectmen, and militia officers as well as the village physician and the minister. Though there is a slight bias toward the east by two households, the map shows a homogeneous distribution of village leaders during this ten-year period. By virtue of their years of service in administrating, policing, and defending the village and serving as church deacons, these men were the most committed to the village's welfare. Though a few held positions as selectmen in the town from time to time, the commitment to village interests as measured by participation in its governance was not largely an affair of the householders living in the west.

Nevertheless, according to Boyer and Nissenbaum, it was the eastern village leaders who deliberately hindered the western villagers' long struggle for independence because the easterners' connections with Salem Town were economically beneficial to them. These eastern men, according to *Salem Possessed*, tried to undermine the village's newly established congregation by attempting to oust Parris, which would set back the village's efforts to become an independent township. An ordained minister and covenanted congregation were the necessary features in any Puritan town, and destabilizing the new church would frustrate Salem Village's cause. To investigate the eastern villagers' role in the village's struggle for independence involves examining the several petitions submitted to Salem Town and to the General Court in Boston from 1670 to 1692. These petitions requested release from the town's ministry tax because the villagers were already paying a tax for their own minister. For most villagers, traveling the five to ten miles to Salem's meetinghouse, especially in the winter, was also a hardship, which was the initial basis for the petitions for a separate ministry and a separate meetinghouse in the village.

There was a wide geographic spectrum of villagers who supported the two 1670 petitions for a village minister (Figure XIII). From the beginning the General Court in Boston made it clear that the support of

were over, as the basis for examining the economic situation that supposedly gave rise to the witchcraft accusations in 1692. Though the tax rates do not vary much between the 1689–90 and 1695 tax lists, I have used the rates for 1689–90, as does Richard Latner. See Latner, "Salem Witchcraft, Factionalism, and Social Change Reconsidered: Were Salem's Witch-Hunters Modernization's Failures?" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 423–48.

[24] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem-Village Witchcraft*, 319–55.

FIGURE XII

Salem Village leadership, 1680–92, with the following abbreviations: c = constable, d = deacon in the village church, m = officer in the militia, p = physician, r = village minister, s = Salem Town selectman, and v = village committee.

a separate ministry in the village and maintenance of the meetinghouse would be in the hands of all residents of the village, not just those villagers who were already covenanted members of Salem Town's congregation. This village-wide control of the ministry created an unusual situation in the village parish, indeed a structural anomaly, since control of a town's ministry was normally in the hands of the congregation members alone. But Salem Village was not an independent town; it was only a separate parish within the town and, prior to Samuel Parris's arrival, the village had a meetinghouse and a minister but no separately covenanted congregation. A small number of the villagers were members of the congregation in the town, and a few belonged to churches in neighboring Topsfield and Beverly, yet almost all were not members of any congregation. In 1679 the Salem church reiterated the policy that all village inhabitants controlled the village ministry: "the liberty granted to them by the town of Salem, whereby the Court order (to have a minister

FIGURE XIII

Signers of village ministry petitions of 1670.

amongst themselves within such bounds [of the village]) was not granted to any of them under the notion of church members, but to the whole number of inhabitants there—for their present ease, being so far from the meeting-house here [in Salem Town]."[25] This ruling set the stage for possible conflict between future church members in the village, once an independent congregation was established there, and the rest of the village residents if they disapproved of the minister.

After repeated conflict and a succession of three ministers in the village in eighteen years, the last of whom, Deodat Lawson, left in 1687, the town permitted the village to recruit a new minister who would be ordained so that the village would be able to establish its own covenant congregation. The search for a new minister, which led to Parris's recruitment, was the work of several village men who would become

[25] Ibid., 246.

founding members of the new village covenant; and in their households would reside the core group of village accusers. After initial negotiations with Parris concerning salary and benefits, which were not fully resolved, the village agreed to appoint him in November 1689. As the first ordained minister in the village, Parris could establish its first covenant congregation, conduct Holy Communion services, and baptize the congregation's children. Establishing a village congregation was also a major step toward the village's independence from the town.

Once Parris was selected and installed, village leaders lost no time in submitting petitions to the General Court in Boston for independent township status. The first petition was initiated in August 1689, another was submitted in December 1690, and two more in January 1692.[26] The final petition of January 28 requested that the village be granted township status and be freed from those town taxes that did not benefit it, namely, the taxes for Salem's minister, the town roads, and support of the town's poor. The petition was signed by several prominent residents, all eastern village men, who were chosen to serve as advocates: Thomas Flint, Joseph Hutchinson, Francis Nurse, Joseph Porter, John Putnam Jr., and Nathaniel Putnam. Flint and the Putnams were strong supporters of Parris; Hutchinson, Nurse, and Porter, strong opponents. Despite the deepening conflict over Parris, it is clear that the anti-Parris leaders steadfastly backed the independence movement in cooperation with their opponents.

The village's desire for independence was strongly supported by eastern leaders, as can be seen from the locations of men supporting the four petitions (Figure XIV). It is difficult, then, to agree with Boyer and Nissenbaum that eastern village leaders had little genuine interest in separation from the town. Indeed all villagers would economically benefit because independence would free the village from paying a sizable portion of the town's taxes for the support of its ministry, roads, and poor. Loss of tax revenue, however, made the town reluctant to accept the village's petitions. Though there is an obvious connection between establishment of the village congregation and the village independence movement, since an independent church was a requirement for township status, there is no exclusive connection between the geographic location of the men supporting the village independence movement and the supposedly proindependence western side of the village, as Boyer and Nissenbaum believed.

Finally, it is important to look at the geographic distribution of church membership in Salem Village during Parris's tenure from the

[26] Ibid., 349–57.

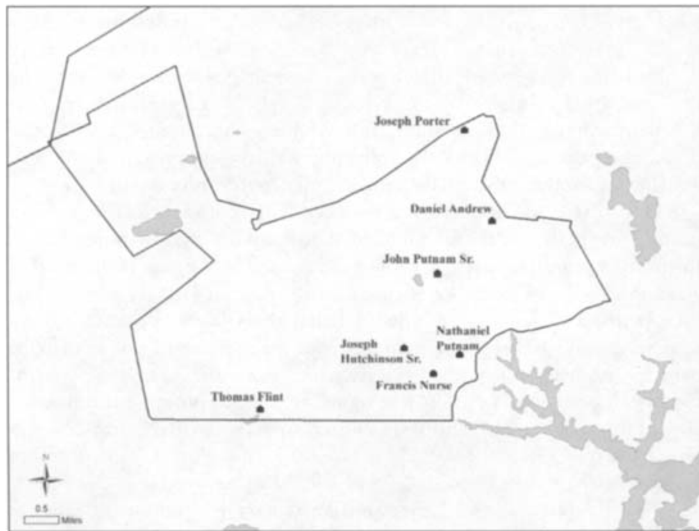

FIGURE XIV

Signers of village independence petitions of January 1692.

founding of the new covenant in November 1689 to 1695, the year in which he was forced to leave (Figure XV). It is revealing to plot the residences of the original twenty-five covenant members, the twenty-nine people who joined in January 1690–July 1691, and the five who joined from 1693 to 1695, as listed by Parris in the church record book. Several of the new members were spouses of and shared the same households as founding members. In 1695, in connection with petitions for and against his removal from the village ministry, Parris identified an additional fourteen individuals who attended the village church as "Church-Members," though they formally belonged to other nearby churches.[27] There was a nearly uniform distribution of church member households across the village landscape (see Figure XV).

Salem Village, then, was not a community geographically divided against itself in terms of church membership. Nor was it geographically

[27] Ibid., 262–63, 309.

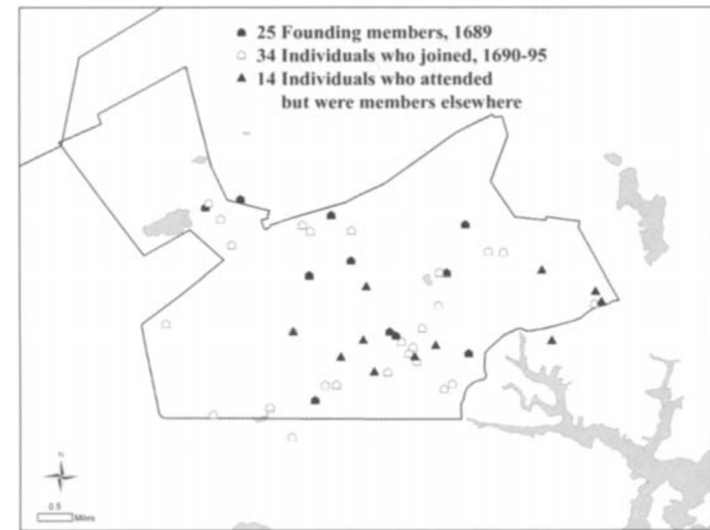

FIGURE XV

Geographic distribution of Salem Village covenant households, 1689–95.

divided over the issue of independence from the town, or by wealth, social leadership, or the witchcraft accusations.

The central idea of *Salem Possessed*, which made it such a landmark study, was the notion that the Salem witch trials "cannot be written off as a communal effort to purge the poor, the deviant, or the outcast," as in most other witchcraft episodes in New England. "Whatever was troubling the girls and those who encouraged them," Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum pointed out, "it was something deeper than the kind of chronic, petty squabbles between near neighbors which seem to have been at the root of earlier and far less severe witchcraft episodes in New England."[28] This something deeper was Salem Village's well-known factionalism and the conflict that Boyer and Nissenbaum believed was economic, social, and geographic in character. Guided by this essential

[28] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 33–35 (quotations).

thesis, *Salem Possessed*—unlike accounts of the previous two hundred years—was the first to analytically examine the historical forces at work in Salem Village instead of merely offering a moral account of the episode and its many perpetrators and victims. As this article indicates, mapping the accusations needs to be as free of interpretive assumptions as possible if scholars are to have a solid geographic foundation for further historical analysis.

What Goes Around Comes Around

John Demos

PAUL Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's *Salem Possessed* was, and remains, a landmark in early American historical studies.[1] The chance to salute it here is welcome.

Its very making was extraordinary. Consider . . . It was the product of genuine collaboration (a rare occurrence among professional historians). Both its authors' areas of expertise lay outside the colonial period. It was conceived and developed as part of undergraduate teaching. And students contributed in significant ways to the research behind it.

Its importance for scholarship seems no less clear. Indeed its timing—publication in 1974—was impeccable. The foundations of a new social history had been laid some ten years earlier, and the edifice was still building. But to that point the new work had been focused on one or another kind of measurement and largely framed as community studies with much emphasis on social boundaries and structures, demographic rates, household and family systems, prevalent styles of mentality, and the like. What had not yet been accomplished or even (for the most part) attempted was the resolution of specific, event-centered historical problems. In that regard *Salem Possessed* proved an absolute breakthrough. Certainly, it was event centered. (It helped that the event in question was old and endlessly intriguing, indeed among the oldest of all old chestnuts in the entire landscape of American history.) Now the new approach, these new methods and concepts, could be seen fully applied as means to the end of explanation. Hence the book might stand as a kind of capstone on a large and broadly influential scholarly enterprise.

For this reason it has endured through more than three decades, and for other reasons as well. Its architecture, the arrangement of its various parts, was nothing less than elegant. Likewise its prose qualities: elegant for sure, also arresting, nuanced, with fast (but not too fast) pace, and richly resonant tone. (The metaphor of a "lightning flash," dropped strategically into the preface to identify both the book's

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[1] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974).

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method and its result, was an especially fine authorial stroke.[2] And there were other, similar strokes scattered throughout.) Which is almost to say that *Salem Possessed* succeeded on aesthetic grounds alone, never mind its substantive contents.

The Forum essays are not, to be sure, concerned with aesthetics. Instead they mount a detailed, empirical challenge to some (far from all) of the book's leading contentions. To wit: a map designed to show patterns of accusation and defense in the witch trials contains many inaccuracies and must be "corrected." Moreover a set of tables, based on local tax assessments, is insufficiently developed and contextualized and thus misrepresents the actual economic profile of Salem residents at the time of the trials.[3] These are possibly valid criticisms (to which I will return). But there is much more to *Salem Possessed* than a single map and set of tables. Three powerfully constructed chapters trace a history of village conflict that, even if it were found not to reflect property differences, was surely central to the witch hunt. From there the spotlight moves to a pair of leading families, the Porters and the Putnams, with their various clashing interests brilliantly exposed, and then to a further, still deeper discussion of conflict internal to the Putnam clan. The final step in this zoom-lens sequence is a superbly insightful essay on the life and psychology of the Reverend Samuel Parris. It is, finally, the convergence of theme and content—as seen from all these different vantage points—that makes the book's underlying argument so compelling.

Returning now to the offending map and tables, one can see some point to the critiques presented by Benjamin C. Ray and Richard Latner. But it's not a large point and it runs more to tactics than to strategy or outcome. That Boyer and Nissenbaum should have interpreted factional division along spatial and economic lines seems logical, since the rest of their analysis pointed that way. That they should have started with Charles W. Upham's map and the 1695 tax list also seems logical; they took what lay most readily at hand. Where they fell short, perhaps, was in the way they deployed these materials. What their critics here have demonstrated is at most a need for more refined handling of the evidence. The broad categories of accuser, witness, and defender (A, W, D) themselves need refinement. Accusers participated in the trials at widely varying levels of intensity, which should be taken fully into account. The

[2] Ibid., xii.

[3] Benjamin C. Ray, "The Geography of Witchcraft Accusations in 1692 Salem Village," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d ser., 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 449–78 (quotation, 458); Richard Latner, "Salem Witchcraft, Factionalism, and Social Change Reconsidered: Were Salem's Witch-Hunters Modernization's Failures?" ibid., 423–48.

same applies to witnesses and defenders. In the social sciences, our closest disciplinary neighbors, such matters are handled through careful efforts of scoring. Impartial evaluators are invited (trained and hired) to assess the pertinent evidence for each individual case; the result is a score along a range, for example, of one to ten. It isn't hard to imagine transposing the same approach to the Salem materials to distinguish the most strongly involved accusers, witnesses, or defenders (thus scored at nine or ten) from others whose participation was marginal (perhaps one, two, or three).

So much for the challenge to the map. With the corresponding economic analysis—the tables based on tax assessments—one can certainly appreciate the inclusion of additional listings from the years both before and after the trials. But this should be simply the start of another, more extended investigation. Ranking the economic position of Salem Villagers could easily include a variety of evidence besides their taxes; probates come first to mind. A further refinement might involve some assessment of an individual's market orientation. The entire array of these elements could then be used in another effort of scoring.

With so much accomplished, a suitably revised map and a much expanded set of economic rankings could be refocused on the task of explanation. In short the critics of *Salem Possessed* have (somewhat unwittingly) shown a need for closer, more detailed study along the same lines as those that were key to the original analysis. But they have not damaged the basis of that analysis with their own patently incomplete efforts. One cannot say what the results of a refined reanalysis might look like. It seems quite possible, perhaps even likely, that the central conclusions of *Salem Possessed* would be sustained or even strengthened.

Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal's Forum contribution is very different; it throws no light on *Salem Possessed* but instead announces the imminent completion of a large editorial project.[4] If the other two constitute small, and somewhat misconceived, steps forward, this one is potentially major. A new and improved *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* surely deserves loud applause. Indeed this edition of the records could well prove invaluable for the additional investigative efforts of the sort proposed above.

Who knew that more than three centuries after the event the Salem witch hunt would spark such broad public and scholarly interest? And

[4] Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal, "Examination of the Records of the Salem Witch Trials," ibid., 401–22; Rosenthal et al., eds., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

who could imagine that more than three decades after publication a single book on Salem might prompt an entire Forum's worth of academic discussion?

Essex County Witchcraft

Mary Beth Norton

SALEM witchcraft is, in a word, bewitching. No one knows that better than Bernard Rosenthal, a professor of American literature, who set out in the 1980s to write a book about the events that inspired so many authors of fiction and who, more than two decades later, is still involved with the subject as the general editor of the forthcoming *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*. Or take me, for example. As part of a larger project on the relationship between women and the public realm in early America, I decided in the mid-1990s to tackle the witchcraft crisis, in which women took such a prominent public role. More than five years after publication of *In the Devil's Snare*, I am still writing, teaching, and speaking about the topic. And it is not just scholars who are intrigued. I have learned to expect self-identified witch descendants in nearly every audience I address, and many people with no familial connections to Salem witchcraft appear just as interested in the subject.[1]

Historians of Salem witchcraft, whether or not they agree with the interpretation in *Salem Possessed*, owe a great debt of gratitude to Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum. Their 1974 book sets forth what has continued to this day to be the prevailing interpretation of the events in 1692 Salem Village. Only time will tell how historians will react to this

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[1] Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge, 1993); Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York, 2002). See also my essay, "The Salem Witchcraft Trials," in *I Wish I'd Been There: Twenty Historians Bring to Life Dramatic Events that Changed America*, ed. Byron Hollinshead (New York, 2006), 17–32. Margo Burns, who cowrote the first Forum essay with Rosenthal (see Burns and Rosenthal, "Examination of the Records of the Salem Witch Trials," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 65, no. 3 [July 2008]: 401–22), moderates the Salem witch descendants listserv on http://archiver.rootsweb.com/th/index/salem-witch. When I lectured on Salem witchcraft at various U.K. and Irish universities in 2005–6 while serving as Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions at the University of Cambridge, I found audiences across the Atlantic just as intrigued by the topic as Americans are. Some of the witch descendants who attend my talks are my own (very distant) relatives; I am descended from Mary Bradbury, convicted in September 1692 but reprieved, and from the stepdaughter of Susannah Martin, convicted in June 1692 and hanged in July.

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Forum's critical analyses of that book by Richard Latner and Benjamin C. Ray, which I find persuasive. But in the 1970s, Boyer and Nissenbaum offered a revelatory approach that emphasized the economic, social, and political context of the witchcraft crisis, helping to broaden historians' perspective by looking beyond the personalities of accused and accuser or the conduct of the trials. I incorporated their ideas into my teaching and later drew on them for the earliest editions of my coauthored textbook, *A People and a Nation*.[2]

Yet after I had reread the book several times prior to leading discussions on it in my classes, I began to question some of the authors' key arguments and uses of evidence. There were the petitions and that tax list dating from 1695, three years after the crisis began. Did signatures on a 1695 petition accurately reflect the positions people took in 1692? Could one tax list tell us all we needed to know about the relative economic positions of accused and accusers? Thanks to Latner's meticulous research, I now know the answers to these questions: yes to the first, and no to the second.[3]

On one rereading I noticed what my subsequent students have called the infamous footnote, the one in which (as Ray points out) Boyer and Nissenbaum declare that they omitted the "afflicted girls" from their famous map because they concluded that those youthful accusers were not "decisive shapers of the witchcraft outbreak as it evolved."[4] In his essay Ray attributes that omission to the age of those accusers. I would instead attribute it to their gender. Boyer and Nissenbaum, developing their interpretation prior to the rise of women's history, simply assumed that women and girls residing in particular households would reflect in their witchcraft accusations the economic or other concerns of the male heads of those households without thinking to ask what familial dynamics might produce such a result. It also did not occur to them to consider whether the women of Salem Village might have accused each other of witchcraft for reasons that had little or nothing to do with men's affairs but that arose from their own interactions. And they largely excluded from their account household servants

[2] Mary Beth Norton et al., *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States* (Boston, 1982). In the eighth edition (2008), all vestiges of the Boyer-Nissenbaum interpretation have vanished. I discussed the changes in the accounts of Salem witchcraft in my essay, "Reflections of a Longtime Textbook Author; Or, History Revised, Revised—and Revised Again," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1383–90.

[3] Richard Latner, "Salem Witchcraft, Factionalism, and Social Change Reconsidered: Were Salem's Witch-Hunters Modernization's Failures?" *WMQ* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 423–48, esp. 426–27 n. 6.

[4] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 35 n. 26.

such as Sarah Churchill, Elizabeth Hubbard, and Mercy Lewis, who in my (eventual) opinion proved crucial to the development of the crisis.

Despite the ways in which *Salem Possessed* broke the mold of previous studies, it remained true to earlier scholarship in one key respect: the book focused almost exclusively on Salem Village, where the crisis began but that accounted in the end for only a relatively small proportion of the total number of formal accusations. The reasons for such a focus are obvious to anyone familiar with the records: since the Salem Village accusations tended to be offered in the first half of 1692, they were more fully investigated than others offered later; and for the same reason the Salem Village accused were more likely than residents of other towns to be tried prior to the dissolution of the Court of Oyer and Terminer in late October. Though, as Margo Burns and Rosenthal point out, scholars lack the formal records that would identify judges, jurors, and witnesses for each trial, copious file papers survive for those early cases. More information survives about the accusations that proceeded at least to the grand-jury stage of the special court, since sworn depositions often supplement the records of the magistrates' examinations for such cases. The effect of such a basic consideration—the ready accessibility of evidence related to particular accused people—has been compounded and heightened by the organizational scheme adopted by W. Elliot Woodward and the Works Progress Administration transcribers, as reflected subsequently in the Boyer and Nissenbaum three-volume *Salem Witchcraft Papers*. As indicated by Burns and Rosenthal, documents in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* are arranged alphabetically by the last name of suspects. Thus historians have found it most convenient to approach the evidence by adopting a biographical focus on the Salem Village accused.[5]

[5] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, 3 vols. (New York, 1977). Thanks to the 1996 rediscovery of the 1693 record book of the Supreme Court of Judicature, as Burns and Rosenthal note, we have that original available to us, but we lack most of the file papers for those 1693 proceedings. The file papers are in fact more useful than the formal record in many respects. The 1692 record book and some file papers from the Court of Oyer and Terminer were probably lost when Thomas Hutchinson's house was destroyed in the Stamp Act riots of Aug. 26, 1765. Hutchinson, who was then the Massachusetts chief justice, included excerpts from the 1692 records in his three-volume history of the Massachusetts Bay colony, and he probably had the manuscripts in his house to consult them more readily. None of the excerpts he published survives in documentary form, which supports this speculation. See Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of Massachusetts, from the First Settlement Thereof in 1628, until the year 1750*, 3d ed. (Boston, 1795). Nearly all studies of the witchcraft crisis, starting with Charles W. Upham, *Salem Witchcraft: With an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Spirits*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1867), and continuing through recent works such as Peter Charles Hoffer, *The Devil's Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witchcraft Trials* (Baltimore, 1996), focus almost exclusively on the Salem Village cases and prosecutions before the Court of Oyer and Terminer.

My decision instead to take a chronological approach made my research tedious in one specific respect because I had to develop a chronology from documents in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* that had been organized in a very different way. I read *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* by proceeding through it not from page 1 of volume 1 to the last page of volume 3, but rather in a roughly chronological order I created by relying on the recorded dates of initial formal accusations. After reading and taking notes on each document, I then updated a daily, computerized calendar of events. (Though working initially from *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, I also visited a variety of archives and located several previously unknown documents that are included in the new edition. As I was writing the book, additional images became available to me on Ray's invaluable Web site.[6])

Therefore I applaud the decision of the editors of *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* to adopt a chronological organizational scheme. Their chronology, which is based necessarily and appropriately on the dates of the creation of the legal documents, is not the same as the one I constructed, which used the dates on which the events described in the legal documents actually (or purportedly) occurred; still, had this edition been available to me a decade ago, my task would have been considerably easier.[7] And now other readers will be able to see what I saw as I read the documents and wrote the book: the way in which the witchcraft crisis ebbed and flowed over time and how events built to an initial crescendo in mid- to late May 1692, with others following in mid- to late July and in late August to early September. Because of the care with which the editors have identified scribal hands, the specific roles played by men such as Thomas Putnam and the Reverend Samuel Parris will now also be open to further analysis.

Most important, perhaps, the new chronological edition should direct historians' attention away from Salem Village and toward the other towns, in particular Andover, that produced the less-often-studied accusations later in 1692. That phase of the crisis could be said to have begun with the naming of the first Andover witch, Martha Allen Carrier, probably in late May (the precise date is not recorded), but it escalated only after mid-July, when Andover residents Ann Foster, her

[6] See the Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive, http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft.

[7] Bernard Rosenthal et al., eds., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (New York, forthcoming). Unbeknownst to me, while I was constructing this daily chronology independent Salem scholar Marilynne K. Roach was doing the same. See her extremely useful *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-by-Day Chronicle of a Community under Siege* (New York, 2002). She and I usually but not always dated ambiguous events in similar ways.

daughter, Mary Lacey Sr., and her granddaughter, Mary Lacey Jr., all offered detailed confessions to witchcraft that implicated Carrier's sons Richard and Andrew. The young men then identified still more of their fellow townspeople as witches. The entwined Foster-Lacey-Carrier examinations and confessions set off a chain reaction as increasing numbers of Andover residents were accused and confessed, then named others, and so on. Finally, a climax was reached with a mass touch test on September 7 that brought about the collapse of the entire process. Viewed against the backdrop of Salem Village (where accusers named people who can be identified as their antagonists and hardly anyone confessed), the Andover pattern, in which sisters named each other, children accused parents, and nearly everyone confessed, is striking. The events in Andover—to which I was unable to devote much attention because my interpretive energies were centered elsewhere, on the Maine frontier and on the involvement of the Reverend George Burroughs—cry out for careful examination and explanation. To date, in contrast to the many book- and article-length studies of 1692 that focus on Salem Village, only my book and a 1983 article by Chadwick Hansen contain more than perfunctory discussions of what happened in Andover.[8]

Once witchcraft researchers spend more time studying the events in Andover and other towns with fewer suspects, such as Gloucester, it should become clear that the 1692 crisis extended far beyond Salem Village to encompass large portions of Essex County and northern New England in general. And that will raise all sorts of new questions for historians to consider. Why did Andover residents react so differently to witchcraft accusations than did Salem Villagers? Were the charges leveled in Topsfield, Salem Town, and Beverly, which adjoined Salem Village, simply cross-boundary spillovers (as they have tended to be seen), or did they have local origins in those communities? Why did some Essex County towns witness no recorded accusations and others multiple ones? Did local magistrates in the various communities handle the charges in similar or varied ways? How did prosecutions change over time during and after the sitting of the Court of Oyer and Terminer? Indeed what difference did the timing of accusations and prosecutions make in general? Finally, can scholars read the widespread accusations of 1692 as a sort of aural snapshot of

[8] See Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 233–41, 252–65, esp. 262; Chadwick Hansen, "Andover Witchcraft and the Causes of the Salem Witchcraft Trials," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow (Urbana, Ill., 1983), 38–57. One of my former undergraduate students, Jacqueline Kelly, produced a superb study of an Andover prosecution. See Kelly, "The Untold Story of Mary Ayer Parker: Gossip and Confusion in 1692," http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:8090/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=salem/texts/bios.xml&style=salem/xsl/dynaxml.xsl&chunk.id=b42&clear-stylesheet-cache=yes.

gossip about possible sorcerers probably extant everywhere in New England during the seventeenth century, a fortuitous revelation of information that would have remained forever hidden from historians had the courts in that year not proved unusually willing to entertain such formal witchcraft charges? Because adopting that approach would make it seem as though nearly every community had its reputed local witch, how might that affect historians' understanding of lives in early New England?[9]

I cannot predict how all these questions might be answered or what other queries will be raised in people's minds by *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, the new definitive edition with its chronological organization and careful annotations. But I am sure that future historians will continue to find Essex County witchcraft as endlessly fascinating as I and many others already have.

[9] See Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 302. Two other former undergraduates of mine also wrote excellent papers relevant here. See Jedediah Drolet, "The Geography and Genealogy of Gloucester Witchcraft," http://jefferson.village.virginia. edu:8090/saxon/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=salem/texts/bios.xml&style=salem/xsl/dynaxml.xsl&chunk.id=b44&clear-stylesheet-cache=yes; Mark Rice, "Specters, Maleficium, and Margaret Scott," http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu:8090/saxon/ servlet/SaxonServlet?source=salem/texts/bios.xml&style=salem/xsl/dynaxml.xsl&chunk.id=b43&clear-stylesheet-cache=yes.

Salem Revisited

Carol F. Karlsen

ONCE upon a time, historians paid little attention to witchcraft in early New England. Apparently, they shared Perry Miller's conviction (mentioned in Richard Latner's Forum contribution) that the 1692 Salem outbreak held little real significance for the region's history. If so Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum's *Salem Possessed* and their three-volume *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* changed all that.[1] Witchcraft studies have never been the same.

Like many others this brief tale simultaneously informs and obscures. For more than three decades, the influence of *Salem Possessed* has been monumental, profoundly shaping the way other historians, students, and general readers have understood the causes of the 1692 witch trials. *The Salem Witchcraft Papers*, moreover, was an enormous boon to scholarship and teaching, for the first time enabling researchers to access relevant trial records on local campuses rather than traveling to Massachusetts to read them. Still, my emphasis on Boyer and Nissenbaum's ability to turn history around hides the role of several other groups of authors in this process: nonhistorians, such as Marion L. Starkey and Arthur Miller, who interpreted the Salem outbreak prior to the 1970s; non-Americanists, including British historian Keith Thomas, as well as feminist thinkers, such as Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, who indirectly encouraged colonial American historians to ask fresh questions about religion and gender in New England's witchcraft cases; and other American historians, especially Chadwick Hansen and John Putnam Demos, who expanded the history of colonial witchcraft beyond Salem or otherwise took us in new social, cultural, and psychological directions.[2] My reference to Perry Miller and my fairy-tale opening speak

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[1] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974); Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, 3 vols. (New York, 1977).

[2] Marion L. Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Inquiry into the Salem Witch Trials* (New York, 1950); Arthur Miller, *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts* (New York, 1952); Chadwick Hansen, *Witchcraft at Salem* (New York, 1969); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971); Barbara

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to and mask my own agenda, which is to celebrate how far witchcraft history has come in recent decades, to highlight some interpretive disputes half-buried in these three articles, to argue for less evasion and more evidence in carrying on these disputes, and to call for greater distinctions between fact and interpretation in the witchcraft stories we tell in the future.

Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt, introduced in this Forum by Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal, two of its main editors, promises to be a wonderful addition to the scholarly resources on the 1692–93 Salem trials.[3] Most of the arguments they make for this comprehensive new edition of the surviving legal records are persuasive. With the help of several associate editors, they have corrected earlier errors; clarified confusing language; added all court documents discovered since Boyer and Nissenbaum published the Works Progress Administration's typed transcripts; identified the many original recorders of handwritten manuscripts, noting the timing and idiosyncrasies of their entries; and sorted out the order of court appearances of accused witches and their accusers and defenders. We can now have greater confidence in the sequence of events in Salem because each legal document appears in chronological order. What's a scholar not to like about such an updated collection?

Though I am convinced by Burns and Rosenthal's fundamental argument for their chronological approach and the limitations of the individual, case-based method used by Boyer and Nissenbaum, I am troubled by their apparent dismissal of a case-based orientation altogether, not only for organizing documents but also for analyzing them. Whether they are referring simply to Boyer and Nissenbaum's editorial decision more than thirty years ago or to the wealth of scholarship (including *Salem Possessed*) that has drawn on individual case studies to reconstruct family and neighborly relationships in New England is ambiguous at best. But by suggesting that seventeenth-century witchcraft accusations are irrelevant if no one pressed charges against the accused, that historians' inclusion of accused witches who were never prosecuted is "deceptive," and that "the gold standard when counting cases has always been conviction and execution," they seem to be dismissing most of the scholarship that has located witchcraft suspicions, accusations, trials, convictions, and executions in the religious beliefs and everyday worlds of seventeenth-century New Englanders; that is,

Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* (Old Westbury, N.Y., 1973); John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York, 1982).

[3] Bernard Rosenthal et al., eds., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (New York, forthcoming).

most recent scholarship on the subject.[4] Unlike their argument against a case-based documents collection, they offer no substantive evidence against case-based analyses, hence no way to evaluate this more submerged critique.

Richard Latner and Benjamin C. Ray take serious issue with *Salem Possessed* itself, in particular with the book's explanation that the witchcraft trials were an expression of a deep-rooted and, by 1692, mortal conflict between two visions of community in Salem, one based on an agricultural worldview exemplified by Salem Village; the other, a commercial outlook represented by Salem Town. Latner focuses on Boyer and Nissenbaum's use of a 1695 tax assessment to demonstrate the economic disparities between supporters and opponents of village minister Samuel Parris, and Ray examines their construction of a map to show that accusers were more likely to live on the western, more noticeably rural side of the village, whereas the accused and their defenders more often resided on the eastern side with its greater ties to Salem Town. The evidence that Latner and Ray bring to their critiques is impressive, though readers like myself, who are not up-to-date on strategies for confronting the problems presented by seventeenth-century tax assessments, will likely find Latner's argument harder to evaluate. Ray offers several valid justifications for the addition of new names to Boyer and Nissenbaum's famous map, most of which undermine the geographic basis of a division between the village's accused witches and their accusers.

However credible the specific problems Latner and Ray pose, neither article dismantles Boyer and Nissenbaum's contribution to an understanding of the causes of the Salem outbreak to the extent they claim. In a footnote Latner acknowledges his stake in an interpretation based specifically on religious discord, but his conclusion that "explaining what happened in Salem Village in 1692 will take a different sort of thesis than that offered in *Salem Possessed*" suggests that he missed the great complexity of that book. An economic argument lies at its heart, certainly, yet one can hardly reduce it, as Latner does, to a book about Parris's supporters engaging "in a battle against economic improvement, the market, or modernity" and trying "to thwart their opponents' economic advancement by launching a witch hunt." Boyer and Nissenbaum were clear from the outset that theirs was not a story of good guys and bad guys. It was instead about the varied and often dissonant goals and interests of Salem's second- and third-generation men and how these conflicts unfolded in political, religious, and psychological as well as

[4] Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal, "Examination of the Records of the Salem Witch Trials," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 401–22 (quotations, 407–8).

economic arenas and as much within as between individuals.[5] Their chapter on Samuel Parris alone, with its close reading of the minister's sermons to illuminate his personal values and anxieties, shows *Salem Possessed* to be about much deeper layers of meaning. Though Latner raises valid concerns about the authors' use of the 1695 tax list to discuss economic divergences in Salem Village in 1692, he neglects a broad array of evidence, including court testimony, that attests to diverse economic tensions expressed in witchcraft accusations and visible in patterns of accusation.

Ray takes Boyer and Nissenbaum to task for their decisions about which names to include or leave off their famous map of accused witches, accusers, and defenders in Salem Village and about where to draw the dividing line between east and west. He faults the map for being "highly interpretive and considerably incomplete." The map was both, in part because they excluded the afflicted girls and some village residents who accused one neighbor and defended another. For Ray these omissions are at times "curious," at other times an "oversight," and at still other times more deliberate. Ultimately, he directly casts aspersions on their motives, arguing that their placing the line between the eastern and western parts of the village at a particular point "suggests that the purpose of the vertical arrangement was to keep as many As [accusers] in the west and as many Ws [witches] in the east as possible."[6]

Ray's assertion that Boyer and Nissenbaum's map is highly interpretive can easily pass unnoticed because most witchcraft studies fit this bill; much too much about what happened in Salem remains a mystery. Yet Ray treats his own interpretive decisions about who to count and who not to count as objective. Following Burns and Rosenthal, he proclaims in a footnote that "I do not include people who were said to have been 'cried out' but never formally charged or who do not appear in any of the surviving records as accused."[7] Presumably, he means the surviving court records here, since many individuals accused during the Salem outbreak appear in the surviving records but were never brought to court. Many of these accused witches were able to forestall prosecution because of their wealth and influence, so Ray's not counting them minimizes evidence for the economic basis of accusations and trials. It is as much an interpretive decision for Ray to omit the names from his list of

[5] Richard Latner, "Salem Witchcraft, Factionalism, and Social Change Reconsidered: Were Salem's Witch-Hunters Modernization's Failures?" ibid, 423–48 (quotations, 448, 444). See also Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, xii–xiii.

[6] Benjamin C. Ray, "The Geography of Witchcraft Accusations in 1692 Salem Village," *WMQ* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 449–78 (quotations, 452, 456, 463, 470).

[7] Ibid., 456 n. 8.

accused witches in his witchcraft story as it was for Boyer and Nissenbaum to omit names of accusers and defenders from their map.

Ray's claim to objectivity appears most problematic when he chides Boyer and Nissenbaum for excluding the afflicted girls from their village map. Citing their justification in *Salem Possessed* that "we think it a mistake to treat the girls themselves as decisive shapers of the witchcraft outbreak as it evolved," Ray insists that "subsequent scholarship . . . has made it clear that this assumption, based on the view that the afflicted girls were merely mouthpieces for adult male villagers, is unsupportable." He quotes Rosenthal's 1993 *Salem Story* as proof, arguing that his "careful analysis of the court documents . . . illuminates the constant collaboration among the young accusers (quite independent of adult control) as well as their deliberate acts of lying and deception." Rosenthal's account and Mary Beth Norton's *In the Devil's Snare*, he adds, "make it abundantly clear that the afflicted girls played key roles in the progress of the accusations in the village and that they helped to maintain control of the dynamics of the legal process inside and outside the courtroom on an almost daily basis." Perhaps unsure that it is abundantly clear and with no discussion of the relevant primary sources, he goes way over the interpretive line, affirming that "nothing in the record demonstrates that these girls and their older female friends did not initiate most of the accusations on their own, relying on personal confrontations, village gossip, and frequent collaboration."[8]

Subsequent historians offer considerable support for Boyer and Nissenbaum's 1974 statement that "nobody knew then, or knows now, precisely what it was the girls were experiencing. They never told; perhaps they did not know themselves." Many writers have tried to understand what was going on for them as well as for other possessed or bewitched people prior to the Salem outbreak. From Demos's acute reading of Elizabeth Knapp's psychological state in *Entertaining Satan* to the more psychocultural accounts of the speech and behavior of possessed and bewitched people before and during the Salem outbreak in Jane Kamensky's *Governing the Tongue* and my own *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, many early Americanists have followed Boyer and Nissenbaum in treating Salem's young accusers as deeply troubled.[9] That

[8] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 34–35 ("we think," 35 n. 26); Ray, *WMQ* 65: 466 ("subsequent scholarship"), 467 ("nothing"); Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge, 1993); Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York, 2002).

[9] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 2 (quotation); Demos, *Entertaining Satan*, 97–131; Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York, 1987); Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (New York, 1997), 150–79.

view has been encouraged in recent years by the growing scholarly interest in the place of witchcraft, demonic possession, and spirit possession in larger religious worldviews of the cultures in which they appear. With due respect for Rosenthal and Ray, who are convinced these youthful accusers were liars, many other scholars find that explanation inadequate at best and, at worst, dismissive of their faith and their experiences growing up in a world that offered little comprehension of their fears and grievances.

Witchcraft scholarship has long been characterized by strong disagreements. Questions about what these girls and young women were grappling with in 1692–93 lie at the heart of them. So, too, do competing descriptions of the experience and character of accused witches and assumptions about whether some of their stories matter more than others. We would do well to acknowledge how contentious these disputes are by offering evidence for our arguments concerning them. Otherwise we perpetuate the ambiguity between witchcraft history and fiction. Besides its interpretive richness, the witchcraft scholarship of recent decades has offered us increasing opportunities to explore how religious, economic, political, cultural, and psychological arguments fit together. However useful we may find the corrections of Boyer and Nissenbaum's work in this Forum, it is also good to remember that *Salem Possessed* was the first book to make such an attempt.

Our Salem, Our Selves

Sarah Rivett

PSYCHOLOGICAL transference, women on the margins, social repression, collapsing Puritan epistemology and semiotics, hallucinogenic mushrooms, magic, and traumatic military violence. These explanations are some of the more influential interpretations of what happened during the Salem witchcraft trials in the thirty-three years since Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum published their socioeconomic analysis in *Salem Possessed*. Their book inaugurated a new phase in Salem witchcraft scholarship by reading the event as the result of something other than Puritan superstition. Such readings often begin by reflecting on a set of historical anomalies that distinguished the Salem witchcraft trials from other witchcraft cases in New England and in the Old World. The witches were hanged, not burned. Confessing witches in Salem were set free though Exodus 22:18 clearly warned, "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The trials came later than their European predecessors, causing Salem to sit disturbingly close to the scientific revolution and an emergent Enlightenment rationality. Coming at the onset of modernity, the Salem events of 1692 have made one particular historical question a near refrain: shouldn't people have known better by then? Known better, that is, than to admit spectral evidence into the trials as the legal basis for the conviction of accused witches. What was Cotton Mather thinking when, against increasing criticism from Boston, he defended spectral evidence in *Wonders of the Invisible World* a full year after his father's own anonymous tract interrupted the trials in the early fall of 1692, granting a stay of execution to the convicted and reprieve to a number still awaiting trial?[1] Salem must be about something other than witches, demons, superstitious clergy, and hysterical children. Otherwise it simply does not make sense.

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[1] John Putnam Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York, 1982); Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York, 1987); Richard Godbeer, *The Devil's Dominion: Magic and Religion in Early New England* (New York, 1992); Nancy Ruttenburg, *Democratic Personality: Popular Voice and the Trial of American Authorship* (Stanford, Calif., 1998); Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The*

The trials and their attendant circumstances and events have garnered a great deal of attention from scholars trying to make sense of Salem. The methods employed to arrive at the various interpretations and sociocultural interventions perpetuate the idea that scholarly analysis will counteract the incongruity and incomprehensibility of the event, eventually leading to a satisfying explanation of it. This desire for a rational explanation is the culminating, if unspoken, goal of Salem scholarship; the method for arriving there involves combing over the sequence of occurrences with ever-greater scrutiny while having recourse to disparate sociological perspectives. These Forum articles reflect this bidirectional pattern in Salem scholarship, further nuancing the archive with new methodologies. Richard Latner and Benjamin C. Ray approach late-seventeenth-century Salem with formidable accuracy. In a methodologically innovative use of geographic information systems technology, Ray convincingly constructs a new map in which the locations of town and village inhabitants do not align as neatly according to accusers and accused as they had in Boyer and Nissenbaum's study. Latner complements this revisionist intervention, reading the tax records in the decades preceding the witchcraft trials to challenge Boyer and Nissenbaum's economic narrative. Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal expand and reframe the archive through their ambitious, forthcoming *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt*, which calls into question the case-study model for organizing Salem. This new edition promises to correct misperceptions by articulating "the sequence and concurrence of events with a degree of precision previously impossible."[2]

Proposing and refining precise frameworks that will explain a seemingly irrational event, which are also the tasks of the historian and literary critic, summarize where we are in Salem scholarship. We explain the inexplicable, redact the intricacies of a complex situation, and identify a series of causal events that precipitate a particular outcome. The future of Salem scholarship will invariably follow this pattern of redaction, rationalization, and explanation. Worth considering before it does, though, is the odd juxtaposition between the precision of the analytic apparatus applied to Salem and the perceived irrationality of the event. Since *Salem Possessed* Salem scholars have been asking the historical question, What was really happening in Salem? Let's ask an integrally related historiographical question, Why are we so invested in returning to this

Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692 (New York, 2002). The anonymous tract that interrupted the trials was published a year later as Increase Mather, *Cases of Conscience Concerning evil Spirits Personating Men* . . . (Boston, 1693).

[2] Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal, "Examination of the Records of the Salem Witch Trials," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 401–22 (quotation, 401).

event with the latest tools of social science, economic history, or anthropology, and doing so with "a degree of precision previously impossible?" What do we imagine we will find or better explain?

As an interdisciplinary group of scholars, we want to understand the event in all its complexity. We want to correct earlier narratives that, through their flaws and misperceptions, seem to have enduringly rendered the witch trials an irrational phenomenon that was resistant to any form of rational closure. Popular perceptions of afflicted teenage girls and relentless witch-hunters have rendered the Salem witchcraft trials, perhaps more than any other event in U.S. history, perpetually ripe for political allegories of religious fanaticism, bigotry, and political oppression. As scholars invested in understanding the complexities of colonial New England, we want to elucidate a nexus of facts beneath the myths promoted through these allegorical readings to humanize the trial's participants. We want to transcend the reductive binary of Salem's victims and victimizers by recuperating a group of individuals with varying degrees of social and spiritual agency in a historical moment paradoxically shaped and predetermined by shifting and competing religious, economic, social, and epistemological worldviews. On the cusp of the Enlightenment and at the end of a century, Salem refuses neat historical and philosophical categories. But rather than challenge the terms through which we understand these categories, scholars struggle to place the event, viewing it disparately as culturally anachronistic or religiously atavistic, as symptomatic of a dismantling Puritan canopy or as an anomaly to the so-called Age of Reason.

Latner epitomizes this tension between the event and its historical moment in his subtitle, "Were Salem's Witch-Hunters Modernization's Failures?" In fact we need them to be modernity's failures precisely because the trial itself does not appear so historically other. It is encased in a discourse of empirical rationality. Quoting the testimony of Ann Putnam Jr., Boyer and Nissenbaum wrote that "in its dense specificity . . . such testimony possessed a superficial resemblance to firm empirical evidence."[3] Their understanding of the trial's evidence as only superficially resembling the firmly empirical depends on a historical retrodiction of our modern notion of empiricism: the Baconian or Lockean rational experimentalism that we associate with social facts and scientific analysis. But in the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon and John Locke ensconced their empirical model in uncertainty, rooted in a worldview that incorporated the limitations of human knowledge believed to be a consequence of the Fall. Observed empirical facts of the seventeenth century

[3] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 17.

were tenuously and tentatively linked to truth. Yet the unyielding rigidity with which Salem's magistrates applied empirical techniques to study spectral evidence was, paradoxically, more modern in the certainty of its claim to legal and epistemological truth. That 1692 is on the cusp of modernity propounds this haunting resemblance. The certainty with which Putnam claimed to have seen George Burroughs's two murdered wives, one still with a knife wound covered in a piece of sealing wax, cannot be modernity's empiricism even if it looks like it, so we disavow this resemblance. The Enlightenment was rapidly unfolding in 1692 but safely insulated across the Atlantic.

Salem is almost always an American story that bespeaks a complex and varied inner colonial landscape yet maintains a deep reluctance to cross the Atlantic or fully shed the birthright of Calvinist provincialism. Though an event still early in the colonial history of the eastern seaboard, Salem is scholarship's last frontier of American exceptionalism. Whatever modernity Salem stands at the threshold of, it is a particularly American modernity. The exceptionalist paradigm of Salem scholarship is a variation on our collective desire for Salem to be not us but defined in proximity to us. We want it to be integral to understanding something about our American past—in the way it has been since the romances of Nathaniel Hawthorne, John William De Forest, and others—while properly confirming its tragic consequences and bracketing the event off as distinctive in or anomalous to the rich traditions and history of Puritan culture. The occurrences of 1692 are not just read as indicative of New English colonial experience; this exceptionalist method of reading the witch hunt often bears the weight of anticipating later infamous moments in American history. Such proleptic readings of the Salem story have the paradoxical effect of containing the violence and its perhaps more unsettling implications. From Cotton Mather to Joseph McCarthy, the American witch hunt gets coded as the powerful eruption of a violence-producing irrationality in need of expurgation through our disavowal of its integrality in narratives of modernization.

Salem has long been a cottage industry in American scholarship. There will always be work on the event due to the powerful grasp it has on our scholarly and cultural imagination. I propose an alternative perspective on Salem scholarship by forgoing projects rooted in this mode of American exceptionalism. By instead devoting some attention to a transatlantic or hemispheric Salem, we could reframe the event within different thematic, cultural, and epistemological contexts. Such projects would expand rather than refocus the analytic, methodological, and archival perspectives with which we view Salem.

What would happen, for instance, if we read Benedict de Spinoza as a contemporary of Mather? We might better conceive of how late-seventeenth-century philosophers displaced their anxieties about inaccessible knowledge by locating it not at a site awaiting examination but within a forbidden site, rendering such knowledge not only unknowable but also morally beyond human ken. For a broad array of seventeenth-century individuals, the devil embodied inaccessible knowledge.[4] The devil posed a historically specific problem that vexed mechanical philosophical circles at the same time that it achieved a level of crisis in Salem. Rather than an index of a fading occult worldview, the devil represented an epistemological step on the way to an emerging Enlightenment modernity. Seen from this perspective, the events of Salem mark the eruption of not an atavistic spiritual irrationality but rather its reverse: the application of a rationality that presented new empirical potential, the implications of which late-seventeenth-century people were attempting to grasp.

Let me specify this claim by taking the problem of spectral evidence, often considered the most inexplicable and vexing aspect of Salem. In lieu of the conventional reading of spectral evidence as symptomatic of an evidentiary crisis, I suggest that the specter constituted a specific site of convergence for empiricism, natural philosophy, and Puritan theology. Throughout a long seventeenth century, from about the 1560s to the 1740s, theologians and natural philosophers were engaged in a mutual endeavor to ascertain knowledge of God in nature. This quest to increase knowledge of the divine proved a perilous endeavor, particularly because it required negotiating the difference between knowable knowledge and knowledge knowable but morally prohibited. God could only be known through revelation. To manage this danger, seventeenth-century natural philosophers such as Bacon and Robert Boyle, like Puritan ministers including Increase and Cotton Mather, drew a sharp division between visible and invisible domains. This division functioned to isolate and circumscribe a domain of inquiry within theologically proper boundaries. Yet despite the danger of transgression, natural philosophers could not help but wonder whether their techniques for mapping nature might also be applied to reveal God in nature. And the Puritans in turn wondered whether techniques of empiricism and natural philosophy might be used to advance their knowledge of God.

By the end of the seventeenth century, philosophers and Reformed theologians were ensnared in an intense struggle between the desire for divine knowledge and a deep awareness of the blasphemous nature of such an inquiry. The years prior to the Salem witchcraft trials reveal an

[4] Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge, 1997).

epistemological crisis in the works. Ministers and empiricists sought to bring evidence from the invisible world into the visible while nervously charting the deteriorating distinction between the two. They struggled to live contentedly in a world that was certain of divine existence yet faced with the increasing awareness that the invisible was essentially unknowable. When specters appeared throughout the late-seventeenth-century Atlantic world, they supplied tantalizing and contentious evidence to the contrary.

Specters appear not only in Increase Mather's *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* but also in texts such as *Sadducismus Triumphatus* (1689), compiled by Royal Society member Joseph Glanvill. Responding to what he perceived to be the atheistic tendencies arising from contemporary mechanical philosophers who expressed reluctance to use empiricism to chart evidence of the invisible world, Glanvill presented six witchcraft stories based on empirically sound, factual records of eyewitness testimony. Mather's essay exhibited a parallel employment of empiricism to chart evidence of the demonic in case studies of possessed children. This study of the demonic is not merely what Boyer and Nissenbaum call "a superficial resemblance to firm empirical evidence." In the preface Mather expressed his wish "that the Natural History of New-England might be written and published to the World; the Rules and method described by that Learned and excellent person Robert Boyle Esq. being duely observed therein." The continuity between Mather's text and those produced by members of the Royal Society, taken together with his reference to Boyle, challenge the putative assumptions that the trials denoted a still "pre-Enlightenment world that had not yet experienced the scientific revolution." For Mather, illustrious providences were entirely explicable through what Mary Beth Norton describes as methods of "controlled experimentation and observation."[5]

Controversies surrounding specters existed on both sides of the Atlantic. In a late-seventeenth-century debate, John Webster and Balthasar Bekker questioned the legitimacy of spectral evidence. Reaffirming a Reformed theological belief that divinity could only be known in limited and circumscribed degrees, Webster and Bekker claimed that the immaterial could not be seen or known through sensory data of the eyes or the touch. They contended that the use of experimental philosophy to chart the existence of "witches and witchcraft" was entirely "immethodical" and thus untenable within the logic of empiricism.[6]

[5] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 17 ("superficial"); Increase Mather, *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, 1684, in George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, 1648–1706* (New York, 1914), 1–38 ("Natural History," 16); Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 6 ("pre-Enlightenment").

[6] John Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft, Wherein is affirmed that there are many sorts of Deceivers and Impostors* . . . (London, 1677), 20 (quotations); Thomas Harmon Jobe, "The Devil in Restoration Science: The Glanvill-Webster Debate," *Isis* 72, no. 3 (September 1981): 343–56. Balthasar Bekker sided with Joseph Glanvill in this debate.

Cotton Mather defended spectral evidence against this claim in *Wonders of the Invisible World*. In the first case examined in Mather's history of the trials, Bridget Bishop displayed a sensory encounter with her four accusers, Elizabeth Hubbard, Mercy Lewis, Ann Putnam Jr., and Abigail Williams. "If she did but cast her Eyes on them, they were presently struck down; and this in such a manner as there could be no Collusion in the Business: But upon the Touch of her Hand upon them, when they lay in their Swoons, they would immediately Revive; and not upon the Touch of any one elses. Moreover, upon some special actions of her body, as the shaking of her Head, or the turning of her Eyes, they presently and painfully fell into the like postures."[7]

This encounter accorded with methods derived from Boyle's *Corpuscular Philosophy*, which offered experimental physiology as a supplement to natural philosophy. Boyle's treatise on chemistry described the process whereby external "Matter" became "manifest to sense" through "Local Motion," rendering natural phenomena "obvious as well to the Eye as the Understanding." In Bishop's trial Mather traced a version of corpuscular interaction manipulated through a disembodied spirit. He identified touch as a sensible quality that revealed evidence of a demonic presence, allowing a space for the preternatural within Boyle's account of sensory interaction. Though Boyle insisted that humans might receive sensory impressions differently, Mather extended this logic of sensory interaction to Salem's afflicted girls, who were almost "deprived of all sense" in their fits.[8] According to Mather sensory deprivation caused a collapse of the balanced process through which the external organs (eyes, ears, nose) tended to receive heat, color, sound, and odor. The afflicted existed in a particular sensory condition, requiring the discerning expertise of ministers and magistrates. *Wonders of the Invisible World* reinterpreted their systematically recorded legal data according to the evidentiary standards of contemporary natural philosophers invested in defending the ontological status of the demonic.

The controlled experiment of Salem deteriorated into bad science as the accusers and magistrates increasingly relied on a formalized script. But the admission of spectral evidence started as a science. It was a quest for "Satan in signes," an attempt to empirically assemble the contours of

[7] Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World* (Boston, 1693), 66.

[8] Robert Boyle, *The Origine of Formes and Qualities, (According to Corpuscular Philosophy)* . . . (Oxford, Eng., 1666), 4 ("Matter"), a2v ("obvious as well"). Cotton Mather explained that this use of sensory interaction might be performed as an experiment on the demonically possessed to determine the nature of possession. See Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World*, 59.

a demonic presence from the invisible forms that appeared through the girls' entranced state.[9] If it subverted or threatened the visible order, it also permitted the reinscription of epistemological hegemony. Yet specters also showed the futility of developing an empiricism of the unseen by anticipating the imminent collapse of a Puritan and natural philosophical model that purported to do so. In their wake Salem's specters left a world of shadows: a stark reminder of the fundamental condition of uncertainty and mystery integral to all systems of knowledge. This condition invariably stood in the way of all early modern attempts to reclaim the knowledge lost in the Fall. And it remains modernity's shadow, or our own reminder that unchecked inquiry can lead to bad science as well as bad religion, each with its accompanying tendencies toward violent domination.

[9] John Hale, *A Modest Inquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft*, 1702, in Burr, *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases*, 395–432 (quotation, 403).

Figures I–IX are from the files of Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum and accompany their essay, which follows. Enlarged versions of the figures are available on the *William and Mary Quarterly* Web site: http://oieahc.wm.edu/wmq/Jul08/boyer.html.

HISTORY 185
New Approaches to the Study of History (American)
Boyer, Nissenbaum

Remarks: A "laboratory" introduction to history: in-depth investigation of two historical episodes, using original sources. Weekly two-hour seminar meetings, occasional lectures.

Topics: 1. Salem witch trials (7 weeks). 2. Shays' Rebellion (7 weeks). (Student participation in selection of future topics).

Required materials: Original documents; paperbacks and mimeographed handouts.

Supplementary materials: Microfilm, etc.

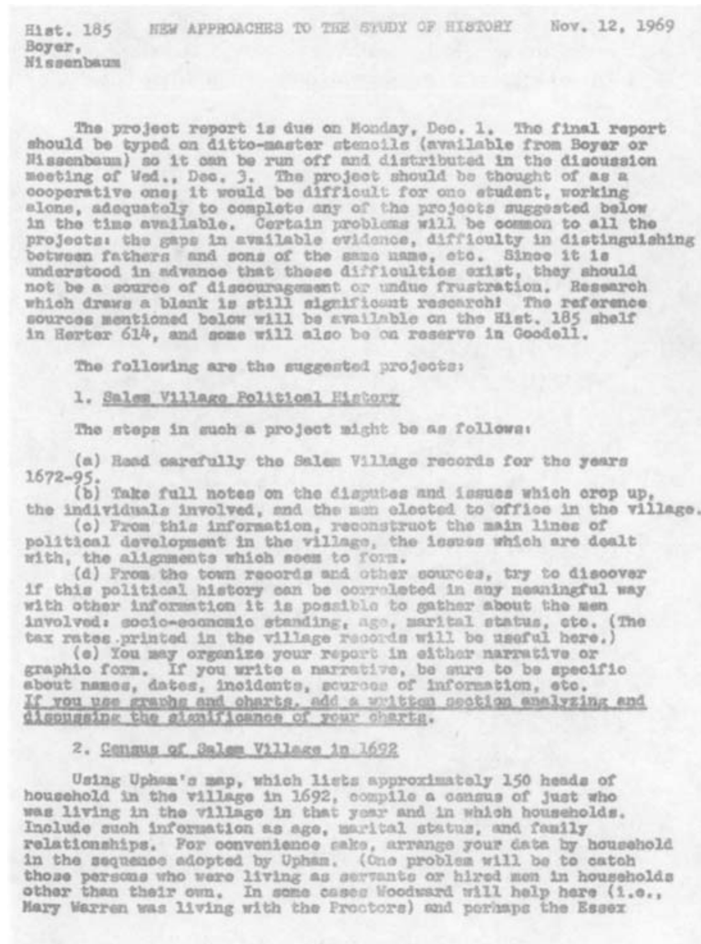
Prerequisites: NONE; this is an INTRODUCTORY-LEVEL course, both for majors and non-majors.

Papers: Short papers approximately every other week.

Exams, quizzes: None.

FIGURE I

Spring 1969: the first announcement of History 185, the experimental "laboratory" course introduced by Stephen Nissenbaum and Paul Boyer at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, for the fall of 1969. Initially, they planned to teach both Salem witchcraft and Shays's Rebellion in the same semester. As the richness of the Salem topic became evident, they decided to devote the entire semester to it. (Shays's Rebellion was the sole topic in the spring 1970 semester.)



Hist. 185 NEW APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF HISTORY Nov. 12, 1969
Boyer,
Nissenbaum

The project report is due on Monday, Dec. 1. The final report should be typed on ditto-master stencils (available from Boyer or Nissenbaum) so it can be run off and distributed in the discussion meeting of Wed., Dec. 3. The project should be thought of as a cooperative one; it would be difficult for one student, working alone, adequately to complete any of the projects suggested below in the time available. Certain problems will be common to all the projects: the gaps in available evidence, difficulty in distinguishing between fathers and sons of the same name, etc. Since it is understood in advance that these difficulties exist, they should not be a source of discouragement or undue frustration. Research which draws a blank is still significant research! The reference sources mentioned below will be available on the Hist. 185 shelf in Herter 614, and some will also be on reserve in Goodell.

The following are the suggested projects:

1. <u>Salem Village Political History</u>

The steps in such a project might be as follows:

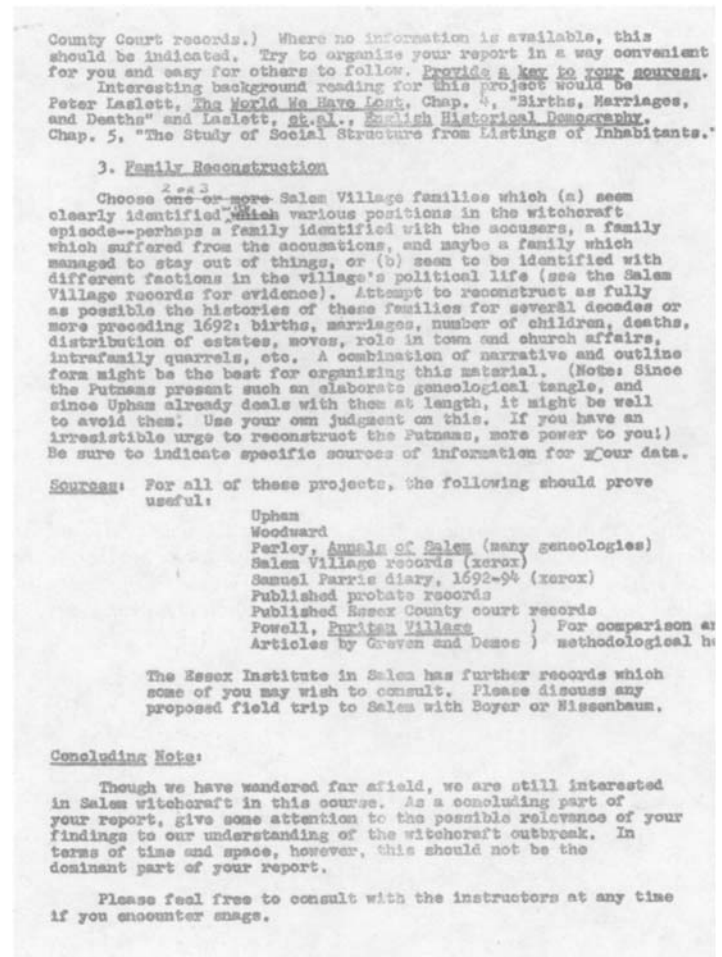
(a) Read carefully the Salem Village records for the years 1672-95.
(b) Take full notes on the disputes and issues which crop up, the individuals involved, and the men elected to office in the village.
(c) From this information, reconstruct the main lines of political development in the village, the issues which are dealt with, the alignments which seem to form.
(d) From the town records and other sources, try to discover if this political history can be correlated in any meaningful way with other information it is possible to gather about the men involved: socio-economic standing, age, marital status, etc. (The tax rates printed in the village records will be useful here.)
(e) You may organize your report in either narrative or graphic form. If you write a narrative, be sure to be specific about names, dates, incidents, sources of information, etc. <u>If you use graphs and charts, add a written section analyzing and discussing the significance of your charts</u>.

2. <u>Census of Salem Village in 1692</u>

Using Upham's map, which lists approximately 150 heads of household in the village in 1692, compile a census of just who was living in the village in that year and in which households. Include such information as age, marital status, and family relationships. For convenience sake, arrange your data by household in the sequence adopted by Upham. (One problem will be to catch those persons who were living as servants or hired men in households other than their own. In some cases Woodward will help here (i.e., Mary Warren was living with the Proctors) and perhaps the Essex

FIGURE II

The final project assignment for the first Salem course (dated November 12, 1969, and distributed in blue Ditto-master format). This two-page assignment offers a vivid sense of the course's hands-on approach.



County Court records.) Where no information is available, this should be indicated. Try to organize your report in a way convenient for you and easy for others to follow. <u>Provide a key to your sources</u>.
Interesting background reading for this project would be Peter Laslett, <u>The World We Have Lost</u>, Chap. 4, "Births, Marriages, and Deaths" and Laslett, <u>et.al.</u>, <u>English Historical Demography</u>, Chap. 5, "The Study of Social Structure from Listings of Inhabitants."

3. <u>Family Reconstruction</u>

Choose ~~one or more~~ 2 or 3 Salem Village families which (a) seem clearly identified ~~which~~ with various positions in the witchcraft episode--perhaps a family identified with the accusers, a family which suffered from the accusations, and maybe a family which managed to stay out of things, or (b) seem to be identified with different factions in the village's political life (see the Salem Village records for evidence). Attempt to reconstruct as fully as possible the histories of these families for several decades or more preceding 1692: births, marriages, number of children, deaths, distribution of estates, moves, role in town and church affairs, intrafamily quarrels, etc. A combination of narrative and outline form might be the best for organizing this material. (Note: Since the Putnams present such an elaborate genealogical tangle, and since Upham already deals with them at length, it might be well to avoid them. Use your own judgment on this. If you have an irresistible urge to reconstruct the Putnams, more power to you!) Be sure to indicate specific sources of information for your data.

<u>Sources</u>: For all of these projects, the following should prove useful:

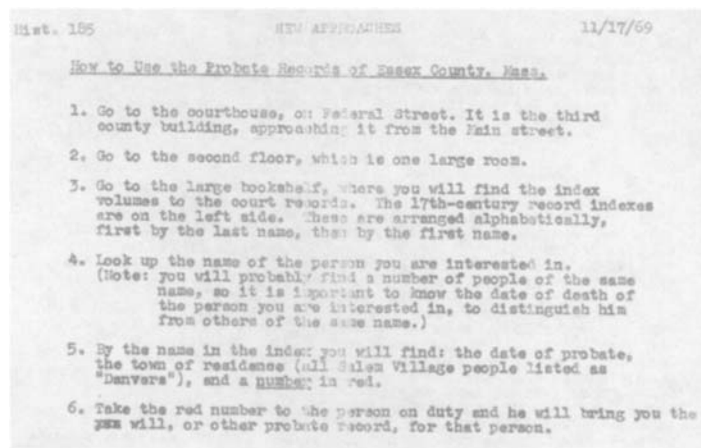
Upham
Woodward
Perley, <u>Annals of Salem</u> (many geneologies)
Salem Village records (xerox)
Samuel Parris diary, 1692-94 (xerox)
Published probate records
Published Essex County court records
Powell, <u>Puritan Village</u>) For comparison a
Articles by Greven and Demos) methodological h

The Essex Institute in Salem has further records which some of you may wish to consult. Please discuss any proposed field trip to Salem with Boyer or Nissenbaum.

<u>Concluding Note</u>:

Though we have wandered far afield, we are still interested in Salem witchcraft in this course. As a concluding part of your report, give some attention to the possible relevance of your findings to our understanding of the witchcraft outbreak. In terms of time and space, however, this should not be the dominant part of your report.

Please feel free to consult with the instructors at any time if you encounter snags.



Hist. 185 NEW APPROACHES 11/17/69

How to Use the Probate Records of Essex County, Mass.

1. Go to the courthouse, on Federal Street. It is the third county building, approaching it from the Main street.
2. Go to the second floor, which is one large room.
3. Go to the large bookshelf, where you will find the index volumes to the court records. The 17th-century record indexes are on the left side. These are arranged alphabetically, first by the last name, then by the first name.
4. Look up the name of the person you are interested in. (Note: you will probably find a number of people of the same name, so it is important to know the date of death of the person you are interested in, to distinguish him from others of the same name.)
5. By the name in the index you will find: the date of probate, the town of residence (all Salem Village people listed as "Danvers"), and a number in red.
6. Take the red number to the person on duty and he will bring you the will, or other probate record, for that person.

FIGURE III

Another Ditto-master handout: "How to Use the [Unpublished] Probate Records of Essex County, Mass." (November 17, 1969). Students were encouraged to make research trips to the Essex County Courthouse in Salem, and several did so as part of their final projects. This handout supplies detailed logistical instructions for such trips.

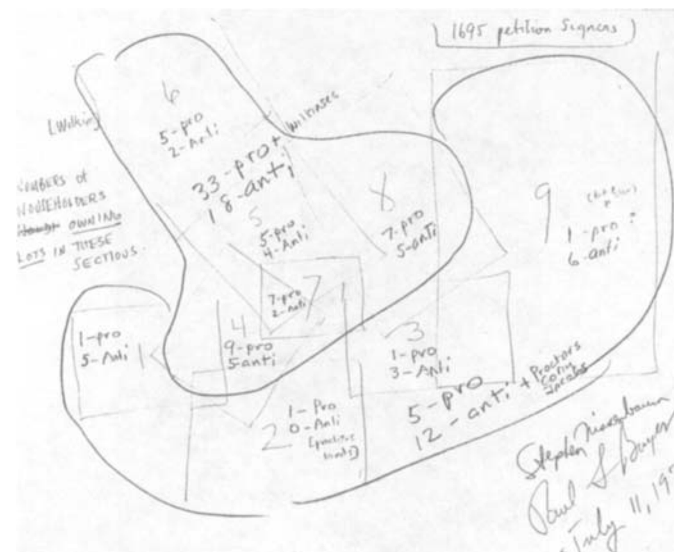


FIGURE IV

The first effort by Boyer and Nissenbaum to map the landholdings of Salem Villagers who signed either the pro-Parris petition or the anti-Parris petition of 1695, which they discovered in April 1970 in the manuscript records of the First Church of Danvers. In July, having located the petition signers' landholdings on nine separate maps of Salem Village real-estate holdings first published in the 1910s, the authors arranged photocopies of the nine maps on the floor to create a complete map of the village. Sensing something of a eureka moment as a striking geographic pattern emerged, they signed and dated this sketch. The final version of this map, titled "Land Ownership and Factionalism: Salem Village in 1695," appears on page 85 of Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974).

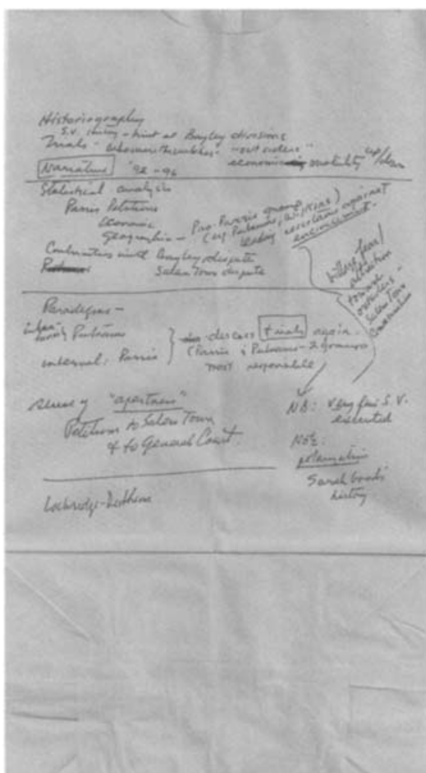
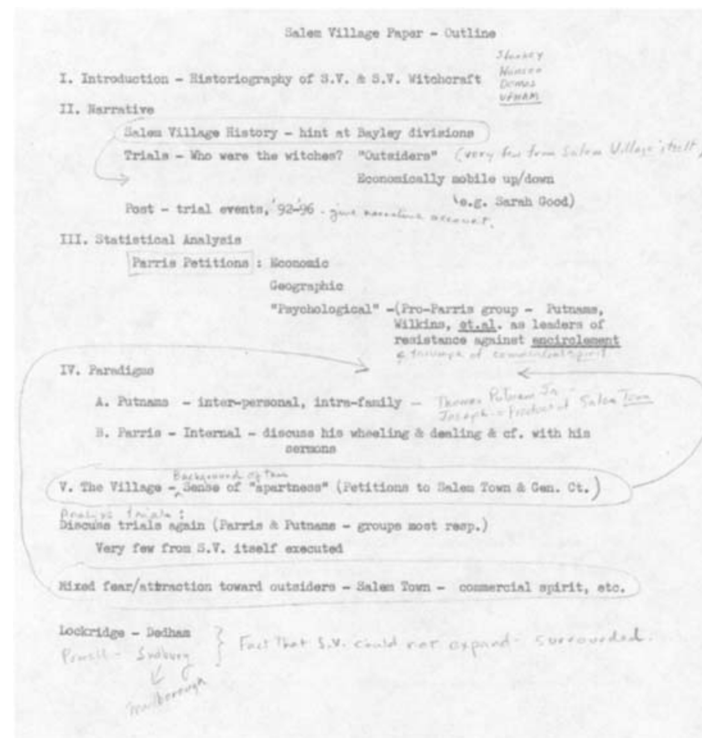


FIGURE V

The first outline of the article Nissenbaum and Boyer planned to write for the *William and Mary Quarterly*. Over coffee in a campus cafeteria in late summer or early fall 1970, they dashed off this outline on a lunch bag from the cafeteria checkout line. Sketchy as it is, the outline contains in embryonic form key elements of the final structure of *Salem Possessed*: first, an overall summary of the Salem story and a brief account of the economic and geographic patterns that emerged in 1692; second, a more detailed historical and quantitative analysis of Salem Village's factional divisions; and third, a final section (headed "Paradigms") on the complex intrafamilial problems that divided the Putnam family and the equally complex tensions and divisions within Samuel Parris's own psyche. (The crucial role of Israel Porter and his familial network would become clearer only as research and writing proceeded.)



Salem Village Paper - Outline

I. Introduction - Historiography of S.V. & S.V. Witchcraft

II. Narrative

Salem Village History - hint at Bayley divisions

Trials - Who were the witches? "Outsiders" (very few from Salem Village itself)

Economically mobile up/down (e.g. Sarah Good)

Post - trial events, '92-'96

III. Statistical Analysis

Parris Petitions : Economic

Geographic

"Psychological" -(Pro-Parris group - Putnams, Wilkins, et.al. as leaders of resistance against encirclement

IV. Paradigms

A. Putnams - inter-personal, intra-family

B. Parris - Internal - discuss his wheeling & dealing & cf. with his sermons

V. The Village - Sense of "apartness" (Petitions to Salem Town & Gen. Ct.)

Discuss trials again (Parris & Putnams - groups most resp.)

Very few from S.V. itself executed

Mixed fear/attraction toward outsiders - Salem Town - commercial spirit, etc.

Lockridge - Dedham

Fact that S.V. could not expand - surrounded.

FIGURE VI

A slightly expanded typed version of the "lunch-bag outline," probably done later the same day.

One way to bring into sharper focus the distinctive characteristics of the two factions in the Village is to examine with particular care that portion of the Village population which lived closest to Salem Town. These are the Villagers who lived on or near the "Ipswich Road," a major thoroughfare which formed the boundary line between Salem Town and Salem Village as it wound northward from the center of the Town. Not surprisingly, the Ipswich Road section of the Village was a hotbed of anti-Parris sentiment. Of the twenty-one Salem Village heads of household who lived along or within one-quarter mile of this road, fully thirteen signed the anti-Parris petition, as opposed to only three who aligned themselves with Parris's supporters. Only _____ were members of the Salem Village church.

Such a dramatic ratio suggests that more than mere chance played a part, and it seems plausible to suggest that the crucial variable was the effect of living along the road itself. These were the Villagers who were most exposed to the Town and its concerns. Every day, travellers going to or from the Town passed near their doors. Town news and opinion must have been the common currency of conversation. The Village center, by contrast, from one to three miles to the west, may well have exercised a correspondingly diminished attraction.

Interestingly, a number of the "Ipswich Road" Villagers are recorded as having occupations which would have brought them even more in contact with a wider range of people.

FIGURE VII

A marked-up page from an early draft of chapter 4 of *Salem Possessed*, discussing the significance of the Ipswich Road. For the final version of this page draft, see *Salem Possessed*, 96.

FIGURE VIII

An early handwritten draft of the *Pilgrim's Progress* discussion found in revised (but recognizable) form on page 213 of *Salem Possessed.* This passage explores the lure of material success that plagued the same Salem Village Puritans who accused others of selling their souls to the devil: "As the witchcraft outbreak gained momentum, the accusers were thus compelled to face the possibility that they were themselves being transformed by the forces of change that were buffeting Salem Village" (Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 214). In the following retrospective essay, the authors suggest that this kind of historical and psychological reasoning offers a rejoinder to those who would reduce the argument of *Salem Possessed* to tax lists or lines on a map.

November 7, 1972

Mr. Max Hall
Editor for the Social Sciences
Harvard University Press
79 Garden St.
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

Dear Max:

Enclosed is the revised first section of Chapter I. (These pages replace pp. 23-54 in your copy; also note that the first five lines of p. 55 should be marked out.)

We feel pretty happy with this revision. It's much shorter than what it replaces, and it now focusses sharply on what was most important and original in the [illegible] it replaces: the connections between witchcraft outbreaks and revivalism. We've dropped the long analysis of Mather's position on witchcraft from the text, though you will note that a highly abbreviated version of our basic point on Mather survives in footnote 9.

The revised notes are enclosed as well. They replace pp. 402-406 of your copy, and again you will note that for continuity the first two lines of p. 407 should be marked out. Also, notes 36 to 41 should be renumbered 20 to 25, both in the text and in the notes. (Of course we would be glad to do such little changes when we next see the ribbon copy--but for the ease of the second reader perhaps you would not mind taking care of them now.)

Except for the matter of some reworking of Chapter [illegible], we now feel that the book, for better or worse, is just about as strong as we can make it. We hope you agree, and that you feel it can now be sent out for its second outside reading.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Boyer Stephen Nissenbaum

2:45 a.m. 11/7/72

FIGURE IX

Fall 1972: the carbon copy of a letter from Boyer and Nissenbaum to Max Hall, their Harvard University Press editor, dated November 7 (and marked "2:45 a.m." at the bottom!), accompanying some last-minute revisions of the first chapter and expressing their belief "that the book, for better or worse, is just about as strong as we can make it."

Salem Possessed in Retrospect

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum

> Here are but 2 parties in the World, the Lamb & his Followers, & the Dragon & his Followers: & these are contrary one to the other . . . Here are no Newters. Every one is on one side or the other.
>
> —Samuel Parris[1]

IT is now forty years after we began planning the experimental history course at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, that in turn led to *Salem Possessed.* We find it an interesting experience to collaborate again as we reflect on that book and its context and on the Salem witchcraft scholarship that has appeared in the intervening decades, including the essays in the present Forum. There is a certain appropriateness in this essay appearing in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, since our initial plan, when we first envisioned writing about this topic, was to submit an article to this journal. Only gradually did the planned article evolve into a book-length project. So here we are now, both retired, finally writing that long-delayed *WMQ* essay first envisioned near the beginning of our careers.

The experimental history course, which we called "New Approaches to the Study of History," came first. We jointly introduced it in 1969. (This course, in turn, emerged from the earlier pedagogical experiments of two historians with whom Stephen Nissenbaum had studied as a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin: Stanley Katz and William R. Taylor.) Our aim was to engage beginning undergraduates in actual historical research, devoting an entire semester to the intensive study of a single historical episode and for the most part limiting our students to reading raw—uninterpreted—primary sources. We used the Salem witchcraft trials as our episode. As the two of us spent the summer

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[1] Samuel Parris, Sermon 1a, Sept. 11, 1692, "After ye condemnation of 6. Witches at a Court at Salem, one of the Witches viz. Martha Kory in full communion with our Church," in James F. Cooper Jr. and Kenneth P. Minkema, eds., *The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris, 1689–1694* (Boston, 1993), 203.

of 1969 preparing a variety of documents for our students, we came across some unfamiliar published sources that had not been used by scholars. These sources, first published in the 1910s and 1920s, included the records of the Essex County Quarterly Court and the Probate Court (up to the early 1680s) and the Salem Village Book of Record from the period 1672–97. This latter source contained a clear and vivid record of factional conflict in Salem Village, which had festered during the two decades preceding the witchcraft trials. In addition it contained the various tax lists that would later prove helpful as we formulated our understanding of the deeper sources of the village's factional divisions.

As the semester progressed, we began, as a further experiment, to drive across Massachusetts to the Essex County courthouse in Salem, taking several of our more eager students with us, to examine and transcribe the land transactions and unpublished probate records of those individuals who were now coming to seem especially significant. Then, in the summer of 1970, acting on a hunch, the two of us tracked down the early manuscript records of the Salem Village church, written down from 1689 to 1696 in the meticulous hand of its first minister, Samuel Parris. These records were located in the most obvious of places: the First Church of Danvers, the very church, though not the same building, in which Parris had ministered. Included in these records, to our astonishment and gratification, were the two crucial petitions—one in opposition to Parris, the other in support—that the minister himself had copied out, along with the names of every villager who had signed one or the other.

We and our graduate teaching assistants transcribed and typed out this new material to make it available in the fall of 1970 to the growing number of students who enrolled for our Salem course the second time we offered it. We also contracted to have the documents published so that other teachers might use them.[2] Having done so, it occurred to us that one of those other teachers might decide to write an essay based on "our" documents! Early that same fall, after considerable deliberation and some reluctance (each of us had other scholarly projects underway), we made the decision to write the essay that, once completed, we planned to submit to the *William and Mary Quarterly*.

As we began to write, we worked with tools that now seem pathetically old-fashioned; this was before even electronic calculators (not to mention personal computers) had been invented. We remember with fond amusement Paul Boyer's old adding machine, a 1950s business

[2] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (Belmont, Calif., 1972). The volume has since been reprinted with a new preface by the authors. See Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England* (Boston, 1993).

model from his father that luckily came with a paper-roll printout—a literal paper trail—which kept a precious record of the various tax figures we entered. Both of us had been trained as intellectual historians with limited experience of even the "old" social history. (We do like to think that our background in intellectual and cultural history and in close textual analysis was not entirely a disadvantage, since we combined our research in tax lists, village elections, and residential patterns with close attention to the written and spoken word, from Parris's sermons and bitter personal outpourings and the pronouncements of other elite figures to the words of ordinary folk caught up in extraordinary circumstances, and even extending to such seemingly unlikely sources as fairy tales and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.)

For all that, when we finally completed *Salem Possessed* in late 1972—that article had long since outgrown itself—we knew we had written a good book.[3] We still think so today, thirty-six years later. It is hardly surprising that our work should at some point be subjected to hard scrutiny. While confronting criticism of one's scholarship is not an unalloyed joy, we recognize it as central to the process of historical inquiry that, at its best, should be a stimulating conversation among mutually respectful participants. More than three decades after the book's publication, many might well conclude that it is high time for *Salem Possessed* to face the kind of rigorous scrutiny that this Forum so abundantly furnishes. (For ourselves, it is even a little flattering to find that our book after all these years remains the subject of so much attention.)

Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal present a thoughtful and illuminating discussion of the forthcoming Cambridge University Press edition of

[3] The title itself, *Salem Possessed*, has a curious history. Our original preference was "Puritan Village in Crisis," which is the working title that appears on our July 1971 contract with Harvard University Press. As the manuscript neared completion, however, we spent quite a bit of time thinking about other possibilities: "The Politics of Witchcraft," "Yeomen, Merchants, Witches," "Bedevilled Village," "Specter Over Salem," "The Tightening Noose," "Toil and Trouble," and many others. (Late-night gag titles thrown into the hopper after too many hours at the typewriter included "Hang-Ups at Salem" and—cleverest of all?—"From Rags to Witches.") By April 1973 we had settled on "Afflicted Village: The Story behind Salem Witchcraft." Max Hall, the editor at Harvard University Press who had initially solicited our manuscript, concurred, and this was the agreed-on title as the compositor began to set the book into type in mid-1973. But literally at the last minute, the recently appointed director of Harvard University Press, Arthur J. Rosenthal, decreed that for marketing reasons, either "Witchcraft" or "Salem" had to be in the main title. It was Hall who suggested "Salem Possessed" (a variant of "Village Possessed," one of our backup choices), and we agreed. At a cost of some two hundred dollars, "Salem Possessed" was substituted for "Afflicted Village" as the running head on the pages that had already been set into type. (Today, of course, such a change could be made with a few quick keystrokes.)

the legal records of the witchcraft outbreak, which is already at least partially available online.[4] Their essay makes clear the meticulous care they have brought to the task. They have discovered new documents, caught transcription errors, retrieved misfiled records, reunited separated documents, and restored to their proper place many of the miscellaneous "Additional Documents" of earlier editions of the witchcraft records. Up-to-the-minute in using computer resources, they even spotted a document in a 2006 eBay auction that solved an attribution problem posed by the similar handwriting of Thomas Bradbury and his son-in-law.

Thanks to their word-by-word scrutiny of the documents, we now know that Tituba saw spectral cats, not spectral rats; that Dorcas Good was really named Dorothy; and that one afflicted girl saw neither a "cosen" (whatever that might be) nor a "basen" (basin), but a "kofen" (coffin). Toothaker descendents all over America will be relieved to learn not only that "Jerson Toothaker" was not an accused witch but also that he never existed at all and was only a spectral emanation arising from a transcription error. Thanks to Burns and Rosenthal, we now better understand the legal circumstances under which Bridget Bishop became the first to be tried, convicted, and hanged, though, as they explain, the underlying reason she went first remains conjectural.

Burns and Rosenthal's essay reads like an advanced seminar by two experts in the retrieval, organization, dating, deciphering, and editing of colonial-era manuscripts, and specifically legal records. They demonstrate how much may be learned from careful attention to orthography, inks, excisions, insertions, and so forth. Their long-awaited work will facilitate a reconstruction of the legal history of the outbreak at a level of detail that has hitherto been difficult if not impossible. Students of Salem witchcraft, legal historians, and American colonial historians generally can only applaud the publication of this monumental work. It will clearly supersede all previous editions, including our own now out-of-print *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, though, as they note, earlier publications such as ours that employ a case-by-case organizational arrangement, rather than the chronological one they have adopted, may still prove useful for some purposes.[5]

[4] Margo Burns and Bernard Rosenthal, "Examination of the Records of the Salem Witch Trials," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 401–22; Rosenthal et al., *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt* (Cambridge, forthcoming). The Web site, "Salem Witch Trials: Documentary Archive and Transcription Project," is available on http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft. Benjamin C. Ray is the project director.

[5] Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, eds., *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, 3 vols. (New York, 1977).

Though most of their essay is descriptive and technical in nature, Burns and Rosenthal advance one substantive interpretive claim, asserting that the legal records they have mastered so thoroughly demonstrate the scrupulous care with which the letter of the law and contemporary due process were observed in the handling of the witchcraft cases. The judicial process, they claim, was "far from being hysterical" and, "though not fair by modern standards, was meticulous by the standards of its day."[6]

One can indeed learn much from legal documents, but like all sources they have their limits. In this case they may convey a partially misleading impression of the punctilious and dispassionate application of the law under highly fraught conditions. For the full story, including the emotional tone of the proceedings and behind-the-scenes disputes and uncertainties, one needs to look beyond the legal records (invaluable as they are). Though the overused term "hysteria" should not be applied to the legal process, the Massachusetts judicial system of 1692–93 was clearly operating under highly stressful, contentious, and unprecedented circumstances. Interrogators, judges, juries, and court officers faced controversy over their methods, endured the frightening behavior of the afflicted girls, and puzzled over rambling depositions reciting past misfortunes, long-festering grievances, and terrifying nocturnal visitations. Such realities rarely show up in the formulaic language of the legal documents.[7]

The specially constituted Court of Oyer and Terminer faced criticism at the time from many prominent figures, including Boston ministers Increase Mather and Samuel Willard; Captain Samuel Cary of Charlestown, a mariner whose wife was accused; and wealthy Boston merchant and Harvard College treasurer Thomas Brattle. Nathaniel Saltonstall resigned from the court, refusing to sign death warrants for women from his town of Andover. Even Governor William Phips, who had created the court, distanced himself from it as the attacks intensified. Cary, disgusted by the court's proceedings and the admission of "Idle, if not malicious Stories," managed to help his wife escape from jail and possibly the hangman's noose; others went into hiding to escape a judicial process they deemed grievously flawed. In 1697 Samuel Sewall, an erstwhile member of the witchcraft court, stood in his church pew while minister Samuel Willard read Sewall's statement acknowledging "the Guilt contracted upon the opening of the late Commission of Oyer

[6] Burns and Rosenthal, *WMQ* 65: 417.

[7] One well-known exception is the trial of Rebecca Nurse. Thanks to a deposition by the grand jury foreman and a later petition by Nurse herself, we know that when the jury returned a not-guilty verdict, the presiding judge of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, deputy governor William Stoughton, sent them back for further deliberations, whereupon they reversed their verdict and found Nurse guilty. One can only speculate how many other such interactions failed to make it into the legal record.

and Terminer at Salem" and asking "that God, who has an Unlimited Authority, would pardon that sin and all other [of] his sins."[8]

Robert Calef, a Boston merchant whose skeptical 1697 account of the outbreak, *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, was published in London in 1700, described chaotic courtroom scenes, including Sarah Good's trial when one of the afflicted girls screamed that Good's specter had stabbed her in the breast and broken the knife in the process. Sure enough a broken blade was found near the girl. But then a youth apparently present in the courtroom volunteered that he had broken his knife the day before when the girl was nearby. The judges, having confirmed that the blade fit the young man's broken knife, admonished the girl not to tell lies—yet permitted her to continue to give evidence in subsequent trials.

Judicial proceedings involve more than technical due process, and observers at the time recognized this as clearly as we do today. Of course, Burns and Rosenthal fully understand this, too, but as they recount their immersion in, and scrupulous study of, the legal documents, the world beyond the documents sometimes seems to fade to near invisibility.

Richard Latner offers a reexamination of the Salem Village tax lists. He supports our finding that in the 1695 assessment, the average tax of the pro-Parris faction was more than 25 percent lower than that of the anti-Parris faction. He also confirms the decline of the pro-Parris group during the crucial years of the early 1690s and agrees that the pro-Parris and anti-Parris petition lists correlate closely with the divisions that emerged during the witchcraft episode.

His principal focus, however, is on the 1681, 1690, and (to a lesser extent) 1700 tax lists, which, he contends, challenge the argument we advanced in *Salem Possessed.* The various operations he performs are not always easy to follow, as he shifts from numerical to percentile rankings and from averages (and means) to ratios, but the bottom line is that both in 1681 and 1690, the average tax paid by the group that emerged after 1689 as the pro-Parris faction was lower than the average of the anti-Parris faction. Latner, however, heavily emphasizes his finding that the gap somewhat narrowed in the course of the decade. In 1681 the average tax of the future pro-Parris taxpayers was 90 percent of the anti-Parris average, whereas by 1690 it stood at 93 percent.

When Latner employs medians rather than averages, the gap between the two groups narrows somewhat more during this nine-year

[8] Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, 1: 210 ("Idle"); Mark Van Doren, ed., *Samuel Sewall's Diary* (New York, 1963), 139 ("Guilt contracted").

period, with the pro-Parris group reaching parity in 1690. As he notes, medians tend to mute the effects of "extreme cases."[9] (People with two arms have an above-average number of arms but are squarely in the median.) In the case of Salem Village, however, where perceptions so crucially shaped beliefs about economic conditions and where the residents did not have access to the sophisticated computational techniques Latner marshals, we concluded in analyzing the 1695 tax list that computing average rates, giving full weight to extreme cases, was actually the more useful and revealing measure.

Though Latner criticizes us for not examining village taxes diachronically, his diachronic data present such a tangle of problems that his claims for their significance must be viewed with considerable skepticism. As he concedes in a footnote, the tax changes in the 1680s "are too small . . . to be statistically significant" because of the relatively few pro-Parris and anti-Parris persisters who appear on these lists, yet he still claims that these changes affected villagers' sense of their relative status. In a further warning, he writes, "Admittedly, one must proffer these conclusions with an abundance of caution. The numbers involved are small and the persisters [signers of the pro-Parris or anti-Parris petitions who also appear on the 1681 and 1690 tax lists] constituted less than half the adult males who signed the petitions in 1695." Near the end of the essay, he reiterates the cautionary qualification: "There are limitations to what Salem Village's tax lists can say about the actual wealth of its inhabitants, let alone how they derived their wealth. Even discounting the methodological problems of tracing the fortunes of villagers who moved in and out of the tax rolls, the lists cannot delineate with certainty whether inhabitants actually improved their standard of living or fell on hard times during these twenty years. Moreover the tax rolls cannot address a person's involvement in or psychological relationship to capitalism or a market economy."[10]

These and other caveats are amply borne out as one examines Latner's statistical operations. Cross-generational land transfers, the appearance and disappearance of names, the entry of lower-taxed younger men on the lists, and difficulties in determining what forms of wealth apart from land have been assessed all affect the data, making it almost impossible to convincingly document change over time from tax lists alone. In a footnote readers learn the crucial fact that the 1690 data are skewed by the addition among the anti-Parris taxpayers of ten men

[9] Richard Latner, "Salem Witchcraft, Factionalism, and Social Change Reconsidered: Were Salem's Witch-Hunters Modernization's Failures?" *WMQ* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 423–48 (quotation, 437).

[10] Ibid., 432 n. 18, 436, 446.

of the younger generation still at the lower end of the tax rolls. In another footnote Latner reports the important fact that the 1700 tax list (when the average tax of the erstwhile pro-Parris faction rose to 87 percent of the average of the former anti-Parris faction, up from 72 percent in 1695) included seven young anti-Parris men first taxed that year and as yet near the bottom of the tax rates.[11] Given all the caveats and qualifications, the usefulness of Latner's data for evaluating the village's economic history in the 1680s and the later 1690s seems dubious. By contrast the clear-cut differences between the two groups evident in the 1695 tax list (and to a somewhat lesser extent in the 1694 tax list) and the stark decline of the pro-Parris group's fortunes in the crucial years 1690–95 remain unchallenged.

It is precisely because comparing the tax lists diachronically is so problematic that we took care to build our argument using a variety of evidence, of which tax data constitute a small part. Yet apart from a brief summary early in his essay and a few passing references, Latner shows scant interest in the larger argument developed in *Salem Possessed* or in the evidence presented. He focuses almost exclusively on three paragraphs (pages 81–83) and other scattered mentions of taxes in a 220-page book. Our book's broader themes—the larger pattern of Salem Village's factional politics; the dynamics of two leading families, the Putnams and the Porters; the background and crucial role minister (and failed merchant) Parris played; the dramatic commercial changes transforming Salem Town and their impact on Salem Village; how all of these figured in the crisis of 1692; and, ultimately, the ways that crisis, and the circumstances that helped precipitate it, might illuminate the complex and dynamic forces at work in the countryside of coastal Massachusetts in the late seventeenth century—do not seem to engage Latner's interest.

We thank him for the appreciative comments about *Salem Possessed* with which he begins, yet in advancing his claims for the significance of his findings, we must say that Latner misrepresents our argument and erects a straw man that he then vigorously knocks down. In his caricatured version of our thesis, Salem Village was clearly and starkly divided between two diametrically opposed groups clinging to totally different values: "traditional agrarians," vehemently opposed to commercial activity, and enthusiastic commercial capitalists, with the former trying "to thwart their opponents' economic advancement by launching a witch hunt."[12] This Classic Comics summary is far from our actual representation of the situation. We do not depict Salem Village as a simple agrarian society but rather carefully delineate its social complexity as many villagers, coping with economic pressures, sought to balance conflicting

[11] Ibid., 437–38 n. 23, 445–46 n. 33.
[12] Ibid., 434–35 n. 20, 444.

values and emotions and as they found the economic developments in Salem Town alluring and unsettling. We do not present the witchcraft outbreak as a deliberate plot by one faction to "thwart the economic advancement" of the other but as an expression of psychological and social tensions played out within individuals and factions as well as among them. As these tensions unfolded, we argue, they followed deeply etched factional fault lines that, in turn, were influenced by economic anxieties and by differing levels of engagement with and access to the political and commercial opportunities unfolding in Salem Town.[13] (More about this crucial strand of our argument a little later.)

Nor do we suggest in a simplistic fashion, as Latner implies in his concluding sentence, "that those associated with religion, such as the supporters of Parris's church, were necessarily engaged in a battle against economic improvement, the market, or modernity." Salem Villagers, church members and non–church members alike, were experiencing economic changes associated with Salem Town's commercial development and anxiously assessing its effect on them. In his 2006 *New England Quarterly* article, Latner sees "religious discord" rather than economic factors as the key to Salem Village factionalism.[14] But it is not an either-or choice. To explore the economic and social history of Salem Village and Salem Town is not to deny the importance of religion, including the implications of establishing a full-fledged church in Salem Village; the widespread and biblically grounded belief in the reality of witchcraft; and Parris's polarizing personality and inflammatory sermons. In *Salem Possessed* we document the interplay of religious and socioeconomic factors—from the controversies involving George Burroughs and other village ministers, to the bitter disputes over Parris's salary demands, firewood allotment, and ownership of the parsonage, to his fateful decision, citing biblical and ecclesiastical authority, to attribute the afflicted girls' behavior to demonic possession.

As though catching us in some sleight of hand, Latner claims that "the authors adjust their thesis at various points by arguing that the pro-Parris villagers were being 'lure[d]' and 'transform[ed]' by the very forces they resisted." This perspective is no opportunistic "adjustment" of our thesis; it is at the core of the entire work. As we wrote:

> One advantage we as outsiders have had over the people of Salem Village is that we can afford to recognize the degree to

[13] Richard Latner criticizes us for not demonstrating the existence of such factional divisions in the other nearby towns that became involved as the accusations and arrests spiraled out of control. As we make clear in *Salem Possessed*, we (like contemporary observers) see Salem Village as the heart and center of the outbreak, and thus we focus our attention on a close examination of the village and its history.
[14] Latner, *WMQ* 65: 448, 448 n. 35.

> which the menace they were fighting off had taken root within each of them almost as deeply as it had in Salem Town or along the Ipswich Road . . . Samuel Parris and Thomas Putnam, Jr. were part of a vast company, on both sides of the Atlantic, who were trying to expunge the lure of a new order from their own souls by doing battle with it in the real world. While this company of Puritans were not the purveyors of the spirit of capitalism that historians once made them out to be, neither were they simple peasants clinging blindly to the imagined security of a receding medieval culture. What seems above all to characterize them, and even to help define their identity as "Puritans," is the precarious way in which they managed to inhabit both these worlds at once . . . We have over and over again stressed the conflicting emotions most Salem Villagers must have felt as they witnessed the transformation of Salem Town into a major commercial center, and as they saw an altered social and economic order beginning to take shape. The witchcraft testimony itself makes plain that even those who felt most uneasy about those developments were also deeply attracted by them.[15]

This passage is a key to the meaning of *Salem Possessed*; it informs the second half of the book especially, as we explore the particular stories of the Putnam and Porter families and Parris. It was and remains our conviction that if these people had been simply traditional agrarians, they might not have lashed out so furiously in 1692; that it was their very ambivalence about marketplace values that fueled their resentment and transformed it into hatred. In a larger sense, we continue to believe, as we wrote in the quoted paragraph, that the Puritan sensibility itself represented a complex response to the subversion of more traditional values rather than a simple expression of those values. (Indeed the powerful reemergence of religious fundamentalisms in our own time seems to represent a similarly complex response to the pressures of globalization in the form of Islamic and Christian radicals who eagerly use communications satellites, laptop computers, sophisticated databases, Web sites, and computerized mailing lists to hasten the coming of a simpler, purer world.) Whoever thinks of *Salem Possessed* in terms of easy polarities—whether based on tax lists or lines on a map—has not read our book with sufficient care.

Benjamin C. Ray, using computer-based digital imaging, geographic information systems software, and geopositioning devices one could

[15] Ibid., 434–35 n. 20 ("authors adjust"); Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 180–81, 209–10.

only dream of in the 1970s, focuses on certain aspects of one of our maps. Supplementing much other evidence, this map, titled "The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692," illustrated and served as one building block in our larger argument that villagers' distance from the emerging commercial opportunities of Salem Town and differing levels of involvement in the town's political and economic life figured significantly in the pattern of village factionalism that, in turn, underlay the crisis of 1692.[16]

Like Latner, Ray (a descendant of Salem Village resident Joshua Rea Jr., a signer of the anti-Parris petition of 1695) shows little interest in our broader argument or our effort to contextualize the witchcraft outbreak historically. He contends, for example, that John Procter's "great mistake," and thus the reason he was accused, was that he scoffed at the afflicted girls and beat his servant, Mary Warren, for her involvement. This exclusive focus on immediate events recalls earlier writing about Salem witchcraft that concentrated entirely on 1692 to the exclusion of historical context. In *Salem Possessed* we examine Procter's "backstory" as a wealthy property owner, absentee landlord, and licensed tavern owner on the Ipswich Road, a district of commercial enterprises separating Salem Village and Salem Town.[17]

Similarly, Ray devotes attention to the somewhat niggling question of whether John Willard's landholdings extended into Salem Village and thus whether he should appear in the tally of accused Salem Village witches, yet he seems to have little interest in Willard's relationship, as a newcomer to the area, to his in-laws (and principal accusers) the long-established Wilkins clan living on the far western side of Salem Village. We discuss this relationship in detail as one of several paradigmatic examples of the geographically inflected tensions afflicting the community, which is a story that readers cannot glean from maps.[18] Instead Ray simply suggests that Willard was accused because he was said to have mocked the afflicted girls, again focusing on the immediate events of 1692 with little attention to the deeper historical context.

Even Ray's cartographic interest focuses exclusively on the Geography of Witchcraft map, ignoring or mentioning only in passing, without comment, the Ipswich Road map, the map showing Putnam and Porter

[16] "The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692," in Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 34.

[17] Benjamin C. Ray, "The Geography of Witchcraft Accusations in 1692 Salem Village," *WMQ* 65, no. 3 (July 2008): 449–78 (quotation, 460); Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 200–202.

[18] While John Willard does appear on the 1690 Salem Village tax list, Sidney Perley's meticulous real-estate history of Salem Village does not mention him. See Perley, *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 46–56 (1910–20).

landholdings, and the important Geography of Factionalism map showing a clear geographic pattern in the signers of the 1695 pro- and anti-Parris petitions.

Though attention to detail is always helpful, we find it frustrating to deal with narrowly focused criticism that ignores our book's overall structure and the full range of evidence offered. The critiques we have found most helpful over the years have been those that addressed our argument and supporting evidence as a whole.

As the epigraph of his essay, Ray reprints part of a single sentence that appears on the facing page to the Geography of Witchcraft map: "The alleged witches and those who accused them resided on opposite sides of the Village."[19] That sentence is clearly an overstatement, incorporated in an early draft and reflecting the excitement of first discovery. In retrospect we should have taken note of it and phrased it more carefully in the process of revising. It does not accurately represent either the map itself or our own overall account of it, both of which make clear that what we had found was a telling geographic pattern in the outbreak, not an absolute division.

Indeed, over the years it has been an ongoing source of frustration when that simplified summary of the Geography of Witchcraft map has been misused to represent the entire argument of *Salem Possessed.* The most blatant public example of such misuse was doubtless the 1985 PBS American Playhouse movie *Three Sovereigns for Sarah*, starring Vanessa Redgrave and Kim Hunter, which concludes with a dramatic scene in which the Redgrave character triumphantly unfurls a version of our very map, and sure enough, every single witch and defender resides on one side of a vertical line bisecting Salem Village, with every single accuser on the other side. (Stephen Nissenbaum, a consultant for that movie, tried hard but in vain to make some changes in that map.) In retrospect, as Ray makes amply clear by highlighting that single sentence, we ourselves remain at least partly responsible for whatever misuses or misrepresentations of our work may have occurred.

Within the narrow compass of his paper, Ray raises several points that merit comment. He "corrects" the Geography of Witchcraft map in various ways, adding to, deleting, and rearranging its Ws, As, and Ds (shorthand for accused witches, accusers, and defenders of the accused), concluding that these changes blur the geographic pattern that we found. Citing a 1981 genealogical article, he removes the W representing Bridget Bishop from Ipswich Road.[20] As with Latner's tax data, however,

[19] Ray, *WMQ* 65: 449.

[20] Sidney Perley shows Edward Bishop's lot on the Salem Village side of Ipswich Road and notes: "he lived in a house which stood upon this part of the lot; and from here his wife Bridget went to jail . . . for the alleged crime of witchcraft." See Perley, "Rial Side: Part of Salem in 1700," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 55, no. 1 (January 1919): 49–74 (map facing 49, quotation, 69).

many of his "corrections" are problematic. For example, he adds a W representing Warren, one of the afflicted girls, who was indeed accused of witchcraft. We omitted Warren (even though including her as a W would have strengthened the geographic pattern the map shows) not through an oversight, however, but because of the categorical decision to exclude those who played ambiguous roles in the outbreak, as both accusers and defenders or, in this case, as both accuser and accused.

Another instance: Ray adds three Ws just across the Salem Village line in Topsfield, representing William and Deliverance Hobbs and their daughter Abigail (near where we placed three As representing accusers of Willard, who figures importantly in our analysis). As it happened, Abigail and Deliverance (reversing Warren's progression from accuser to accused) were accused witches who, in turn, accused others. (William Hobbs, whose testimony survives in fragmentary form, answered only "I do not know" when asked if his daughter was a witch.) We omitted the three Hobbses, again following our policy of not including people who fall in more than one of the A, D, or W categories. Ray has decided otherwise, but this is a matter of judgment, not a simple correction of an oversight or deliberate misrepresentation. In a similar arbitrary decision, Ray moves still farther away from Salem Village to add a W representing Mary Esty of Topsfield on the grounds that she was the sister of two accused Salem Village witches.

More crucially, Ray reshapes the map by adding thirteen accusers whom we excluded for reasons we clearly explained. Five of these are individuals who appear in the records first as accusers but later as defenders, most by signing the Rebecca Nurse petition circulated by Israel Porter, a highly risky public act given the climate of the time and, at the very least, indicative of reservations about the course of events. (It is worth reiterating that Porter and his circle, including his son-in-law Joseph Putnam and nephew Daniel Andrew, so central to our interpretation, go essentially unmentioned by Latner and Ray.) Ray also adds eight so-called afflicted girls (plus Susannah Shelden and Jemima Rea) to his map as accusers. In planning the map, we made the considered judgment that though these girls were obviously important in the onset and forward momentum of the outbreak, their specific accusations were so tainted by adult intervention or, as Ray suggests, by "village gossip" that their residences were not germane to the geographic pattern we were documenting. (Interestingly, Burns and Rosenthal reinforce this conclusion, attributing the similar phrasing in many accusations to "the

influence of Thomas Putnam, who was the recorder and the one common element across the group of accusers.") Our decision to omit the so-called afflicted girls was further influenced by the fact that six of them were not living in their parents' households in 1692.[21]

As Ray points out, others have made differing judgments on these points. That is the nature of scholarly discourse. So we find it highly surprising that Ray repeatedly implies we deliberately manipulated the Geography of Witchcraft map to buttress a thesis we had already formulated. By citing the book *How to Lie with Maps*; by characterizing our judgments as "curious"; by citing our decision to exclude from the map the afflicted girls and those who were both accusers and defenders (or accusers and accused) as proof that we "did not intend [our] map to represent information as recorded in the court documents"; and by other comments scattered throughout the essay, Ray creates the impression that we deliberately distorted the map to support a predetermined interpretation.[22] We did no such thing. Here and throughout our book, the evidentiary findings came first and the interpretation followed. This sequence was exactly the process by which the two of us moved, slowly and after much deliberation, from discovering and teaching these documents and thinking about what they could tell us to making the decision to write about them. Indeed it would probably be more accurate to say that we stumbled on our interpretation than that we imposed it on the evidence. Ray is free to make his own maps and to include whomever he wishes. But it should be understood that his "corrected" map in significant measure involves differing judgment calls and is not necessarily either more accurate or so dramatically different from ours as to justify his sweeping claims regarding its significance for our argument.

Ray correctly removes from the map six signers of the Nurse petition who also made witchcraft accusations and who therefore, by our criteria, should not have been included. He cites no source but presumably he has used the forthcoming new edition of these documents that we assume will be meticulously indexed and will also, Ray reports, include some fifty additional court records not in the WPA compilation that we indexed and reprinted as *The Salem Witchcraft Papers* several years after completing *Salem Possessed*. In researching *Salem Possessed* a generation ago, we relied for the most part on W. Elliot Woodward's *Records of Salem Witchcraft*, published in 1864 and reissued in facsimile by Da Capo in 1969. Two of the six whom Ray identifies as accusers as well as defenders (Jonathan Putnam and John Putnam Sr.) appear in Woodward's index as accusers,

[21] Burns and Rosenthal, *WMQ* 65: 44. See also Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed*, 34–35.

[22] Ray, *WMQ* 65: 463.

and we should have caught this fact. The other four (Joseph Hutchinson Sr., Lydia Hutchinson, Rebecca Putnam, and Joseph Holton Sr.) do not appear in Woodward's index, and though we carefully read the actual documents, for some purposes we relied primarily on Woodward's index and so missed these four. While conceding that we may have missed some accusers "by oversight," Ray repeatedly places a vaguely sinister interpretation on what he views as our errors or omissions, scarcely acknowledging legitimate differences of judgment or the emergence since the early 1970s of new evidence or more accessible research aids as factors worth noting.[23]

Ray also adds fourteen more accusers. Discussing each in detail would extend this paper to unconscionable length. Suffice it to say that several have already been addressed, and our reasons explained; some are missing from Woodward's index; and others are, indeed, oversights. Since Ray does not report where eleven of these fourteen lived, how their addition affects our geographic findings remains unknown.

Pursuing his bill of particulars regarding our Geography of Witchcraft map, Ray questions the placement of the east-west dividing line. Inevitably, within obvious limits, the exact siting of this line is somewhat arbitrary. Further, as he notes, several accused witches, accusers, and defenders lived in or near the village parsonage, making any geographic division among them difficult. Still, even if one obviates this problem by moving the line one-quarter mile to the west (and accepting the principles of inclusion explained in *Salem Possessed*), perhaps five or six more of the accusers on our map would fall on the eastern side, which would not appreciably affect the larger pattern.

Ray concludes with some map exercises of his own. His Figure XI displays the residences of Salem Villagers on the basis of their rank in the 1689–90 tax list. Though this map shows twice as many of the community's lowest-taxed farmers on the western side as on the eastern side, Ray surprisingly concludes that the two geographic cohorts were "not . . . radically different" economically. Not only does this map fail to trace changes over time—the issue that looms so large for Latner—but Ray has chosen the 1689–90 tax list rather than the 1695 list, on which the economic differences between the two factions (also clearly divided geographically) are so striking.[24] He does not show a demarcation line (at

[23] Ibid.; W. Elliot Woodward, ed., *Records of Salem Witchcraft, Copied from the Original Documents* (1864–65; repr., New York, 1969); Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Witchcraft Papers*.

[24] Ray, *WMQ* 65: 471. Benjamin C. Ray justifies his decision to ignore the 1695 tax list by asserting that "the tax rates do not vary much between . . . 1689–90 and 1695" (ibid., 472 n. 23). In fact Richard Latner's essay, which he cites for this claim, documents a dramatic shift in this crucial six-year interval, with the average rates of

least on the draft we saw), but if one places it where we do in the Geography of Witchcraft map (and excludes those residences that lie directly on or very near the line), the east side appears to have five men in the top tax bracket and fifteen in the middle bracket, whereas the west has three in the top bracket and nine in the middle bracket—not a "radical" difference, perhaps, yet not insignificant, particularly when combined with the overwhelming preponderance of the lowest-taxed farmers in the west.

Figure XII, plotting the geographic location of men whom Ray considers "village leaders" in the period 1680–92, purports to show that those living on the eastern (Salem Town) side of the village were just as committed to the village's political life and welfare as those on the western side. But the map is a strained effort, raising more questions than it resolves. Ray's village leaders are a mixed bag indeed. He includes militia officers, who were actually a part of the Salem Town militia.[25] Dr. William Griggs is included as "the village physician," as though this were an official position. In fact, Griggs was a Salem Townsman who purchased a property on the town side of the Ipswich Road (outside the village bounds) as late as February 1692, when he was around eighty years old, and who died less than a year later. Griggs, in short, lived on the periphery of Salem Village for at most a year.[26] Equally problematic is the inclusion of Samuel Parris, an outsider who arrived only in 1689 and promptly became a lightning rod of controversy. Ray's inclusion of militia officers, about whose selection we know so little, along with Griggs and Parris among the village leaders who, he claims, had logged "years of service" in promoting "the village's welfare" raises serious doubts about the relevance and even the credibility of this map.[27]

Moreover, Figure XII reveals nothing about changes over time in an extremely volatile period of intensifying factional polarization, culminating in the dramatic political shift that swept the anti-Parris faction into power late in 1691—an event, not incidentally, that increased Ray's tally of village leaders living on the Salem Town side of the village. In fact

the pro-Parris taxpayers declining sharply both absolutely and compared with the anti-Parris group.

[25] For militia purposes, as for many others, Salem Village in these years remained a part of Salem Town. Unless the village had a quasi-autonomous company within the Salem Town regiment, its officers would have been chosen by the town-wide militia as a whole, in which village residents would have constituted a minority. We have been unable to resolve this question with any degree of certainty.

[26] Griggs died sometime before Feb. 10, 1693, when his will was probated. See Perley, *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 55: map facing 48, 63; Walter S. Griggs, "Genealogy of the Griggs Family," http://www.franklinfamily.info/ancestry/griggs_family_genealogy.htm.

[27] Ray, *WMQ* 65: 473.

this election brought onto the village committee (and thus into the ranks of those Ray counts as village leaders) men who were hardly proponents of the village's welfare and were actually at bitter odds with the previously dominant faction in village politics! Finally, and most bewildering to us, Ray significantly revised Figure XII after we finished writing this response.[28] What had been an eighteen to fourteen east-west division in the essay we responded to suddenly became a sixteen to seventeen split tilting toward the western side. Such a striking last-minute revision unavoidably raises questions in our minds about the overall reliability of Ray's imposing array of cartographic, geographic, and prosopographical evidence.

Less importantly, Figure XIII, plotting the geographic distribution of the signers of a 1670 petition requesting a village minister, goes far back to a time when the social and economic changes we trace in *Salem Possessed* were in their earliest stage. Figure XIV shows that signers of 1689 and 1692 petitions to the General Court seeking release from Salem Town taxes included men from the eastern part of the village. If anything this map underscores the ambiguity and fluidity of the situation so often obscured in reductionist summaries of our argument. It was entirely possible for individuals, particularly those with easier access to Salem Town, to be drawn to its economic and political promise while also favoring a specific measure—abatement of town taxes for village residents—that offered obvious and immediate economic benefits. In any event we have never claimed that every conceivable piece of evidence supports our interpretation. In researching and writing *Salem Possessed*, we looked for the *preponderance* of evidence and formulated an interpretation that seemed best able to explain that evidence and that most firmly rooted the village's factional divisions, and the witchcraft outbreak, in the local and immediate political and economic context, thereby illuminating why the outbreak erupted when it did, and precisely where it did, rather than at some other time or in numerous other communities affected by more general causal factors.

In summary, Ray's critique, involving assumptions and procedural decisions over which scholars may legitimately differ, fails to justify his sweeping conclusion, supposedly proved by objective cartographic evidence free of interpretive assumptions or polemical intent, that Salem Village was "not a community geographically divided . . . by wealth, social leadership, church membership, or the witchcraft accusations."[29] In our view the case for an economic and geographic component in all

[28] We learned of this revision only as the result of an editorial query at the copyediting stage, just as this issue of the *Quarterly* was about to go into production.

[29] Ray, *WMQ* 65: 477.

these tangled elements of Salem Village's history up to and including 1692 remains strong, resting not only on tax data or a single map but also on the full array of evidentiary sources and analytic approaches we drew on in *Salem Possessed* to get at the lived experience of individual men and women, households, and extended family networks.

Benjamin C. Ray closes with the observation that "mapping the accusations [and, by implication, all historical research] needs to be as free of interpretive assumptions as possible." Echoing as it does Leopold von Ranke's insistence that historians remain faithful to the evidence, without allowing their ideological commitments to dictate their scholarly interpretations, Ray's claim is, in an important sense, axiomatic.[30] Yet historians *are* products of their era, and its concerns, preoccupations, and perspectives inevitably influence the questions they ask and the interpretive approaches that seem most alive for them. In this sense we readily concede that *Salem Possessed* reflects a particular moment in American historical scholarship, in the nation's history, and in our personal lives.

The late sixties was a seedtime not only of the new experiments in historical pedagogy that led us to build a documents-based course around Salem witchcraft but also of what was quickly being dubbed a new social history. *Salem Possessed* was a product of that development too. These were the years when John Demos, Philip J. Greven Jr., Kenneth A. Lockridge, and others were publishing their microhistories of other early Massachusetts communities. (And they, in turn, were influenced by the young Bernard Bailyn who, with his pathbreaking, statistically grounded study *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, had begun to move beyond the awesome and sometimes intimidating shadow of Perry Miller and his magisterial two-volume intellectual history of a core group of New England ministers.)[31] It was their work that encouraged us to approach the events of 1692 from a new angle, not as an aspect of the psychology of adolescent hysteria, the side effects of Puritan religious superstition, or even the larger history of witch trials, but rather as a single extraordinary episode in the individual

[30] Ibid., 478 (quotation). On Leopold von Ranke, see for example Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell, eds., *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1990).

[31] Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York, 1970); Philip J. Greven Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1970); Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years, Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636–1736* (New York, 1970).

and collective lives of otherwise unexceptional people—people who happened to reside in or near what we discovered to be a rather exceptional community.

As we note in the preface of *Salem Possessed*, the book was also the product of a tumultuous era in the nation's history, with society torn by clamorous disagreements over what many saw as a disastrous and ill-considered war waged by an arrogant and blundering administration. Beginning our teaching careers in the late sixties, we had experienced this turmoil firsthand, as every semester seemed to end chaotically with strikes, moratoria, and cancelled classes and with authority questioned at every level, from the university lecture hall to the White House.

The late sixties spawned not only a new social history but also a "New Left." And we were not just observers but participants in these developments. Stephen Nissenbaum, while still a graduate student in 1967 in Madison, Wisconsin, and an instructor in the first incarnation of the Salem witchcraft course, was actually meeting with a group of his students on October 18, 1967, as they marched around an academic building in peaceful protest of on-campus recruiting by the Dow Chemical Company (the manufacturer of napalm), an episode that would achieve national notoriety several hours later when the state police violently attacked the protesters. Paul Boyer took time from work on the Salem book to participate in teach-ins, including a crowded and intense late-night session at a UMass dormitory where a tearful young woman burst out: "My brother was just killed in Vietnam. Are you telling us this war is wrong?" All these experiences, too, certainly shaped the perspectives and affinities we brought to bear as we looked at the history of a single community that was itself caught up in agonizing, seemingly intractable conflict.

These personal experiences may help explain why we were prepared to accept the evidence that the two opposing Salem Village factions could be differentiated from each other by their relationship to an increasingly powerful market economy: that the pro-Parris faction was struggling within (and in part against) that economy, to which it was nevertheless strongly attracted, whereas many members of the anti-Parris faction had a closer and more advantageous, if still ambiguous, relationship with it. In interpreting the history of an early New England community in such terms, we were not alone. By the mid-seventies we would find ourselves in the company of early New England social historians such as Christopher Clark, James A. Henretta, and Michael Merrill, all of whom addressed in provocative fashion the transition-to-capitalism question by arguing, in one way or another, for the centrality of the countryside in that process and contending that rural Americans were generally reluctant to embrace the entrepreneurial values of the

marketplace.[32] That idea, too, was in the air as we were writing *Salem Possessed*.

This is not to suggest that Salem witchcraft, or any historical event, is a mere Rorschach inkblot to be interpreted however one wishes. All historical writing reflects the circumstances of its production and is the work of men and women who are citizens and social beings as well as historians. This fact is often easier to recognize in retrospect than at the time, but we would be surprised if the many scholars who have brought their own interpretive perspectives to bear on New England witchcraft since *Salem Possessed* would disagree.[33]

Indeed we are inclined to believe it is not mere coincidence that Richard Latner and Benjamin C. Ray imply that the two factions in Salem Village cannot be meaningfully distinguished from each other by economic standing or geographic location; by implication, apart from "religious discord" (which looms so large in contemporary America), the differences between them cannot be explained by reference to larger issues of ideology and behavior. The instruments of quantitative micro-analysis and even of basic scholarly work have improved exponentially over the decades, with sophisticated database software, geographic information systems devices, and word processors replacing our clattery typewriters, archaic adding machine, laborious cut-and-paste composition,

[32] Michael Merrill, "Cash Is Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," *Radical History Review* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1977): 42–71; James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America," *WMQ* 35, no. 1 (January 1978): 3–32; Christopher Clark, "Household Economy, Market Exchange and the Rise of Capitalism in the Connecticut Valley, 1800–1860," *Journal of Social History* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1979–80): 169–89.

[33] These scholars include John Demos, who employed psychology and anthropology to explicate New England's pre-1692 witchcraft accusations; Richard Weisman, a sociologist with a fine historical eye who differentiated popular notions of witchcraft from theological ones to suggest what made 1692 unique; Carol F. Karlsen, who dealt subtly and powerfully with gender issues; Bernard Rosenthal, who brought the sensibility of a literary scholar attuned to current trends in textual analysis to the testimony of the afflicted girls; and Mary Beth Norton, who carefully and imaginatively connected 1692 with the sometimes violent interactions of European settlers and the indigenous peoples they displaced. Overall the tendency in much of the recent witchcraft scholarship has been to shift the focus from immediate and local issues to questions of gender, law, and ethnicity: from microhistory back to macrohistory. In this scholarship, as in our own work, we can see the effect of broader shifts in cultural politics. John M. Murrin offers a concise summary and analysis of the recent historiography of Salem witchcraft, though we believe he goes too far (or is simply being shortsighted) in suggesting that *Salem Possessed* amounted to something like a diversion from more important issues. See Murrin, "The Infernal Conspiracy of Indians and Grandmothers," *Reviews in American History* 31, no. 4 (December 2003): 485–94.

and photocopied nineteenth-century maps. But there has been another kind of change as well. As the political culture of the late sixties shifted sometime around 1980, so, to some degree, did the inclinations of historical scholarship. Important studies of the social and economic history of early New England (by scholars such as David Grayson Allen, T. H. Breen, Stephen Innes, John Frederick Martin, and Winifred Barr Rothenberg, for example) reengaged the vexed transition-to-capitalism question by asserting that from an early period the region's farmers, whether as producers or consumers, embraced the entrepreneurial behavior and values of the marketplace and the values it encouraged.[34] From such a perspective, early New Englanders came to look very much like Reagan-era Americans. The scholarship of those years has posed a challenge to works such as *Salem Possessed* that emphasized resistance, or at least ambivalence, toward the marketplace. Latner and Ray implicitly support that challenge. To make this observation about their critiques is not to impute bias or distortion to them. It is only to say that they, like us, not only write about history but also live within it.

When the two of us began almost four decades ago to teach our experimental course about Salem witchcraft and then to write about it, some of our more senior UMass colleagues looked on our work with something like bemused condescension. Surely, they implied (no, they said outright!), we would glean nothing else from so overworked a topic, and they even wondered whether there was something rather unserious about devoting an entire course to teaching it. Though we were confident at the time that our doubting colleagues were wrong, we also probably assumed that our book was likely to be the last word on Salem witchcraft.

How little we knew! Today, now that both of us have long since gone on to do very different kinds of scholarly work in very different

[34] David Grayson Allen, *In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferal of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1981); Stephen Innes, *Labor in a New Land: Economy and Society in Seventeenth-Century Springfield* (Princeton, N.J., 1983); John Frederick Martin, *Profits in the Wilderness: Entrepreneurship and the Founding of New England Towns in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1991); Winifred Barr Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750–1850* (Chicago, 1992). T. H. Breen contributed to this literature with a series of important essays, beginning with "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690–1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 4 (October 1986): 467–99, that culminated in *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York, 2004).

periods of American history, we would not dream of condescending toward all the recent efforts to explore the events of 1692. Indeed, as new generations of historians have been drawn to this seemingly inexhaustible topic, we have come to suspect that nobody is likely for very long to possess Salem.