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# Fear Thy Neighbor: Spatial Relations in 17th Century New England Witch-Hunt Trials

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**Fear Thy Neighbor**  
*Spatial Relations in 17th Century New England*  
*Witch-Hunt Trials*

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**Trinity College**  
**History Senior Thesis**  
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**Spring, 2017**

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*For my mom. Thank you for a childhood full of hocus pocus.*

## **An Introduction to Spatial Relations and Witch-Hunt Historiography**

On May 25, 1669, Katherine Harrison awaited the court's final decision. The widow, who was now almost eighty years old, had faced a number of witchcraft accusations over the years. Rumors of her harming cattle, defying social norms, fortune telling, and, in the form of animals, afflicting her Wethersfield neighbors, was used as evidence against her. Was it her husband's death and subsequent exclusion from society that led to these accusations? Or was she really a "cunning woman," a dangerous teller of fortunes, whose mystical powers frightened her neighbors? Either way, Harrison had little hope that she would escape the accusations—the evidence seemed stacked against her. However, the jury returned with an inconclusive verdict. While Goody Harrison was, no doubt, highly suspect in the eyes of her neighbors, she escaped indictment, saving her from imprisonment or execution: The court "remov[ed] her from Wethersfield which that will tend most to her own safety and the contentment of the people who are her neighbors."<sup>1</sup>

Harrison's banishment did little to resolve her neighbor's suspicion. After her trial, she made her way to Westchester, New York. She was met by uproar, as the rumors of her past traveled with her. Although New York authorities tended to be more lenient when it came to witchcraft accusations compared to their New England brethren, Harrison's new neighbors were not accommodating, and essentially drove her out of town. While Katherine Harrison embodies certain traits of a suspected witch, widowed and marginalized, her case was isolated and does not fit into a specific wave of "panic" that a few towns erupted into. The town of Wethersfield had a problem and they relied on their judicial system to root it out. However, the manner in which Wethersfield dealt with Harrison's case was in no way the universal practice. The outcomes of

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<sup>1</sup> "Harrison Verdict," in *Court of Assistants Records* (Connecticut State Library). Cited in David D. Hall, ed., *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1693*, 2nd ed (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) 184.

witchcraft cases in the Northeast varied by design, but the witnesses' testimony for witchcraft trials remained eerily consistent.

Belief in witchcraft is best to be understood as a grounded set of fears among everyday accusers, rather than a mass hysteria that haunted early colonial settlements. While some periods of witchcraft belief proved to be more intense than others, through the 17th century the belief remained constant and a perpetual source of tension. The historiography of magic and witches has a long history rooted in both religious and secular authority, as well as amongst the public in Europe and New England. There are few comparable points in history, as witchcraft terrorized both mind and body –it was both a tangible and intangible threat. The fear of witches was genuine. Witch-hunts were ordinary, as they remained a common part of puritan society.<sup>2</sup> Witch-hunts are best understood through relationships, whether that is neighborly, familial, spatial, or environmental. Understanding social tensions across colonial space is imperative when trying to piece together witchcraft trials because it demonstrates the ordinary and everyday concern of witchcraft.

While most scholars place Salem as the culmination of the witchcraft epidemic, this thesis works against the teleological understanding of the witch-hunts; rather it will first look at witch-trial testimony as isolated cases and then compare it to others to uncover the dimensionality of hunts. This approach removes Salem as the center of the conversation. By looking at the cases themselves reveals a greater complexity that addresses the common concerns of the community, rather than an approach that looks at more superficial commonalities in rhetoric. In the same vein, most scholars tend to use the testimonies to fill the narrative, while main arguments are drawn from the colonial elite. While theory of witchcraft, proposed by

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<sup>2</sup> Colonial New England scholars no longer capitalize this term “puritan” in order to emphasize the difficulty of definition, the fluidity of membership, and the centrality of reformed thinking to English society.

ministers such as Increase Mather, is needed to understand the theology of witchcraft, relying on this source material exclusively does not account for the discrepancies between the common beliefs and the learned. Furthermore, while religion was ubiquitous in colonial understanding of witchcraft,<sup>3</sup> the court cases reveal that witch-hunts were not directly inspired by theological debates. Rather, witch-hunts remained tied to the relationships in everyday life. Examining David D. Hall's anthology of witch-hunt case trials not only provides a bottom-up context for the elites' ideas, but the documents themselves allow alternative themes of witch-hunts to come forth. The everyday accuser's concerns are reflected in these documents. Much of Hall's documents come from the Wyllys Papers. Samuel Wyllys (1631-1709) was a Connecticut magistrate and public official who served from 1654 to 1684. The collection, covering the period from 1638 to 1757, is split between the Connecticut State Library and the Brown University Library. While the collection pertains to Indian affairs, colonial wars, civil and criminal cases, the documents centering on the witchcraft trials are of particular interest. Hall similarly included local town histories and magistrate records.

Much of what these testimonies convey centers on either a lack of, or a need for, control. Colonists sought power to influence the situation at hand, which was increasingly necessary as they had just made their way to an unknown land and sought stability. The possibility of witches threatened material and spiritual stability. A discussion of control brings about a question of

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<sup>3</sup> In David Hall's *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment* (1989), it is suggested that puritan conviction spread into the everyday relationships of colonists. Colonial settlers saw God's prominence was "embedded into the fabric of everyday life." However, nowhere was this more certain than in the meetinghouse, which served as a spiritual structure. Everyone from, farmers to housewives, left the service with a better understanding of themselves; they continued to read sermons after returning home. As Hall pointed to, they were empowered by their literacy colonists were able to make their own judgments on sermons. The physical structure of the meetinghouse was threatened after large population increase. In the 1640s, Thomas Hooker noted that the numbers of church member were dwindling and many went unbaptized. The questioning of practices of baptism was tied to the new generation of settlers who also became those members who ventured into other lands. A concept explored in Chapter II of this thesis. David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*, 1st Harvard University Press paperback ed (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990) 152.

authority and its role over society. Some scholars argue that the function of the courts was to impose social control over its residents through witchcraft trials; anyone who threatened authority could be accused as a witch.<sup>4</sup> The “difficult” people were deemed witches as a way to root out problems. However, understanding control as something that could be desired by both authoritative persons as well as the masses is imperative for a bottom-up examination of witch-hunts. Witchcraft not only threatened community as a whole, but also individual institutions, such as the home and agricultural practices.

It cannot be assumed that witch-hunts were used as an authoritative means to maintain order, as perception and fear of witchcraft was ingrained into society. Tensions between neighbors existed even without the facilitation of the authority. These tensions arise from interpersonal conflict, usually dealing with land, occupation, animals, and family. The stresses on these early colonies made relations strained. A relational history provides an alternate understanding of trial proceedings. Colonists were impacted by the world around them, which tended to encompass a larger territory than just their family or even their community. New scholarship, such as Katherine Grandjean’s *American Passage* (2015) demonstrates both inter and intra colonial communication growth in 17th century New England. The increasing number of settlers in the colonies only led to swelling tension as well as movement into uncharted lands, which threatened the nucleated community.<sup>5</sup>

While those accused of witchcraft often exhibited odd behavior outside of the accepted norm, they were not always considered outsiders. Even after they were accused, the judicial

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<sup>4</sup> Paul S. Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed; the Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> While a structured road system was not in place until much later (and most roads were constructed between houses not towns), Grandjean does believe the concept behind a road system, i.e. the notion of eased traveling between regions, was alive in many of the colonists. She demonstrates that colonists often thought about uniting the colonies by a network of routes to, “better unite and & strengthen the inland and plantations.” Grandjean, 119.



system still technically gave them a way to enter back into society. This is especially true in the latter half of the century when stricter requirements for evidence became necessary, for example two or more witnesses to a crime and removing spectral evidence as fact.<sup>6</sup> Suspected witches were thought to be agents of the devil that operated within the societal context, which is why they were so threatening. Thus, it was possible for anyone to become lured into the unnatural world.

Perception and fear of witches was always present in colonial minds. Most scholars of witchcraft tend to focus on the larger “panics,” where a multitude of witches were accused. Due to this, most of the more mundane cases are taken at face value rather than tracking the overall implication. These patterns include instances of sensory harm, which is without physical afflictions, or harm to animals. It is not surprising that authors tend to focus on the impressive cases or materials as it makes for more entertaining reading. However, a fundamental aspect of the trials is lost with this approach, which calls for scholars to understand witchcraft trials from a bottom-up method. Ignoring the common, less enchanting, patterns in witchcraft trials takes away from the notion of a constant concern of witchcraft in everyday life. Anyone could be afflicted at any moment. By looking at colonists’ relational understanding in terms of space, movement, and time we can recognize why their fear was an everyday and constant one. By examining how colonists perceived witchcraft’s infiltration into their workday dominions, their fear becomes more comprehensible.

The first chapter, “Infiltrating Intimacy: Conflicts Across Local Spaces,” highlights the various ways in which witches were perceived as disrupting the domestic space. In order to do this, it is critical to determine where the home ends and the outside world begins. This proves difficult, as the definition of domestic space was complicated when looking at the themes

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<sup>6</sup> Hall, *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England*, 11.

conveyed in the trials. Witches were suspected of penetrating these arenas and causing mischief within them. Domestic space was fragile and when things went awry or behavior was questioned, an accusation was sure to follow. The wealth of primary sources suggested a great concern over who and what could cross the threshold into private spaces. This was especially true of certain methods of magical infiltration, such as clairvoyance.

Insecurity culminated within the home and the surrounding area, as it was the most vulnerable area. Things that were most afflicted, animals and children, were supposed to be protected by this space. While children existed within the physical structure of the home, the focus of animals that appeared in trials extends the definition of the domestic space. There are two ways to understand animals within the context of witchcraft trials. The first, which reflected the contemporary scholarship on witches, is the animal familiar.<sup>7</sup> These beings were supernatural entities that either assisted witches or allowed witches to take the form of an animal to cause harm. The animal familiar is a well-documented phenomenon in historical scholarship and tended to take the form of either domesticated animals, such as cats, or wild animals, such as eagles, wolves, and bears. The second grouping was the animals victimized by witches, and is the group of particular interest for this thesis. These animals tended to be necessary for survival, such as cattle, pigs, and chickens. Scholars do not tend to focus on farming animals in their works on witchcraft. However, this type of testimony dominated the primary sources, which suggests that it was a tangible concern. If one is to consider farming animals as a pivotal aspect to a household, enough to cause a great amount of concern and heavily featured in the trial testimony, then it is natural to challenge the preconceived notions of the colonial society

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<sup>7</sup> While animal familiars will not be covered extensively in this thesis, see Emma Wilby for a more detailed account: Emma Wilby, "The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland," *Taylor & Francis, Ltd* Vol. 111, no. No. 2 (October 2000): 283–305.

hierarchy. Most scholars outline colonial society as rigid spheres; the things that people most feared in the witchcraft cases suggest a more encompassing structure. The fear of witches' ability to infiltrate the physical home is met with the same attitudes as the terrorization of livestock, which existed in the lands surrounding the home.

However, defining the home in this manner does not make the boundary between domestic space and the outside world more distinct. While scholars have defined this forested, unincorporated area as "wilderness," colonists remained in dialog with the surrounding land. In 17th century New England, theologians and colonists used "wilderness" to describe the unsettled land. However, their understanding of wilderness does not coincide with present day connotations of the word. For instance, Edward Johnson's *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Savior* proposed the "wilderness" would become the place where colonists would rebuild Mount Sion.<sup>8</sup> These lands served as both a home to unnatural world as well as possibility for God's providence. This thesis defines these lands as the *border places*. Colonists' relationship with the border places was more fluid and, much like their understanding of the domestic space and the home, more encompassing. Over time, colonists became more familiar with these lands. While there was always something to be feared in these border places, they provided possibilities as well. Examining colonial spaces within the context of witch trials suggests the true fears of the colonists; which not only shows that not enough attention has been paid to the area just outside the home in recent scholarship, but also that the overall structure of colonial society can be seen as more fluid. Real and experienced ailments signaled a disturbance of the domestic space.

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8 David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, 122.

It is impossible to discuss domestic spaces in witchcraft trials without highlighting women's roles within these cases. Witchcraft historiography tends to emphasize the clerical and negative perceptions of women in cases of witchcraft as root cause for women's overwhelming accusation rates compared to their male counterparts.<sup>9</sup> However, the trials themselves reveal less of an expression of misogyny and rather a fear of *anyone's* ability to infiltrate and do harm in domestic spaces. By understanding colonial society as a set of fluid spaces, the testimonies against women illustrate witchcraft as a direct threat to domestic space and communal relationships, which were more likely to be occupied and maintained by women.

The second chapter, "Pushing the Boundaries: Movement in Colonial Witch-Hunts," explores the various understandings of movement in the colonies in terms of witchcraft, and focuses more on the potentiality of witchcraft harm. Within witchcraft cases, certain types of movement were considered suspicious and cause for concern. These types of movements were unexpected and had the potential to inflict harm. These movements signaled lack of control over communal structures as outlined in the first chapter. In the first section, this type of movement is referred to as *unexpected movement*, in that it caught people off guard and was unpredictable. The potentiality for harm is key, as unexpected movement increased, the hyper awareness of witchcraft also increased. Even if a witness in a trial never came under any physical affliction, the fear tied to the unexpected nature of these movements was enough for concern. Unexpected

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<sup>9</sup> In her *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, Carol Karlsen noted that "the story of witchcraft is primarily the story of women and this [she] suspect[s] accounts for much of the fascination and the elusiveness attending the subject...witchcraft confronts us with ideas about women, with fears about women, with the place of women in society, and with women themselves." While there is no doubting more women were accused, her work is primarily based on male understandings of theological interpretations of women, which cannot be done without discussing theology. Karlsen suggested that witchcraft was first and foremost a set of dynamic religious beliefs and describes how witchcraft played a significant role not only in shaping and maintaining men's attitude about women. She maintained that understanding women as witches came from a combination of religious and communal belief as "gender issues were religious issues." However, she does not account for the lack of theology included in the actual testimonies themselves. Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1998).

movement played into an understanding of sensory perception of witchcraft, and the idea that witches could disorient one's senses was part of the stereotype.

The second section examines regional movement and looks at how those, like Katherine Harrison, were perceived after intercolony movement. The key difference between unexpected movement and *regional movement*, i.e. movement between colonies, is that regional movement is rooted in normalcy. Intercolonial travels were becoming more common throughout the 17th century as was regular and reliable communication. Movement brought the potential spread of witchcraft into other communities. Movement, both locally and regionally, was feared because it signaled a lack of control. The potential to move freely and outside the bounds of the community was concerning because it meant that colonists were losing the war with the unnatural world. However, the testimony reveals that perceptions of regional movement depended on the community. If the community already presumed a person guilty, their movements were classified as suspect. While spatial issues and crossing of thresholds threatened neighborly relationships, movement suggested an ability to move beyond individual afflictions and a potential witchcraft to intrude on the entire community.

The third chapter, “The Witching Hour: The Formal and Informal Records of Witches in New England,” considers the extended duration of time that was common between the initial affliction experienced by the witness and their ultimate testimony, which could span years or even decades. Ultimately, this time gap suggests that suspicious behavior was ingrained in society and that widespread panics did not arise every time there was an instance of supposed witchcraft. Belief in witchcraft was continuous, and action against them varied over time. The ways to understand time in terms of these cases expand beyond chronological order. Turning back to the importance of a relational history, prolonged time in witch-hunts addresses the

formal versus informal histories of witch-hunts. That is what is included in the historical record and what was actually experienced on a daily basis. A lens into the ultimate decline of witch-hunts comes from similar events in Europe during the time that influenced New England.

Through an examination of time, the historiography of witch-hunts expands into both a temporal and regional understanding, and attempts to make the discussion more dimensional

It is easy to overlook relational history in terms of space and movement because it is not an obvious aspect of the trial records. Nor is it able to be identified by looking solely at individual cases, such as Salem. When scholars look exclusively at learned works and use the trial records to fill in the narrative, they ignore the possibility of the trials to speak for themselves. Only through an in depth examination can a multidimensional understandings shine through. Fear of witchcraft was a given and was not a new concept associated with witchcraft trials. However it is possible to view the accused as a tangible representation of the unnatural world existing within the community, rather than a foreign or outside force. The surrounding environment was paradoxically feared and met with increased curiosity. The relationship between these border places and the domestic space, which included the surrounding land areas of the home, were more fluid as colonists had an increasing knowledge of them. Increased awareness, reflected in the trials, signaled that concern of witches was constant one, and that witch-hunts were a perpetual state of mind.

## Chapter I: Infiltrating Intimacy: Conflicts Across Local Spaces

The condition of 17th century colonial New England existed as “[a] pervasive state of insecurity.”<sup>10</sup> In order to properly research witch-hunting or suspicion about witches and this increasing state of insecurity, historiography regarding colonial homes is necessary to think about the physical versus mental boundaries of the domestic space. How to define not only the home, but also what surrounds the home is a difficult task and one that scholars have been grappling with for decades. It extends beyond the specific intellectual and cultural context of witchcraft and into a general historiography of both space and place. However, understanding colonial sense of place and redefining not only their own internal community, but also the one that surrounds them aids any effort for a relational approach to witch-hunts.

Rather than placing the home and church as the center of communal life, the witchcraft trials placed the land around the home rather than just the physical structure of the home itself as part of the domestic space. This framework is backed by both the importance of female spaces and domesticated animals that are seen in the trial records. Traditionally, witchcraft scholars have focused on the infiltrations of the physical home itself, as it was usually considered the center of domestic life. However, afflictions to a family’s farmlands and animals were riddled throughout the testimony, suggesting the importance of the land that surrounded the home. In support of this concept, recent scholarship, such as Katherine Grandjean’s *American Passage* (2015), views colonial communication as an extended web, rather than in a fixed system. This understanding of colonial structure is echoed in the witch-hunt primary sources. Past scholarship tends to apply anachronistic definitions of the home when interpreting primary sources. This makes complete understanding of the pervasive fear of witchcraft colonials had more difficult to

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10 Peter N. Carroll, *Puritanism and the Wilderness* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1969), 138.

comprehend.

The evolving historiography of the period also demonstrates a growing understanding of a more permeable relationship with the environment around them. Juxtaposing the home and the outside world gives us an opportunity to understand the spatial terms of uncontrollable events. In the early decades of a settlement, there was great strife and concern over the outside world. However, the documents associated with the witchcraft show that, rather than creating a barrier between the community and the extending environment, English colonists approached these lands with curiosity and, over time, displayed a considerable interaction with them.

Harm to livestock reveals the importance of external lands and further suggest that these lands were not only included within the realm of domesticity, but also brought more interaction with the surrounding lands. Those animals that were harmed were usually those that were relied on for survival and lived just outside the home such as cattle, pigs, and chickens. However, control over animals and their movement also aids to a new understanding of colonization and colonial expansion. Understanding colonial perception of their surrounding environment, their own community, and the items or beings that occupy that space suggest that individual and actual harms speak to a vulnerability that is expressed both within their own homes as well as their lands and the lands beyond.

This chapter begins by looking at colonial systems in relation to the witch-hunt trial records, and examines domestic areas as protected spaces. This includes both internal and external spaces and the concern of who and what could cross certain thresholds within the internal space of the home and the external surrounding lands. The second section notes how the colonists viewed the area around them and how they conceived of the line between settled and unbounded lands, or *border places*. The final section highlights the role of animals in the



witchcraft trials and how this relates to a more encompassing sense of colonial place.

### *The Permeable Domestic Landscape*

Much of older scholarship on the domestic space and communal organization examines the various possibilities of the colonial system. Anthony Garvan (1951) looked at how movements of the colonial population modified architectural practice in Connecticut and argued that the flow of commerce and class structure was expressed in architecture.<sup>11</sup> Connecticut gained most of its population through migration before the 1660s, after which population stabilized from this period until the late 17th and early 18th century.<sup>12</sup> Until 1650, home lots in Connecticut were roughly uniform and allowed narrow limits of variation.<sup>13</sup> Settlers of this region received a few central acres within the collective unit for a meetinghouse yard fronted the green and commons. The Church and meetinghouse were placed at the center of community life and a focal point for communication; they held positions of equal importance in their respective town plan.

More recent scholarship has looked at the domestic sphere in terms of division of labor in terms of control. Author of “Set Thine House in Order: The Domestication of the Yeomanry in Seventeenth Century New England”(1986), Robert Blair St. George argued that New England become more man centered and less God centered, which led to architectural changes were being made to control the chaos unfolding. Changes imposed strict order on daily life. St. George wrote, “The main task of the puritan yeoman was then to restrict the uses of spaces around him in order to assert his will, his control.”<sup>14</sup> There were two areas in which a yeoman attempted to

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11 Anthony N.B. Garvan, *Architecture and Town Planning in Colonial Connecticut* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951) 1.

12 Garvan, 2.

13 Garvan, 41.

14 Robert Blair St. George, “Set Thine House in Order’: The Domestication of the Yeomanry in Seventeenth-Century New England,” in *New England Begins: The Seventeenth Century*, ed. Dell Upton and John Michael (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 337.

wield order, his barn and his home. For a yeoman, the physical lay out of his barn was critical to his economic livelihood as well as his psychological stability.<sup>15</sup> Manmade structures, outlined in fences, well preserved barns and other structures, and fields plowed in geometric pattern helped bring order to a usually chaotic world. The ideal farmland, as described by the Englishman John Woodbridge, was a “garden on every side enclosed with a noble fence, and be cultivated with most curious Art, and singular Industry.”<sup>16</sup> The barn became the focal point of a yeoman’s production. There was a movement to place raw food supplies or “men’s work” at a great distance from the house, on average about 140 feet.<sup>17</sup>

If the barn served as a symbolic realm of men’s work, the house was a triumph to offset the disorder. The house itself, St. George argued, was a symbolic act of proclaiming his “victory over the wilderness.”<sup>18</sup> The internal home was the female domain as well as an indicator of a family’s status.<sup>19</sup> St. George pointed to the disjunction of women work from the everyday life of the family as a whole and the parallel concern for making the front rooms culturally clean related to social class. The ability to separate worlds of work, leisure, process and product depended on economic stability. The parlor was the most densely packed and was occupied with furniture. Overall the spaces in the front of the house were the most crowded, showing the importance of public displays of products. Hierarchical arrangements of space were directly tied to the use of the room. Open space meant less control of movement while closed space exerts more authority over rooms. Over time, spatial differences between rooms were becoming less pronounced as

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15 St. George, 337.

16 St. George, 337.

17 St. George, 339.

18 St. George, 352.

19 St. George argues that the hall was the center of the yeoman's house because the majority of the personal and social interaction took place there. The hall kept most of the furniture, large chests, and cupboards and was also the place where the family ate; the seating at the table established a social hierarchy with the father occupying the armchair, his wife and children were left to the other chairs or to stand. The other front room, the parlor, was where the concentration of wealth laid. The parlor was a place to display artifacts as well as served as the place where most of the family slept.

investment in household goods grew –the need for privacy also grew.

This suggestion was especially seen within the context of witchcraft trials, which St. George himself used as evidence to indicate that physical structures were built to keep the outside world out. In 1679 the Morse family of Newbury, Massachusetts came under attack. The elderly couple of Elizabeth and William Morse were both respected members of the church as William could read and write. When strange occurrences began to happen in their house, such as moving furniture and missing items, their grandson John Stiles, who resided with them, was seemingly to blame. A seaman named Caleb Powell, who was to have said knowledge of the occult, offered assistance to the Morse family. The relationship between the Morses and Powell strained and William eventually accused Powell of witchcraft. While he was highly suspected of witchcraft, Powell was ultimately acquitted. Elizabeth Morse, however, was not so lucky and blame was quickly placed on her. Numerous accusations against her led to a guilty verdict and a death sentence. William actively defended his wife and even tried to get her to move jail cells, as hers was too crowded. His concern and efforts were rewarded when she returned to Newbury in 1681.

In a letter written to Increase Mather from William Morse, he described the violent and chaotic scene occurring in his home. Morse alludes to the contrasting thresholds of the internal home and outside world. There are many instances where Morse describes himself locking the door or recalling that the door was locked: “I arose and found a great hog in the house the door being shut: I opened the door the hog running violently out.”<sup>20</sup> The limbo, between the inside and outside world was reflected in the chimney; which served as a source of tension throughout his account. Lost items from the house were thrown down the chimney as well as sticks and stones.

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20 “William Morse and His Bewitched House (December 3, 1679),” in *Mather Papers*, Prince Collection (Boston Public Library) cited in Hall, 232.

The chimney was the place where the outside world is able to infiltrate the safety of their home. Through the course of his testimony, the attacks become worse. When Morse turned to prayer, he was struck with a chair, the source of the harm now crossing the physical threshold and striking from within the house. The distress that William and Elizabeth experienced comes not only from the flying objects, but also from the threatening of their safety inside their home.

Other cases of witchcraft included instances of attacking the home. Emerson Baker detailed the case study of haunting of Great Island in 1682. Off the coast of New Hampshire, the residents of Great Island were under siege from an unknown, rock-throwing assailant. George Walton, an owner of a local tavern, was the most afflicted. Throughout the summer, Walton and his family were tormented this mysterious rock thrower, which was referred to as *Litchibolia*.<sup>21</sup> Much like the Morses, George Walton and his family was surrounded by controversy. George himself was banished from Boston in 1638 for swearing and eventually found residency in Exeter, a small remote frontier town. Religious conflict between Walton and John Cotton, a puritan minister, led Walton to relocate to a region where a different strand of Puritanism resided. This tension relates to the variability of colonial New England. Baker points to the fact that there are not only tension between the puritan community but also in interactions with Native Americans, Quakers, and Africans. New England was more diverse than once thought, and it is within this tension where Baker sees instances of *maleficarum* to be the strongest.<sup>22</sup>

One can even extend St. George's argument further through the implication of clairvoyance and its similar ability to threaten the internal home. Much of the controversy surrounding Goody Cole's case centered on her later trials, especially in 1673, although accusations began two decades prior. Living Hampton, New Hampshire, Goody Cole was tried

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21 Emerson W Baker, *The Devil of Great Island: Witchcraft and Conflict in Early New England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 13.

22 Baker, 5.

in both Essex and Norfolk counties courts beginning the early 1640s. She was first tried for witchcraft in 1656. While it is unclear if she was convicted, the court ordered a public whipping and imprisonment in Boston.<sup>23</sup> She was in and out of prison for the next few years. In 1662 her husband passed away, leaving her widowed. She was tried for witchcraft twice more: once in 1673 and again in 1680, after her attempt to attempted kidnapping of a ten-year old girl and subsequent beating. Although she was never formally indicted or convicted in either case, suspicion remained and she was held in prison.

Goody Cole's attempts to entice a ten-year-old Ann Smith, with the promise of plums, to live with her the has long occupied the minds of scholars as it is filled with blood, gore, shape shifting, and flight.<sup>24</sup> However, testimony from her 1656 trial revealed themes of concern over the home, as St. George suggested. While not a physical infiltration, such as the Morses, her neighbor Mary Coleman testified of Eunice Cole's knowledge of words spoken between her and her husband. Both Goody Coleman and her husband testify that neither of them had shared their conversation with anyone, which increased their perplexity of Cole's intimate knowledge of the conversation and ability to repeat it verbatim. Although the details of the discussion were not addressed, Goody Coleman does describe them as "words of discontent."<sup>25</sup> Clairvoyance can be viewed as a spiritual invasion into the internal home and threatens the security found there. Goody Coleman herself stated that the conversation was held, "in their own house in private."<sup>26</sup> It is another instance where the internal sphere is not only threatened, but also penetrated.

Katherine Harrison of Wethersfield was also accused of fortune telling in her trial and addressed concerns of her ability to infiltrate other's privacy. Fortune telling also connected to

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23 Hall, 213.

24 Baker, 218.

25 "Sarah Clifford and the Harming of Ann Smith," in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Essex County Records 135:5. Hall, 216.

26 "Sarah Clifford and the Harming of Ann Smith," Hall, 216.

the passing of time and the long duration of a witch's practices, something that will be considered in the final chapter. However, speaking to the larger purpose of this thesis, individual testimonies cannot address the overall experience of colonial witch-hunts. The prominent and, frankly, grisly testimony often overshadows the mundane evidence. There is validity in St. George's argument, but colonial knowledge of place and environment extended beyond the home. They were just as active within their field lands.

While St. George's propositions are valid and have been backed by other scholars, they do not provide a completed picture of witch-hunts in relation to space. This because he generalizes the organizational his proposal of segmented male and female domains as seen through home space and the increase in household goods to the entire 17th century. However, during the time where witchcraft was at its height, the majority of people lived without concerns of progression of social status. This suggests that before this change women, who as he argues later became confined to aid men's dominance and control in search of social status, operated in the same spaces as men. If women, as St. George suggested, served as the transformers and improvers of nature into culture while men continued to play the role of players of nature,<sup>27</sup> it implied before the change women served a similar role as men. They occupied and worked both within the home as well as in the fields. St. George's work is much too generalized and did not account for the earlier house structures of the 17th century which interacted with the surrounding environment.

St. George described the fear of witchcraft infiltration on the home as a "a thin membrane of artifact mediating between chaos and control."<sup>28</sup> In attempts to evict supernatural disorder out of the human order, St. George maintained that the yeoman continued to draw

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27 St. George, 356.

28 St. George, 352.

boundaries between his house and outside world. There is no denying that the Morse family believed the supernatural force existed outside the home and was something to be feared or that Goody Coleman feared Eunice Cole's knowledge of her private matters. However, by ignoring the rest of the records surrounding their cases scholars disregard interactions that extend outside the immediate home. Goody Morse, of Newbury, was accused of other supernatural powers, such as the transformation into a cat and healing powers, several years prior to her formal accusation of witchcraft.<sup>29</sup> Like other witchcraft cases, testimony is pulled from years and sometimes decades before the formal accusation. The testimony suggested she was primed for suspicion well before any of the afflictions targeted at her home began.

The evidence also indicated Goody Morse's harming of animals. Joshua Richardson recalled from 1675, when he was moving his sheep to Hampton and temporarily stored them at the Morse house because it was accessible from the river. Goody Morse, angered by this, forced him to leave immediately. After he arrived in Hampton, his sheep became sick and died, which he blamed on Goody Morse's anger.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, when John Mighill refused to assist Goody Morse around her house, Mighill assumed that this quarrel resulted in the death of some of his cows. He describes one of his calves being skinned and its eyeballs falling out of its head.<sup>31</sup> Accusations of Goody Morse being a witch extended outside the physical home and into the land that surrounded the family's physical structures.

St. George's discussion of the home as a safe haven from the outside world does not depict the entire picture of colonial experience of domesticity. The physical standing of the home

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29 Samuel Drake, "Goody Morse as a Cat (January 7, 1679)," and "Elizabeth Morse as a Healer (May 20 1680)" in *Trials for Witchcraft in New England*, *Annals of Witchcraft in New England* (New York, 1869), 258–96. Cited in Hall, 241, 249

30 Samuel Drake, "Richardson's Sick Sheep (January 7, 1679)," in *Trials for Witchcraft in New England*, *Annals of Witchcraft in New England* (New York, 1869). Cited in Hall, 242.

31 Samuel Drake, "Mihill's Sick Cattle (January 7, 1679)," in *Trials for Witchcraft in New England*, *Annals of Witchcraft in New England* (New York, 1869). Cited in Hall, 244.

did provide human order in a chaotic world, as St. George argued. However, to paint New Englanders as segregated from the land is incorrect. Women, especially in the early part of the century, seemed to participate in both in the household chores as well as in fieldwork. By only focusing on the attack on the Morse house that occurred in 1681, St. George ignored not only key testimony from the Morse case, but also other cases that do not detail attacks specifically on the home. Furthermore, one witch-hunt case from the late 17th century cannot be retrospectively applied to other cases of witchcraft, which St. George did in order to argue the tension between the home and the environment. However, by looking at other cases of witch-hunts, especially the relationship with animals reveals early New Englanders, both men and women, extended private and protected space to the area that surrounded the home. A discussion of work that extended beyond the home into both the fields and the boundary lands further reveals the fluidity of colonial spaces.

### *Women in the Workplace*

The extension of labor and dependent work system is seen within the witch-hunt cases. Elizabeth Godman, a widow from New Haven, was tried for witchcraft in 1653 and 1666. While her case depicted fairly typical accusations, including the death of animals and clairvoyance, it also established her as a beggar as seen through her interaction with her neighbor, Mrs. Thorpe. After Goody Thorpe refused to sell Godman any chickens, she began to worry that Godman would kill her chickens. Her fears were confirmed when one of the chickens was found dead, eaten from the inside out by worms.<sup>32</sup> The horrific nature of the death was tied to the concern of the possible deaths to come, which were felt Mrs. Thorpe and also her neighbors. After rumors of Godman's suspected witchcraft spread, one of her neighbors, Goody Evance, feared that

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<sup>32</sup> Hammond Trumbull, "Selling of Chickens (June 16, 1653)," in *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Hartford, 1850). Cited in Hall, 68.



Elizabeth Godman would harm her cows. Soon after, one of her cows became ill, unable to produce milk. The coincidental affliction to Goody Evance's cow was enough to be considered as evidence against Goody Godman.<sup>33</sup>

An important consideration for this case, and others that directly show harm to animals, was the fact that these testimonies came from woman. While men experienced similar concerns for their animals, women must be taken into consideration for, at least, partial responsibility for animals outside the physical home. Unlike St. George, who framed women as the primary caretaker for the hearth,<sup>34</sup> it is possible to see farming responsibilities as a shared endeavor. One scholar argued that the formation of the whale industry in the late 17th century left women directly responsible for cattle in Eastham, Barnstable, Falmouth, Sherbourne, and other towns along the Massachusetts coast.<sup>35</sup> The extension of female responsibility for animals extends the overall women's space to include the fields surrounding the physical home. Just as the internal privacy of the home was valued in witch-hunt trials, such as in the Morse case or examples of clairvoyance, animals that exist within the realm of work were valued as exhibited through the concern of supernatural afflictions. Spaces of value were expressed in the witchcraft testimony, which demonstrated fears of potential or actual harm inflicted upon their properties. This includes both the internal threshold as well as the field lands.

Virginia DeJohn Anderson used the diary of Thomas Minor (1653-1685), a farmer from Stonington, Connecticut, to reconstruct key features of the agrarian experience. Minor's account was more of an agricultural logbook than a diary, as it omits personal accounts or familial

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33 Franklin Dexter, "Goody Godman Accused of Harming Cows (August 7, 1655)," in *New Haven Town Records 1649-1662* (New Haven, 1917). Cited in Hall, 69.

34 St. George, 353.

35 David J. Silverman, "'We Chuse to Be Bounded': Native American Animal Husbandry in Colonial New England," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 60, no. No. 3 (July 2003): 527.

matters.<sup>36</sup> It revealed that early farming life was not self sufficient and remained depended on familial aid, both from sons and daughters as well as wives.<sup>37</sup> While his wife and daughters tended to the garden, cultivating herbs and vegetables, their work occurred in both the home and the fields. Becoming a successful farmer was based more on intuitive processes than experience and depended on the entire family to perform necessary tasks.

The communal relationships and social circles in 17th century New England also demonstrated the permeability of communal life, especially between neighbors, and especially between female neighbors. The Hartford witch-hunt, which took place between 1662-1665, resulted in eight formal accusations and four executions. The cases originated with the possession of Ann Cole and her accusation of Elizabeth Seager, which was backed by neighbors' testimonies. Rebecca and Nathaniel Greensmith were indicted as well after Rebecca's confession. Other accusations developed, such as eight-year-old Elizabeth Kelly who accused Goody Ayres of witchcraft after she became very ill. Those accused maintained some sort of relationship with the others. It was because of their relationships that caused their demise. Nowhere is this clearer than in the jury's rationale for convicting Goody Seager. In 1665, the jury upheld that her intimate relationship with other women who had been accused of witchcraft before her signaled her guilt. The witnesses accused her of frequenting the homes of Goody Ayres and Sanford to learn how to knit. While at first Goody Seager denied these claims, after further questioning, she begrudgingly admitted they often shared their sewing together.<sup>38</sup>

Some neighborly relationships were more suspicious in nature. While a witch's Sabbath was rarely mentioned in English or New England cases, especially compared to their German

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36 Virginia DeJohn Anderson, "Thomas Minor's World: Agrarian Life in Seventeenth-Century New England," *Agricultural History Society* Vol. 82, no. No. 4 (Fall 2008): 489.

37 Anderson, "Thomas Minor's World," 500.

38 "Jury's Decision on Goody Seager (January 16, 1662)," in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Annmary Brown Memorial Library.) Cited in Hall, 158.

counterparts, in larger hunts, some New England cases depicted pseudo-Sabbaths or mass gatherings of witches. Mary Sanford and her husband were also accused of witchcraft after Rebecca Greensmith directly named Mary as a participant in frequent meetings with the devil that she and Nathaniel attended.<sup>39</sup> While Mary was executed her husband was released. Readers may be able to glean the slight differences in Andrew and Mary's verdicts, the obvious being that the jury could not come to an agreement for Andrew. Mary, tried about ten days after her husband, was deemed guilty. It is probable that, much like Elizabeth Seager, Mary was executed because she was named directly in the Greensmith case and, according to her indictment, had "knowledge of secrets in a preternatural way" and joined the Greensmiths in their night meetings.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, Andrew's incident did not mention specific disturbances nor was he indicated by Rebecca to have had any involvement in the nightly meetings, only that he acted "beyond the course of nature."<sup>41</sup>

It is hard to overlook most witchcraft historiography that usually suggests more women were accused because they were deemed the weaker sex. However, another underlying cause proved to be these neighborly relationships that were more common among women who often their shared work. These female spaces including sewing circles and times of childbirth are filled with rumors and gossip. It was easy to place blame on these women in these spaces, as they were often vulnerable. Consider, for instance, Winifred Holman and her daughter Mary who were accused of witchcraft in 1659 in Cambridge after a neighbor, Rebecca Gibson, accused them of harming her child. In response, the Holman family sued the Gibson family for defamation, however the case was dismissed and the jury ruled that Rebecca was not in her right state of

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39 "Jury's Decision on Goody Seager." Cited in Hall, 158.

40 "Rebecca Greensmith's Confession (January 8, 1663)," in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Annmary Brown Memorial Library). Cited in Hall, 356.

41 "Rebecca Greensmith's Confession." Cited in Hall, 356.

mind.<sup>42</sup>

In his lengthy account of the tense relationship between the Gibsons and the Holmans, Rebecca's father John Gibson detailed the reasons behind their suspicion. When Rebecca began having fits, Mary Holman offered to help end her woes. At first, the family did not suspect that the Holmans were witches, although Rebecca did describe Mary as "prate" and seemed irritated by her handling of the situation.<sup>43</sup> Mary instructed Rebecca that she would cure her with a blessing from God. Rebecca's child became ill after this interaction and the Holmans, once again, offered their assistance. Mary noted how she had cured other children in the past, which marked her as an authority figure and experienced with healing practices. However, her practices were a tad suspect. When the baby started crying, Rebecca rushed in only to find Mary out of sight and the baby's nose bleeding.<sup>44</sup> After this, Rebecca fell into frequent fits and would often scream about Goody Holman being a witch. Mary Holman's presence in their house worsens Rebecca's fits. Rebecca continued to accuse her of being a witch and "working wickedness on the lord's day."<sup>45</sup> She would often shoot up from a deep sleep and accuse Mary of witchcraft. She cited Exodus 22:18 and called for the magistrate to take action against Mary and hang them.<sup>46</sup> Rebecca was especially convinced of this when she noted that Satan often visited her in her sleep and she suffered from what seems like possession. She claimed that a snake and a frog got into bed with her; she also foamed at the mouth, and barked like a dog. This behavior continued for weeks. Rebecca begged her family and her husband to pray for her. Although Rebecca and her son remained afflicted, the family continued to rely on Mrs. and Mary Holman. This notion connected to neighborly duties and demonstrated how connected neighbors were to

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42 Hall, 134.

43 "John Gibson against Mary and Winifred Holman (1660)," in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Middlesex County Records, cited in Hall, 136.

44 "John Gibson against Mary and Winifred Holman." Cited in Hall, 136.

45 "John Gibson against Mary and Winifred Holman." Cited in Hall, 136.

46 Exodus 22:18: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

each other, especially in times of need.

Many accusations come from this kind of tension within female spaces –the Holmans were able to enter into the sacred sphere of mother and baby. They had to do their due diligence to convince the family to allow them in, but once they did, they were granted a certain privilege. There is an inherent line of trust being drawn, which Rebecca ultimately believed Mary and Winifred crossed and resulted in their accusation as witches. Spaces, both within the home and beyond it, upheld a certain amount of fluidity. They were not rigid and stagnant; rather they were malleable and adaptable. Neighbors, family, friends, women, and men moved across these spaces. Tensions often arose in these spaces when something went wrong and threatened the foundation of the community: relationships.

#### *The Borders and Overlaps between the Familiar and Uncertain Environment*

The relationship with the elements that occupy colonial domestic spaces, which can be living or inanimate, possessed some semblance of familiarity and can be recognized within the context of “known”. While the specific elements vary with time and regional location, they fit into larger and recognizable themes. Elements include the home, family, barns, animals, Church, and neighbors. Traditionally scholars categorized elements that occupy the less familiar as the “unknown” or “wilderness.” These elements include natural phenomena such as swamps and rivers, Native Americans, and even unearthly or invisible worlds that may occupy this space. Using words such as “wild” carries a certain connotation, signaling a disassociation and prejudice. Within this section, these lands are termed *border places*, as they prove to be less wild than they appear by juxtaposing older scholarship and Katherine Grandjean’s work.

Peter N. Carroll, author of *Puritanism and the Wilderness* (1969) demonstrated the tension between enjoying the cultivation of the environment as well as possibilities of bringing

dangers to the community threatened their notion of commonwealth. On one hand, colonists' abhorrence to the wilderness suited their distrust of the lands around them.<sup>47</sup> The physical manifestation of this, Carroll argued, was their views towards Native Americans who occupied the wilderness.<sup>48</sup> Carroll proposed the stereotypical view of Natives was similar to how John Underhill categorized them, "as instruments of the devil."<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, certain forces made it impossible to ignore the outside world. Mobility and the discovery of new lands made people explore beyond their communal bounds. While community leaders tried to restrict tendencies to explore, colonists could not be restrained. Overpopulation and the desire to settle more fertile areas drove this mobility. An internal paradox within puritan thought emerged that tried to reason desire for expansion while maintaining communal importance.<sup>50</sup>

Social cohesion was the most important element in colonial society. After the Anne Hutchinson controversy, John Winthrop wrote that any person who chooses to enter a society "must...willingly binde and engage himself to each member of that society to promote the good of the whole, or else a member actually he is not."<sup>51</sup> By pinning themselves against the environment, colonial leaders sought to strengthen community cohesion. While providing protection such as setting up garrisons around the town to protect fortified town and was a logical attempt to protect against real threats, it also created an impenetrable barrier to distinguish between communal and wild lands. Attempts to protect were necessary for colonial survival. Besides Native invasions, wolves swarmed the countryside and devastated New England livestock: "Although the wolves attacked cattle and not men, these animals added to the general sense of insecurity which permeated the formative period of colonization."

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47 Carroll, 127.

48 Carroll, 136.

<sup>49</sup> Carroll, 76.

50 Carroll, 128.

51 Carroll, 132.

Carroll believed that this understanding of community changed after the population rose during the mid 17th century and made movement a necessity. Movement because of population growth forced puritans to rethink collective society and wilderness modified the original idea of an organic society.<sup>52</sup> This is especially true with the expansion into Connecticut in the 1640s, which divided the idea of an organic society surrounded by a “protected hedge” and required that Puritans redefine “the hedge.” Inland expansion only grew during the 1660s, especially in Connecticut.<sup>53</sup> Carroll looks explicitly at phrasing and word choice in this new understanding of wilderness. Land surveys in particular showed that “wilderness” was no longer synonymous with evil place. As early as the 1650s, settlers qualitatively differentiated between the habitable areas and the untamed territories.<sup>54</sup> While the biblical attitudes towards wilderness remained, Carroll believes that rhetorical devices rarely kept pace with experimental changes that came with the inevitability of expansion.<sup>55</sup>

This growing familiarity with the environment was seen in colonists’ evolving relationship with Native Americans. While there was no denying colonial repugnance for Native Americans, their relationship with Natives remained complicated, especially in the early parts of the century. Katherine Grandjean’s work points to Native influence in the web of communication. They were relied on to deliver messages to other towns before the formal establishment of roads because they better understood the surrounding terrain. Few scholars, Grandjean notes, have dug into the actual deliverers of the thousands of letters that were sent in the early part of the 17th century.<sup>56</sup> Grandjean’s work is based on the collection of Winthrop family letters that span from 1630-1670, many of which were sent via Native Americans. This

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<sup>52</sup> Carroll, 159.

<sup>53</sup> Carroll, 165.

<sup>54</sup> Carroll, 195.

<sup>55</sup> Carroll, 197.

<sup>56</sup> Katherine Grandjean, *American Passage: The Communications Frontier in Early New England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015) 46.

complicates Carroll's understanding of colonial relationships with Natives. While they relied on Natives because they were unequipped to navigate the surrounding land, early relationships marked the beginning of early interaction with the lands outside colonial control. These lands were feared, and what lay beyond their settled landscape was unknown.<sup>57</sup> However, they were forced to interact with parts of it, such as their Native messengers, for written communication, which later evolved into a much more physical relationship.

When colonists minimized their reliance on Natives as messengers by the 1660s, it suggests a growing comfort when engaging in these lands; Indians were used as guides until colonists got their footing. This is especially true with short distance travel or exploration. Grandjean notes, maps of this era were not intended for travelers. Rather most were made for property claims over territory. Due to English ignorance of the interior landscape, these basic maps would not have aided travelers.<sup>58</sup> Colonists understood travel and geography as a string of places and landmarks. This became increasingly more common when travels moved away from the waterways.<sup>59</sup> Natives served as guides for early colonists. Given this, colonists borrowed native understanding of spatial movement, adopting Native marking methods.<sup>60</sup> Grandjean refers to this as a "dialogue in the landscape."<sup>61</sup> In the early part of the 17th century, Natives dominated the conversation. However, as colonists began to feel more comfortable in these lands, they increased their mobility in them. Grandjean notes, "New England's travel routes were liminal places, interstices between Indian and English territory."<sup>62</sup>

No longer strangers to the Northeast, the colonists had settled regions of New England

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<sup>57</sup> Grandjean, 48

<sup>58</sup> Grandjean, 66.

<sup>59</sup> Grandjean, 67. For a better understanding of colonial travel via waterways and subsequent relationships with Native Americans see Andrew Lipman's *The Saltwater Frontier*.

<sup>60</sup> Grandjean, 69.

<sup>61</sup> Grandjean, 69.

<sup>62</sup> Grandjean, 71.



through engaging with the surrounding environment. Other scholars attempt to define wilderness within in a similar context and their changing attitudes toward it. In John Canup's *Out of the Wilderness* (1952), he questioned to what extent colonists tried to control the wilderness and how to define control. What victory meant to the settlers in the new land proved to be different from English precedent and "control meant something different."<sup>63</sup> Fearing cultural differences, writers of the period placed Native Americans they encountered in this "organic" environment that they found.

Canup's work is no doubt complex and outlines the fears associated with the newfound wilderness. However, his work only focused on the elite's vision of the environment. This top down approach omits Native and gendered perspective. While both are difficult groups to provide context for, especially when using a literary analysis, it is unfair to generalize the developing American identity to the perception of a few elite. Especially in the context of Katherine Grandjean's work, which suggest a developing involvement of unchartered territories or partly known lands. Similarly, Peter Carroll's work pinpoints a disconnection between the learned elite and the general population. Boundaries between the internal puritan community and the outside environment were much more permeable.

Within the context of witchcraft trials, this notion of border places, rather than wilderness, becomes even more apparent as testimony reflects knowledge of the environment, as seen in the following section. The term "wilderness" is not directly used in the testimony when discussing the "invisible world," where the witch's' powers come from. Rather it is referred to in familiar terms. There is an understanding of not only the environment but also Native words as well. The testimony reveals not only the witches venturing into these border places but also the

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63 John Canup, *Out of the Wilderness: The Emergence of an American Identity in Colonial New England* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1990) 4.

witnesses observe it. They had a greater understanding of border places than many scholars give them credit for. Carroll hints at it, but referring to it as “wilderness” takes away from their actual perception. Of course anxieties were expressed in the land and, for a long time, remained unknown. But they did not push it away colonists had to live there, travel there, and maintain relationships there. This daily effort makes it less wild and more permeable. Thus, the things associated with border places were not “other” rather they had the ability to cross into the communal realm and vice versa. These border places, while not a completely familiar element in bounds within the community, but remained ‘just over the hill’.

#### *Animal Movement and the Extension of the Domestic Sphere*

To better understand colonists’ relationship with border places, it is useful to examine colonial daily work. Only then can a proper explanation of witchcraft in these spaces be revealed. Adaption was key as farming practices utilized in England proved obsolete in the New World. The one persisting practice was animal husbandry. In theory, husbandry called for a physical fence that enclosed a settler’s private property.<sup>64</sup> In practice, however, the regulation of animals was less supervised, and livestock often entered lands outside colonial control, usually Native lands. While this complicated the relationship between Native Americans and colonists especially in terms of private property and land rights, it conceptually blurred the line between settled and unsettled land. Technically, the land to which cattle wandered off to was not cultivated or inhabited by settlers, however this did not end the practice of animal husbandry. In fact, it was until the mid-19th century that farmers began enclosing their livestock within set limits.<sup>65</sup>

Not only did animal husbandry increase the interaction with the Native population, who

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64 Silverman, 513.

65 Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 244.

were angered by livestock destroying their lands, it also meant that settlers spent a considerable amount of time in the border places trying to recover their animals. Recovery of animals was widely depicted in the witch-hunts trials and demonstrated a direct interaction with the border places in relation to witchcraft. Nowhere was this best seen than in Goody Harrison's case in 1668, which directly linked a suspicion of witchcraft to animal husbandry. Two of her neighbors, John Dickinson and Philip Smith, observed Goody Harrison yelling *Hoccanum* to herself in a swamp.<sup>66</sup> They later saw her cows running violently towards home, without Katherine.

*Hoccanum* was the Algonquin word for a small river that flowed into the Connecticut River from present day East Hartford. While Harrison's intentions for screaming Native words in a swamp are lost, her actions reflect intimate knowledge of Native terms and places. Even if animal husbandry was a widespread phenomenon, the witnesses acknowledge it as suspicious and connected to her guilt. Harrison's case is riddled with Native terminology and connection to movement, as outlined in the following chapter. This testimony revealed suspicion in a common practice, as the witnesses themselves could also have been searching for their livestock.

Furthermore, harms to livestock were considered a direct threat against its owner. After a heated argument with Mary Parsons, William Hannum overheard her cursing his cows. Although the cow was very young and healthy, it died shortly after her threat. Already under the suspicion of witchcraft in Northampton during the 1650s, any afflictions to Hannum's animals were subsequently blamed on Goody Parsons. Like the Harrison example, injury to Hannum's animals occurred as part of the practice of animal husbandry such as one of his hogs that wandered into the swamp and its death was blamed on Parsons.<sup>67</sup>

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66 "Joseph Dickinson Testimony (October 29, 1668)," in *Wyllys Paper* (Annmary Brown Memorial Library). Cited Hall, 179.

67 "William Hannum Testimony," in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Middlesex County Court Records, Folder 15. Cited in Hall, 102.

Extension into the border places through livestock proved that the definition of private and ownership was difficult. It seemed natural that these lands and work that occurred in them continued to remain tied to the supernatural. These lands were in flux. Direct relationship between settler and environment remained unclear. As other scholars have noted, debates over expansion remained divided as some saw it as worthwhile for land development while others believed it threatened community values. In her *Creatures of Empire* (2004), Virginia DeJohn Anderson's argument placed the practice of animal husbandry within this desire for expansion, as it was a strategic tactic used by colonists to take claim over new lands.<sup>68</sup> In this regard, it makes sense why harm to animals remained a recurring piece of evidence in most witchcraft trials. Harming livestock was perceived not only as a threat to colonial survival, but also represented a threat to the colonial efforts to settle land and promote colonization.

Those suspects that were accused of harming livestock faced a series complaints rather than one isolated incident. In the Stamford witch-hunt in 1692, resulting in the suspicion of half a dozen and formal trial of two women including Mercy Disborough, harms to animals was a recurring theme. Henry Gray of Fairfield reported strange afflictions happening to his animals, after a disagreement with Mercy over the sale of one of his animals to the Disborough family. One of his calves roared very strangely, sometimes up to seven or eight hours.<sup>69</sup> One of his lambs, after being skinned, appeared bruised and pinched. There was also a case where one of his cows went under rapid aging after he passed Goody Disborough. Most interestingly, as it pertains to animal husbandry, Gray also reported one that he found one of his cows tied up by its legs in a swamp.<sup>70</sup>

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68 Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, 243.

69 "Testimony on Disborough Harming Animals (June 6, 1692)," in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Connecticut State Library) Cited in Hall, 322.

70 "Testimony on Disborough Harming Animals." Cited in Hall, 322.

Animals and their preservation were an integral part in what it meant to be civilized for colonists. As Anderson suggested, to understand colonization begins with understanding the relationship between animals and colonists.<sup>71</sup> Livestock for colonists were labeled as property and their relationship served as attempts to domesticate and control. Natives' relationship with animals, on the other hand, was based on respect and reciprocity, not dominance.<sup>72</sup> While animals represented a functional tool that aided colonial efforts to transform the physical environment, they served as symbol for what it meant to be civilized. It then becomes clear why animals' place in witchcraft trials is so widespread. Much of the interactions with Native Americans and the border places challenged colonial preconceived notions of settled community; which occurred because of farming practices such as animal husbandry. A discussion of witch-hunts and the unnatural world cannot go without discussing the implication of animals because it is often the reason why colonists interact with the border places, which presumably filled with unnatural entities. While many scholars simply overlook harms to animals as part of a long list of afflictions that suggest vulnerability in food supply and sustainability, afflictions to animals also threaten the already unstable condition that colonists faced concerning the establishment of a new society.

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71 Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, 6.

72 Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, 21.

## Chapter II: Pushing the Boundaries: Movement in Colonial Witch-Hunts

Colonial movement and its influences in witch-hunts varied throughout the 17th century. Fitting within the long historiography of witchcraft, colonists feared physical impossibilities such as levitation, unprompted spoken foreign languages, odd sounds, and flight. Within witchcraft cases, certain types of movement were considered suspicious and cause for concern. These types of movements were unexpected –the types that made neighbors turn on against one another and had the potential to inflict harm. These movements signaled lack of control over communal boundaries; they were unwanted and unanticipated. A suspect's movement within the communal space was usually deemed suspicious within the context of other accusations they faced. However it is this *unexpected movement* that had the largest potential for widespread harm. This is especially true of cases where suspected witches had some sort of connection to factors just outside colonial boundaries, whether knowledge of swamps or relationships with Native Americans, or non-English colonists. Extension into new lands or other towns was feared because it threatened to contaminate the community. Fluidity between the colonies brought the potential for communication, but it also posed a threat both in the sense of spreading witchcraft and permitting witches to escape the hands of the legal system.

This chapter is divided into two sections, the local and unexpected movement that threatened the community and regional movement of crossing into other colonies. While the two kinds of movement vary both in interpretation and perception, they suggest a potential of wickedness bleeding into a place it did not belong. Within local movement, trespassing or unexpected appearances were not only a threat on the domestic sphere, but were disorienting and suspicious acts that played with people's senses. Regional movement and its disorienting properties depended on the communal perspective, which determined reception. Regional

movement can be further divided into banishment, or movement by punishment, and escape, or movement for sanctuary. The community determined the perceptions of both local and regional movements. Fears about local and regional movement expressed an underlying anxiety about a collective lack of control in colonial spaces. The potential to move freely and outside the bounds of the community was concerning because it signaled that colonists were losing the war with the unnatural world.<sup>73</sup>

### *Looking Over Their Shoulders*

Alarm bells ran inside Jonathan Thing's head as he was walking home one afternoon. Eunice Cole, who had been under the suspicion of witchcraft for the better part of the last 20 years, lurked behind him. He noted in his testimony that she was walking 20 or so rods "triangle sideways of [him]." <sup>74</sup> As his head turned to face forward and, in an instance, Cole appeared 20 rods ahead of him. Out of curiosity, Thing quickened his pace in attempts to confirm her identity. He did determine it was in fact Goody Cole and, satisfied, continued on his way. Goodman Thing, upon entering his home looked out to see Goody Cole among his cattle. When he confronted her, she very imprudently retorted "what is that to you, sawsbox" and sprinted away.<sup>75</sup> Goodman Thing, who considered himself to be in good shape, chased after her but was unsuccessful. This was no small feat for Goody Cole who at this time would have been almost 70 years old.

Goody Cole was already under the suspicion of the community after being tried and convicted for witchcraft 20 years prior to Mr. Thing's testimony. Goody Cole was a marginalized member of society, even without the accusation of witchcraft. Her husband

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<sup>73</sup> Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature an Environmental History of the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012) 25.

<sup>74</sup> "Jonathan Thing and Eunice Cole (September 5, 1673)," in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Suffolk County Records 13:1228, cited in David D. Hall, ed., *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1693*, 2nd ed (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) 227.

<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Thing and Eunice Cole." Cited in Hall, 227.

William had passed in 1662, and by 1673 she had been accused of witchcraft for a second time. Hampton, New Hampshire had a hierarchical social structure, with a few families controlling the majority of the day-to-day business. At this point in time, the community was stable and exhibited self-sustaining practices, especially compared to other towns. The testimony against Goody Cole came from a diverse group of witnesses.<sup>76</sup> Everyone from the upper echelon of society to the outlying settlements turned up to attest to Goody Cole's wicked ways.<sup>77</sup> Her odds of coming out of her 1656 case unscathed seemed slim, as there was a general push against her. John Demos (2004), and other scholars who focus on her case, tend to provide blanket commentary of the majority of the testimony and focus on her principal accusation, attempted kidnapping and beating of a small child. Lost in the allure of this aspect of her case, the more mundane testimonies often get overlooked. The story of Goody Cole beating Ann Smith with a rock, as discussed in the previous chapter, is engrossing and informative and should no doubt be taken into account. However testimony, such as Goodman Thing's, contribute to the larger picture of neighborly relations, especially how movement affected the daily concerns of the overall community.

The participation of a diverse group from Hampton reveals that this problem affected the whole community. After Cole's first trial, she was sent to a Boston prison, thus removing her from Hampton, and temporarily suggested she no longer posed a problem. While Hampton dealt with its fair share of external crises that threatened the political structure of Hampton, witch-hunts subsided. It was not until Goody Cole's return that widespread concern erupted in the town. Individual cases of afflictions that relate to one another came together to reflect the overall community's woes. The idea that their town was being harmed was reflected in portrayals of

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<sup>76</sup> Hall, 213.

<sup>77</sup> John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*, Updated ed (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University, 2004) 322.



unexplained movement. The testimonies represent a common concern with sensory dissolution. Cole's swift movement left Thing with a sense of being out of touch with reality. Attempting to rationalize the situation, he was at a loss. Witches' afflictions existed under their own set of laws and bounds.

Peter Charles Hoffer (2003) argues for a sensory understanding of witchcraft. A witch's supposed afflictions targeted people's abilities to think, see, or sense correctly, "the witch and the devil changed ordinary sensation into extraordinary visitations."<sup>78</sup> Their unexplained and rapid appearances and disappearances reflect the unnatural world's workings in the natural one. Their game was psychological warfare and was meant to disorient. This sensory assault against victims' sight was tied to the unexpected nature of witchcraft. It was a deep and diabolical harm that directly targeted their victims' perceptions. Hoffer holds that it was the commonplace nature of witches' harms that made them so devastating.<sup>79</sup> They were unexpected because they were masked in normalcy. Movement within communal spaces was common. As outlined in the previous chapter, the community was an organized crowd of social interaction, neighborly communication, and fluidity of movement. It was the added baggage that suspected witches, such as Eunice Cole, brought with them that caused people to have a heightened sense of urgency. Goody Cole's previous accusations of witchcraft left people with a biased perception of her. This stigma followed Cole, and her neighborly interactions were changed forever. While many trial cases depict active harm against neighbors, harming cattle, killing children, and committing physical assaults, unexpected movement could come without harm. Goody Cole was accused of direct, neighborly harm, such as her assault of Ann Smith. However, most scholars

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<sup>78</sup> Peter Charles Hoffer, *Sensory Worlds in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) 125.

<sup>79</sup> Hoffer, 124.

fail to address the testimony about actions that had the potential for harm and threat to the community.

The perceivers or observers' understanding of a suspect's motion was intangible. The intangibility of movement was exacerbated when the observer attempted to control movement or apply corporeal restraints and was unsuccessful because a witch's powers lay outside the physical world; they existed under their own set of unnatural laws. While Hoffer does attempt to outline Increase Mather's efforts to depict the laws of the unnatural world,<sup>80</sup> the theories of learned ministers were moot when trying to understand the communal perception and experience. Mr. Thing, who experienced no physical assault against him, knew of Goody Cole's past. His testimony did not fall within the category of physical harm but was still used as evidence because it fit the narrative. The importance of community perception is clear here. Thing's testimony was not stand-alone piece of evidence. It was within the context of other testimony, those that fall within the tangible afflictions, which brings forth conviction. These kinds of testimony are overlooked, as they are secondary or supporting evidence. However, observations of movement reflect the sustained fear within the greater community. Goody Cole's potential ability to cause harm had scared Goodman Thing.

This was especially the case when unexpected movement occurred under the cover of darkness. Ann Burt was another suspect who was marginalized by society yet also depended upon it. After her husband's death in 1669, Burt was tried for witchcraft. Goody Burt was known for practicing healing, which placed her in a vulnerable position. Especially when there were disgruntled patients or suspicious neighbors who desired retribution. Jacob Knight was one of these victims. When passing through Lynn, Massachusetts, he stayed with Mr. Cobbet, where Goody Burt was also residing, as she alternated between neighbor's homes because she did not

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<sup>80</sup> Hoffer, 109.

have the economic means to live on her own after her husband's passing.<sup>81</sup> Knight went to Goody Burt's room to light his pipe; his own room was without a fire. In their brief conversation, he disclosed that he was suffering from a headache. Leaving the light of the fire-lit room, Knight stepped into the darkened hallway. He had counted the number of doors between his room and Goody Burt's to ensure that he would find his way back, the entire time listening for a loose floorboard that would indicate his return. However, Knight was blindsided by Goody Burt's appearance in the hallway and her offering of some sort of medicine to cure him. Caught off guard, Knight accepted the offer without hesitation. This proved to be a mistake as the remedy only exacerbated the pain in his head. Unsuccessful in finding the loose floorboard, Knight he was immobilized and petrified by fright.

Goody Burt's odd and immediate presence after Knight left her room provides insight into movement within the house. The house was so dark that Knight relied solely on his sense of hearing and touch to find his way. This relates back to Hoffer's overall argument that a sensory approach to history best reflects a contemporary understanding of colonial experience. Even without the threat of witchcraft, Knight was denied one of his senses because of the darkness and replaced it with another in order to compensate. He was already at a disadvantage. The added threat of witchcraft brought utter panic. Disregarding the added harm of poison, this moment was especially jarring because he could not comprehend how Goody Burt was able to navigate so well in the dark when he clearly struggled to find his own way. Movement within the domestic sphere was restricted at night. Goody Burt, however, was easily able to navigate this space.

Craig Koslofsky (2011) argues that before nocturnalization, or man's evolving relationship with the night, became widespread, Christians who argued for witch-hunts and trials

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81 "Goodman Knight on Goody Burt (1669)," in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Essex County Records 15:62-1, cited in Hall, 187.

saw both witchcraft and ghosts as “proofs” for understanding God and the invisible world around them.<sup>82</sup> They believed that persecution was God’s work, thus affirming the belief system in God and the Devil, Good versus Evil.<sup>83</sup> The Enlightenment, which brought with it both a physical and metaphorical light, sought to root out this “imaginary world” that night and darkness brought and demonstrated the absurdity of magic, spells, and ghosts. Jacob Knight existed in a time where night was still associated with the unnatural world. Night left people vulnerable to not just superstitious threats, but genuine ones as well. Nighttime became a projected aspect of the unnatural world. The ability of those who inhabit the illusionary world through nighttime exhibited the great takeover. Witches had authority in this space, which was taken away from the colonists, who never had control in the first place.

While Hoffer did not directly discuss the theme of darkness within his work, its importance is indirectly implied. If, as he argued, witch-hunts were an attempt to regain control over the physical world and to root out sensory distress, nighttime worsened this endeavor. Night brought sensory deprivation, which signals a loss of control. Similar to Jonathan Thing who lost sight of Eunice Cole and was unable to chase her, Goodman Knight was lacked control over the situation because he was denied his senses. Unlike Goodman Thing whose testimony could only speak to odd behavior of the accused, Knight’s testimony also addressed an active harm. After Knight was poisoned, actual harm was tied to unexpected movement. By itself, the poisoning was bad and suggested guilt. However, his discussion of movement presented a dual threat, one that he could recognize, the poison, and one that utterly escaped his senses, the movement. His testimony reflected the behavior, or at least the understood behavior, of witches. Movement within the domestic sphere was considered to be normal and unthreatening. Unexpected

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82 Craig Koslofsky, *Evening’s Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe*, New Studies in European History (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 239.

83 Koslofsky, 250.

movement that was done without explanation was threatening, especially when it was under the veil of night.

After this instance, Knight was more aware of Goody Burt as a threat and more sensitive to her presence and suspicious movement. After his restless night, he traveled to Salem to visit his brother and was troubled by multiple instances of strange sightings, “I saw a cat, which being out of sight again, I presently saw a dog it being likewise presently out of sight, I saw before me, like unto Widow Burt going before me down a hill as I was going up it, and so I lost sight of her.”<sup>84</sup> Knight’s acknowledgement of disappearing animals in relation to Goody Burt reflected this inherent fear. Her presence, or rather her wavering presence, was troublesome. Goody Burt was a walking threat that followed Knight on his travels. Paranoia set in as Knight made his way to his brother’s home. That evening, Knight saw Goody Burt outside his window on a horse, illuminated by the full moon. When he rose to tell his brother, she vanished. After his brother left the room, she appeared to Knight in his room. He threw a piece of barrelhead, with which he thought to have hit her on the chest, but she disappeared.<sup>85</sup>

Hoffer upheld spectral evidence as one of the causes of the outright panic in Salem in 1692. Spectral evidence, which refers to testimony that suggested the accused’s spirit or presence appeared to them and not the physical being itself, was in itself difficult to deal with because it meant relying on a person’s word alone, rather than physical evidence. Within the cases of the possessed girls in Salem, people could see the corporeal effects of the invisible world, but not the invisible world itself. Why were they trusted? Hoffer believes that cries of alarm needed to be taken seriously. While a threat may not be seen, a vocalized warning signaled a need for action or protection. Colonists did not question cries against specters because they believed their

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84 “Goodman Knight on Goody Burt (1669),” Cited in Hall, 187.

85 “Goodman Knight on Goody Burt.” Cited in Hall, 187.

presence was a real threat.<sup>86</sup> The testimony against Bridget Bishop, who was accused and later hanged for witchcraft, indicated a wealth of unexplained movement. As Hoffer suggested, “Bishop was a busy traveler in the hidden realm.”<sup>87</sup> Accused witches, like Bishop, were believed to take advantage of the night. While specters appeared in daylight as well, their actions were truly menacing under the cover of darkness. Jacob Knight’s testimony fits within this paradigm spectral evidence, movement without seeing. Like other instances of spectral testimony, there was an overlap with animal familiars, which could be seen as an extension of unexpected movement.

Hoffer sees spectral evidence allowing for mass hysteria and panic. While there is merit in this, Salem remains an outlier in the witch-hunt cases to actually draw any conclusions about the rest of the communities. When this method is applied to other cases, we see less of a panic and more of an awareness or steady vigilance. Jonathan Thing had no physical harm come to him from Goody Cole, but he had an innate fear of her presence. Jacob Knight, who was physically harmed by Goody Burt, also paid attention to her movement. So much so that it worked him up into a state of paranoia. On a communal level, the unnatural world was seeping into their own and there was a need to control it. Where these individual testimonies come into play is trying to understand how the individual sought to protect its community. Individuals were aware of what was going on, even if they were not directly afflicted. They were diligent and observant, the ultimate neighborhood-watch. Their motivation was twofold, a protection of the community and a regained control over their own senses and experiences.

Contributing to this increased concern for the community was temporary movement outside communal bounds. Influences of the outside environment were considered tainted and

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<sup>86</sup> Hoffer, 116.

<sup>87</sup> Hoffer, 119

possible connections to the invisible world were drawn. It is important to note that just because someone ventured beyond the colonial bounds did not mean that they existed outside the community indefinitely. Rather, they were temporarily tainted in some way. The legal procedure for these witch trials suggests that there was a possibility of suspects being brought back into society after their ruling. While the fear and the stigma usually followed the accused, and even their families, they were still considered part of the community. They were feared not because they were outsiders, but because they existed within the community and were able to do harm within the colonial realm, especially after temporary movements. This temporary movement into the border places included both interactions with natural sources that are uninhabited colonists, such as swamps, rivers, and other uncontrollable territories and engagement with Native American practices or experiences. The latter of these elements is difficult to fit into a neat box. An examination of references to Native place names or hints at Native tradition will demonstrate the colonial fears of the invisible world projected onto the border places, as discussed in the previous chapter.

#### *Movement Into the Border Places*

Peter Charles Hoffer seeks to draw a comparison between sensory perceptions of witchcraft to Native American actions. Hoffer was right to point to a commonality between colonists and Native Americans, as the concept of an invisible world was not a foreign concept to either party. Hoffer introduces the phrase “Sensory Imperialism,” which points to the colonial alterations to landscape and an introduction of English scenery. New England settlers came in direct conflict with the complex unnatural world and blamed their troubles on the invisible world. Hoffer relates internal and external threats as having the same root cause. Thus, Native threats and disturbances from witches were related because they both connected to the sensory

world. The devastation caused by the Pequot War (1636-1638) left many colonists to contemplate. Hoffer's main argument was that the Pequot War was a highly visual and audible one, which stemmed from the "loud" Pequot culture.<sup>88</sup> New Englanders also fostered a vocal culture where a Minister's sermon sat in the center of community life.<sup>89</sup> The Pequots did not wish to hide. They visibly expressed their superiority through raids, taking women and children, and outwardly mocking colonists and their inability to protect their community. Colonial-Pequots conflict included numerous territorial disputes, such as the raid on Wethersfield, which remained part of a long series of retaliations against one another.<sup>90</sup> The Pequot War and later King Philip's War reaffirmed for the colonists that a threat was near. It primed them to be suspicious of the outside world, especially the parts that pertained to Native Americans. Hoffer quoted John Underhill, a militia leader during the Pequot War, when he said Indians are "the devil's instruments."<sup>91</sup> This type of rhetoric was riddled throughout scholarly depictions of early colonial writings about Native Americans. It is undeniable that colonists held negative and derogatory attitudes towards Natives, which was tied to fears about the invisible world. While an examination of learned attitudes is a worthy endeavor, less attention has been paid to the Native American themes within the testimony itself, which reflects a similar communal fear.

Returning to the Hartford witch-hunt of 1662 demonstrated Native familiarity. One of the accused, Goodwife Seager, was seen with three other women in the woods accompanied by two black creatures. The witness, Robert Stern, compared the beings to Indians, only taller.<sup>92</sup> Stern observed them dancing around and seemed to be cooking. Upon seeing him, the women, one of

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88 Hoffer, 82.

89 Hoffer, 82.

90 Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War*, Native Americans of the Northeast (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) 135.

91 Hoffer, 88.

92 "Robert Stern Sees Women in the Woods," in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Connecticut State Library) cited in Hall, 156.



whom was identified as Rebecca Greensmith, ran up into the hills and the black creatures began to approach him. Stern quickly ran away. His testimony alluded to the corresponding fears of Native ritual and witches' practices. In this case, his comparison to the unknown creatures he saw to Indians evoked fear because it placed the women within the context of the border places and in direct contact with Natives. Goodwife Greensmith was also mentioned here, which strengthens Stern's testimony, as Goody Greensmith was already a suspect. This connection was reinforced through an allusion to a possible Sabbath, which signaled a sort of formal meeting. Especially in larger hunts as it signaled a sort of meeting or recruitment for witches in the area. By pulling from both the community's fear of Rebecca, an internal threat, and Native Americans, an external one, Stern's testimony was doubly reinforced.

Elizabeth Godman, a widow from New Haven, who was tried for witchcraft in 1653 and 1666, faced similar accusations to the Hartford suspects. While testimony from her neighbors and her landlord, Stephen Goodyear, depicted fairly typical accusations, including the death of animals and knowledge of private conversations, there was a suggested intimate knowledge of the occult. Furthermore, Godman was marginalized by society because she was isolation and weak after the death of her husband. Goody Goodman's neighbors had long been suspicious of her especially because of Godman's extensive knowledge on the subject of witchcraft. The list of witnesses against Goody Godman was extensive. One, Mrs. Atwater accused her of being married to Hobbamock. In one of his footnotes, David Hall suggested that the notion of Elizabeth Godman being married to an Indian was apart of the larger theme of the devil resembling an Indian.<sup>93</sup> Thus by saying she was married to *Hobbamock*, she actually was having relations with the devil. The overlap in ideas suggested between clerical and vernacular

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93 Franklin Dexter, "Mrs. Godman's Hearing (August 4, 1653)," in *New Haven Town Records 1649-1662* (New Haven, 1917) cited in Hall, 62.

perspectives that Native disapproval was widely shared. However, it is still necessary to look at the testimony or the common approach because it demonstrated a practical concern of safety. In this case Godman's curiosity and stepping outside colonial and earthly bounds, which resulted in her accusation.

Other instances of Native involvement in witchcraft trials such as Goodwife Staples of Fairfield singled the concern of potential threats that came with Native interaction. Many testified that Staples remained skeptical even up to the time of Knapp's execution. Hester Ward outlined Staples encounter with an Indian who approached Staples and offered her "two little things brighter than the light of the day."<sup>94</sup> Goody Staples was told that if she kept the items she would be "rich and big."<sup>95</sup> It is unclear if Staples herself was said to have kept the items or not. Regardless, Ward's testimony raised an important question: why were Indians depicted as the bearers of magic and not the devil? The properties of the Indians' magic in this testimony (making her rich and big) were often attributed to the devil and his contract, which usually entailed a quid pro quo relationship. Goody Ward's testimony demonstrated the discrepancies between the common and learned understanding of witchcraft, the latter often included references to the devil. Thus Ward's testimony relates the characteristics of the devil in a relatable and worldly form.

One of the problems with looking at these kinds of cases is that they are isolated accounts. References to Indians are not strung throughout every account. If that were the case, it would have been widely discussed throughout the historiography. However, there was still an undeniable presence of references to Native American presence, territory, and language. This can be related back to a sensory understanding of witchcraft. Perception of the community around

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94 Franklin Dexter, "Mrs. Godman's Hearing (August 4, 1653)," in *New Haven Town Records 1649-1662* (New Haven, 1917) cited in Hall, 78.

95 Dexter, "Mrs. Godman's Hearing." Cited in Hall, 78.

them was of the utmost importance for colonists. Unexpected movement across traditionally Native space threatened the community because it was uncontrollable. It was disorienting and unpredictable.

*Moving Without Bounds - A Communal Effort*

Regional movement has the potential to be discussed without a sensory approach because it was rooted in normalcy. Unlike unexpected or spectral movement, movement from town to town was not unheard of and could go without accusation of witchcraft, and, as Grandjean outlines, became the norm towards the end of the century. It was the attachment of other suspicions, such as animal harms, possession, and healing powers that brought further accusations and suspicion. There were two ways to think about regional movement and its effects on the community. The place the suspected witch was moving towards seems like the obvious starting point. What to do with someone who had been accused of witchcraft or was suspected was a question that was widely circulated because it posed a problem and threatened community dynamic. There was a potential threat from a witch entering the community – a logical thought process. Second, there was the community of which the suspect was escaping from. How their suspicion, and sometimes actual people, followed the accused to ensure due process and retribution suggested their need to control the outcome in their own terms. The perception of regional movement took a somewhat paradoxical approach, yet a universal rule can be found. Community is key here. If the mover is attached to the new community, that is they are moving towards something familiar, they escape persecution in their new location. Conversely, if they lack the familiarity with the new community they are subject to further suspicion. Thus, each instance is determined through a case-by-case basis, with the general stipulation that community drives the outcome.

Perhaps a place to begin is to take a step back from witchcraft and return to Katherine Grandjean's *American Passage* (2015). Grandjean moves past the archaic boundaries that are drawn from maps of the period and convey a much more messy and *human* geography.<sup>96</sup> Control over land was the ultimate motivator for migration, which did not always leave the cleanest boundaries in the colonists' wake. Travel itself was an indicator of power; those who could control movement and master communication temporarily had the upper hand. Grandjean refers to this area as the "communications frontier": the movement of goods, people, and information in a region of cultural contact.<sup>97</sup>

In one of her chapters, she details the newly established post system that was set up by New York's new governor, Francis Lovelace. The region itself had just gone through extensive amounts of change, with the Dutch leadership being ousted and replaced with English governors. Although the law of the land had become English, many Dutch people still resided in western New England. In the winter of 1672, Governor Lovelace announced that a Post System would be established to transfer information from New York to Boston, and Hartford, and back again. While Lovelace's reasoning for establishing such a system was done out of frustration for mail being lost over long passages, it was also done for defense purposes.<sup>98</sup> England was once again at war with the Dutch and Lovelace feared an attempt would be made by the Dutch to take back their land. By increasing communication in the colonies, they could maintain a united front. Mr. Hatfield was the one responsible for making the rounds every month.<sup>99</sup> While Grandjean notes that the system did not completely succeed, it did show colonial intentions for greater communication. This explains communities working with others to bring the accused back under

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96 Katherine Grandjean, *American Passage: The Communications Frontier in Early New England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015) 6.

97 Grandjean, 11.

98 Grandjean, 112.

99 Grandjean, 113.

judicial control, such as Judith Varlet, This attempted to control the frontier and demonstrated the colonists moving away from solely aquatic travel.<sup>100</sup>

Horses were an additional resource provided to the colonists towards the end of the 17th century. Originally hard to come by, horses provided another option for long distance travel. The reliance of horses for travel led to the decrease in need for Native messengers. Colonists relied on Native peoples' understanding of the land to carry letters to one another in the early years of settlements. In the 1650's Indians carried over one third of the Winthrop family letters and the numbers only decreased into the later decades.<sup>101</sup> Thus, Lovelace's post system only had hope because of the option to travel by horse. This meant that colonists now had the option to travel by land or sea. Grandjean views this as a time where thoughts about roads were coming into focus. While a structured road system was not in place until much later Grandjean does believe the concept behind a road system, i.e. the notion of eased traveling between regions, was alive in many of the colonists.<sup>102</sup> She demonstrates that colonists often thought about uniting the colonies by a network of routes to, "better unite and strengthen the inland and plantations."<sup>103</sup>

Lovelace's hopes of securing New York through a series of "post roads" was short lived and in the summer of 1673, the Dutch reclaimed Manhattan. In a brief aquatic battle, the Dutch relied on the element of surprise and took back the island. Some hope for Lovelace's plan came out of this attack as it brought about a swelling demand for news and information, especially those in Connecticut who were fearful of their new neighbors to the south.<sup>104</sup> Only when an actual threat was deemed worthy of concern did colonists begin to warm up to the idea of a

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100 Grandjean, 114.

101 Grandjean, 119.

102 Early roads were constructed between houses not towns, which speaks to the local communication between neighbors as seen in many of the witchcraft cases.

103 Records of Massachusetts Bay General Court, quoted in William Lincoln, *History of Worcester, Massachusetts, From Its Earliest Settlement to September 1836* (Worcester, 1837), 4-5 quoted in Grandjean, 131.

104 Grandjean, 135.

universal post system. New York did eventually fall back into the hands of the English in 1674 after the Third Anglo-Dutch War. Without bloodshed, the territory was returned with the Peace of Westminster under its new leader, Sir Edmund Andros.<sup>105</sup> Although Lovelace's postal road failed, plenty of other colonists were taking advantage of new modes of travel and increased the flow of information of communication and people.

While formal modes of travel between colonies were not institutionalized until the late 17th century, an unofficial attitude towards regional movement was founded in the early part of the century. As discussed in the previous chapter, as the population increased in the colonies there was a demand for more land. While it was common for people to push into new territories, it was also not unheard of for people to venture into established towns. In terms of witch-hunts, the concern of regional movement came pre-established suspicion, which had the possibility of threatening the new community.

John Godfrey was a nomad. He was also a drunkard and found himself wrapped up in court cases, both as a plaintiff and a defendant. Between 1659 and 1675, Godfrey was involved in at least one judicial case every year, although it was usually more than one. While he was not officially charged with witchcraft until 1658, he had a long history of demonstrating interest in witches. His trials were rooted in witness testimony centering on his numerous disputes and accusations of stealing as well as animal harm and animal control. Although, the most unique aspect of his case was that he was a man. While other male witches were accused, they usually had some ties to a female witch either through marriage or familial connection. Godfrey never married nor, it seemed, had any familial relations whatsoever. It is possible, then, to understand the accusations against John Godfrey as neighborly disputes with a single perpetrator, rather than

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105 Grandjean, 135.

in combination with a larger panic or a series of accusations tied to familial relations.<sup>106</sup> The question then becomes why was Godfrey accused and singled out. Possible answers lay within the testimony of his neighbors and his relationship with the rest of the communities.

In March of 1658, several people signed an appeal against Godfrey marking losses on their estates and “some afflictions to their bodies.”<sup>107</sup> While the complaint was filed in Ipswich, the complainants heard rumors of similar protests against Godfrey from neighboring towns. Some of these afflictions, the document noted, came from unnatural sources and they called for his immediate questioning.

One of the earliest accounts of Godfrey’s tension with neighbors came from testimony, which demonstrated a theme of occupational tension within the cases. William Osgood recalled an instance in 1640 when he hired Godfrey to construct a barn for him. Within the exchange of pleasantries, Godfrey mentioned that he recently got a new master. When Osgood pushed on this further, Godfrey was unable to answer who his master was or where he lived. When Osgood justifiably asked him how Godfrey would know when his master needed him, Godfrey replied, “The man will come and fetch me.”<sup>108</sup> At this point William Osgood was thoroughly convinced that Godfrey had in fact made a contact with the devil. This account, which occurred in 1640, was the earliest mentioning of John Godfrey and suggests his place within society. Newbury, Massachusetts had barely been five years old at this point. While Godfrey’s exact origins are unclear, this testimony does suggest he was known within the town, as his former master was mentioned.<sup>109</sup> “Master” also insinuates that Godfrey was bound to an authority figure, which

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106 Hall, 115.

107 “Complaints Against John Godfrey (March, 1659),” in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Essex County Records 5:7-1, cited in Hall, 116.

108 “John Godfrey and His Master,” in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Essex County Records 5:8-3, cited in Hall, 119.

109 John Demos attempts to piece together John Godfrey’s life in his *Entertaining Satan*. Godfrey’s year birth is called into question, as there are major discrepancies within the testimony about his age. One account fixes him at

places him lower down on the hierarchy within Newbury's social structure. Osgood's testimony ties Godfrey's interaction with the devil to 1640. While none of the other testimony against him being a witch dated this early, and must be called into question, he was in fact accused of other criminal activities. In 1648 he was accused of "suborning a witness" and then again in 1649 for lying.<sup>110</sup> However between 1650 and 1658 his name only appears briefly in land deeds and minor court cases in Rowley, Haverhill, and Andover.<sup>111</sup>

The discussion Godfrey and his relationship with animals and occupation as herdsman is a theme throughout the majority of the testimony against him. John Remington's accounts did not diverge from this pattern. In the winter of 1665-1666, Godfrey was formally accused again for witchcraft. While 18 witnesses came forth, Remington's stood out as the only new contribution. John Remington Sr. had decided to drive his cattle up into the woods for the winter. This act enraged Godfrey who coolly remarked that Remington will "have cause to rependt that he did drive them up."<sup>112</sup> Even though this heated argument took place between John Remington Sr. and Godfrey, it was Remington Jr. who faced the consequences of this disagreement as he was tasked to care for the cattle. Riding his horse in the woods, Remington Jr. witnessed strange events,

I smelt a sweet smell like cider and presently I looked up into the swamp and I see a crow come towards me flying and perched upon a tree against me and she looked at me and the house and dog and it had a very great and quick eye and it had a very great bill and then the said crow flew off the tree to another after me.<sup>113</sup>

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40 years old in 1661 while another ages him at 30 in the same year. Demos also considers his occupation into calculating his age. If he was considered a herdsman in 1640, as seen through William Osgood's testimony, than Demos suggests his birth year was 1620, as herdsman were usually young men and not boys. Demos also speculates that Godfrey came over on the ship *Mary and John* because the passenger list reveals a "John Godfrey". While it is unclear if the John Godfrey that came over on the passenger ship is the same as the one is later accused of witchcraft, many of the people who settled Newbury, such as John Spencer were aboard the same ship. Demos, 38. 110 Demos, 38.

111 Demos, 38.

112 John Noble and John F. Cronin, "John Godfrey and the Remington Incident," in *Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay 1630-1692* (Boston, 1910) cited in Hall, 125.

113 Noble and Cronin, "John Godfrey and the Remington Incident." Cited in Hall, 125.



Remington Jr. believed this crow to be some sort of fabrication as it attacked him and his horse furiously. Remington and his horse toppled over, crushing his leg. As he lay on the ground, the crow circled overhead, swooping down to bite him and his horse. Eventually, he gained a bit of strength and he and his horse were able to escape, although the crow followed them for about a mile. Much of the testimony dealt with Godfrey's ability to control animal spirits. While animal familiars were a theme seen throughout a number of witchcraft cases, Godfrey's connection is heightened because of his occupation. This is made clear here as the source of tension between the Remington family and Godfrey comes from him being denied work. This motive is clearly seen in Godfrey's response to the accident, "if thee hadst been a man as thee wast a boy thee hadst died on the spot where thee got the fall."<sup>114</sup> Mrs. Remington inquired how he would have known that if God were the only one who could foresee that, insinuating that he was predicting the future. Godfrey's anger and the result of that anger are amplified when his livelihood is threatened. While the suggestion of him having unhealthy knowledge is important, it is the suggested attacking of the boy because of Godfrey's disgruntlement with the Remington family over work that signals this tension as the person who took the work away from him is attacked.

Competition for labor, as suggested in the above example, marked a driver for John Godfrey's incessant movements. As he moved in and out of the court system he acquired a number of enemies, usually relating to land disagreements with hints of his unearthly powers. However, it was not the only cause for his suspicion. Godfrey clearly did not fit within his community, or communities. As mentioned above, Godfrey had no family. Lifelong bachelors were rare in colonial New England. This meant that, much like widows, he was dependent on others. Lacking a consistent support system also meant that he lacked a stable residence. While he was responsible for many pieces of land throughout his life, the residential situation was

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<sup>114</sup> Noble and Cronin, "John Godfrey and the Remington Incident." Cited in Hall, 125.

irregular.<sup>115</sup> This flexibility speaks to his mobility. Considering geographical spread of the witnesses against him and his various suits, he was continually at odds with his peers that stretched the like of northeastern Massachusetts. Godfrey never cared for the communal or religious expectations as his legal record of swearing and drunkenness suggests personal deterioration. He operated outside the gravitational forces that worked within a community that not only bind it but created trust.<sup>116</sup> Godfrey could not be trusted partially because he was a degenerate, but also because he was mobile. He did not ascribe to the typical colonial lifestyle, which is especially seen in his incessant movement. John Demos arranged, an admittedly incomplete, chronological list of places Godfrey resided, which suggests thirteen tension-inducing moves between 1640 and 1675.<sup>117</sup>

The most telling of these interactions took place in a defamation case against Godfrey in 1669. John Griffing, who was staying in Newbury the previous winter, observed Godfrey in places where he did not belong. Griffing's testimony insinuates a combination of unexpected movement, as discussed in the previous section, which is tied to his movement between towns.

I further testify that about seven years ago last winter John Godfrey and this deponent went over the Merrimack River on the ice to go to Andover. Godfrey on foot and this deponent on horseback and the horse was as good as one as ever he ride on and when I was at Goodman Gage in his field I saw John Godfrey in the same field a little before me this deponent but when I has ridden a little further not seeing Godfrey nor any tracks at all and it was at a time when there had fallen a middling snow overnight and not seeing him not his steps I run my horse all the way to Andover and the first house I came into at Andover was Goodman Rust's house and when I came in I see John Godfrey sitting in the corner and Goody Rust told me that he had been there so long as that a maid that was in the house had made clean a kettle and hung on peas and pork to boil for Godfrey and the peas and the pork was ready to boil and the maid was skimming the kettle.<sup>118</sup>

Taken on its own, Griffing's testimony would fit into the previous section in a discussion of sensory and unexpected movement. His testimony expressed fear of Godfrey's unexplained

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115 Demos, 51.

116 Demos, 50.

117 Demos, 51.

118 "Godfry's Appearances (1669)," in *Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay 1630-1692* (Boston, 1910) cited in Hall, 130.

ability to move into the domestic space, but also across great distances. Other cases exhibited neighbor's fears of Godfrey's unexpected and spectral movement such as Elizabeth Button who, for days, was visited by Godfrey's shape in her room.<sup>119</sup> However, fears of Godfrey's unexpected movements are tied to his regional ones. His accusers expressed a resentful attitude, and at the very least draw attention to, his regional movements. Within the aforementioned complaint of 1658, it stated, " John Godfrey resident at Andover or elsewhere at his pleasure."<sup>120</sup> Conflict and criticism followed him in his travels. This independent movement that Godfrey exhibited was unique. Most colonists sought stability and to exist within a fixed set of controllable laws. No family or hint of residence, Godfrey was *rootless*.<sup>121</sup> This connected to his disruptive behaviors brought forth communal outburst. Communal control is expressed in his case as well. Within the defamation case against Godfrey in 1669, Abiel Somerby comments on the communal reaction to the judge refusing bonds. Sommerby reported that some men pledged, "If he were gone [into the farthest part of New England] we would have him brought back again in chains or iron."<sup>122</sup> There was no escaping communal effort, even if the court system was unable or unwilling to prosecute. The community attempted to prevent his regional movement, which was expected of him because of his previous actions. They sought control through the legal system, proving the community's distaste for Godfrey determined how his movements were interpreted.

Katherine Harrison of Wethersfield demonstrated another instance of communal distaste and ultimate disapproval. After her husband's passing, Katherine Harrison of Wethersfield was

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119 "Godfry's Whereabouts (1669)," in *Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay 1630-1692* (Boston, 1910) cited in Hall, 131.

120 "Complaints Against John Godfrey (March, 1659)," in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Essex County Records 5:7-1, cited in Hall, 116.

121 Demos, 52.

122 "Town's Anger Towards Godfry (June 21, 1669)," in *Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay 1630-1692* (Boston, 1910), 115. Cited in Hall, 130.

charged with defamation of her neighbor. She was left a sizeable amount of money, which granted her with power over an estate and her children's future.<sup>123</sup> A jury indicted her for witchcraft on the basis that some of her neighbors believed her to be a fortuneteller, citing her knowledge of a book of astrology by William Lilly.<sup>124</sup> The jury could not make a decision about her case and thus she was banished from Wethersfield, and she headed to New York. However, rumors of her witchcraft followed her and she returned to Connecticut in 1672. We have discussed Katherine Harrison's case before in the context of relationship to animals. However, examining her banishment to New York will only aid to the argument of lack of communal connections resulting in suspicion.

Although Harrison's jury was greatly suspected her jury, they originally had a difficult time finalizing a decision. However, she was pronounced guilty in October 1669. The Court of Assistants challenged the jury's decision and could not justify her execution. Instead they banished her in May 1670 and determined, "Willing her to mind the fulfillment of removing from Wethersfield which is that will tend most to her own safety and the contentment of the people who are her neighbors."<sup>125</sup> The court rejection of the jury's findings was based on lack of evidence to sentence her to death. However, they did acknowledge the tension that allowing her to stay in Wethersfield would do not only to her neighbors, but also her own well-being. Her community rejected her; banishment was the middle of the road option that seemed to benefit both Harrison and her neighbors.

However, much like John Godfrey, she was not welcomed with open arms. It appears that after Harrison was banished from Wethersfield, she made her way to Westchester, New York. It

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123 Hall, 170.

124 "Katherine Harrison Knowing Magic (October 24, 1669)," in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Connecticut State Library). Cited in Hall, 174.

125 "Court Rejects Jury Verdict for Harrison (May 30, 1670)," in *Court of Assistants Records* (Connecticut State Library). Cited in Hall, 184.

should be noted that at this time, New York had recently come under the control of the English and was operating under English law. Less than a year after her removal, the town of Westchester sought Harrison's dismissal. In one document, it is noted that the people of Westchester had an apprehension to her staying and they were fearful of her presence; the rumors of her past followed her to Westchester and she lacked the communal familiarity for a fresh start. Many of her new neighbors requested her removal from Westchester, "under the suspicion of witchcraft."<sup>126</sup> However, there is no detailed accusation or account of her craft. This was something that Francis Lovelace, the governor of New York, also took note of; which suggests that there was no evidence against her to require a trial, but the rumors themselves were enough for suspicion. Even so, Lovelace saw the need to investigate this matter, though she was granted protection provided she had "good behavior."<sup>127</sup> Eventually, it was decided that there were not grounds for removal. However she eventually chose to leave in 1672, as her neighbors proved to be merciless to her.<sup>128</sup> Goody Harrison was unwanted by both the community she was banished from as well as the one she fled to. Much like John Godfrey, communal acceptance, or in this case rejection both determined and influenced movements.

The inverse of these cases reflect a different trend. Those were accepted, or at the very least tolerated, by the new community they inhabited were by no means outliers. It is best to understand these cases as an escape rather than an invasion upon a new community. While boundaries were not neatly defined during this period, those who fled their accusations did so with a calculated plan. They sought a familiar community and one that would provide protection from the place they were escaping from and often received help from the new community.

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126 George Lincoln Burr, *Narratives of The Witchcraft Cases: 1648-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948) 49.

127 Burr, 51.

128 Burr, 52.

Philip Ranlet examined those who sought refuge in New York in the latter half of the 17th century in his “A Safe Haven for Witches?” (2009). Ranlet focuses on the cases of Philip and Mary English from Salem, Nathaniel and Elizabeth Cary from Massachusetts, and Goody Miller from Connecticut. Goody Miller is of particular interest because of the close proximity of her home in Connecticut to New York. Ranlet upholds that before one can understand motives of these people to leave for New York, one must examine the tensions between New York and the rest of the colonies and question, why they refused to send these people back to New England after they escaped? One of the initial tensions between New York and the rest of the colonies was their refusal to aid New York against the French during King William’s War.<sup>129</sup> New York was keen on territorial expansion and when the French impeded it, their survival was threatened. Due to the back and forth of rulership, New York was not as developed as the other colonies and lacked the resources to defend themselves.<sup>130</sup> Governor Richard Ingoldsby and his successor Benjamin Fletcher were behind attempts to grow New York territory rather than leave it as another failed colonial experiment. The witchcraft trials only increased this tension because New York leadership was able to take advantage of the other colony’s chaos. Of course, New Yorkers were aware of the cases that were being deliberated on in the other colonies. Joshua Broadbent, writing to his friend in Maryland, wrote, “No doubt you have heard of the wizards and witches.”<sup>131</sup> At this time he was no doubt commenting on Salem and expressed concern that even credible people were being accused and he sensed the he devil was in the region.<sup>132</sup> This shows that other New York not only had knowledge of these cases, but also real concern or fear of the colonies’ state of affairs. Due to the fact that New York was not as self sufficient because they

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129 Philip Ranlet, “A Safe Haven for Witches? Colonial New York’s Politics and Relations with New England in the 1690s,” *New York History* Vol. 90, no. No. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 2009): 38.

130 Ranlet, 38.

131 Ranlet, 38.

132 Ranlet, 39.

were still trying to establish themselves and were more concerned with expanding their territory north, they did not engage in witch trials the same way.<sup>133</sup>

Considering the tension between New York and the other colonies demonstrates the hostile nature among the colonies and what begins to happen when the accused make their way into New York. Governor Ingoldsby was sickened by the state of New York and having territory filled with Natives was a true burden as was maintaining Albany. The refusal of other colonies to help was only made worse by the personal disagreements between New York leaders and those from other colonies. James Graham, the attorney general of New York during the time of the Salem trials, was not willing to assist in sending escapees back to Massachusetts because of his hatred of the puritans who had imprisoned him for his imperial mindset and trying to expand New York territory.<sup>134</sup> Benjamin Fletcher also maintained hatred for the Massachusetts leadership who, he believed, unfairly took Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, which had previously been owned by New York.

While Ranlet does point to the importance of communal relations, he does not emphasize it. Leaving us to question to what the dynamic was like between New York and other colonies before these governmental tensions were established. Looking at earlier cases demonstrated that it was in fact a communal force that determines the fate of the accused witch in a new town. Looking back at the 1660's during the time of the Hartford witch-hunt demonstrates that even when New York was in a working relationship with the rest of the colonies, New York could still prove to be a sanctuary.

Ranlet argues that the escapees from Massachusetts and Connecticut were not returned because of New York's treatment. This was especially true for Goody Miller, whose safety was

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133 Ranlet, 39.

134 Ranlet, 40-41.

reassured after a disagreement about land protection occurred. Little is known about Goody Miller except for her trial. After the servant Katharine Branch accused Goodwife Miller, along with other women, of bewitching her, Miller fled to Bedford, New York. Families from Stamford, Connecticut, including Miller's brothers, had settled Bedford. Ranlet upheld that these family relations were necessary for her survival in the area, but government relations were more influential. Even after Daniel Westcott, Katherine Branch's employer, was sent to Bedford to bring her back, she remained untouched by the political power of Massachusetts. Furthermore, appealing to New York leadership proved to be successful especially when Connecticut refused to help protect Albany. Feeling angered, bitter, and betrayed it was no wonder Governor Fletcher refused to aid the Connecticut's pleas for a forced return. While her outcome is unknown, it has been noted that Goody Miller went back and forth between Westchester and Bedford. Ranlet upholds that because there is no mention of Goody Miller's after 1697 it either shows that she was no longer in the area or that she was no longer sought on charge of witchcraft, as skepticism was triggered in New York in spite of Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Ranlet failed to communicate what was occurring in Connecticut in relation to Miller's, and the other accused, case. Katherine Branch's case was riddled with not only regional movement, like Goody Miller's escape to New York, as well as unexplained movement or movement directly caused by witchcraft or other superstitious occurrences. Other explained forms of movement include the accused Mary Glover from New York and Goody Abison from Boston, which demonstrates that there was an interconnectedness between colonies and demonstrates a concern about movement across borders.<sup>135</sup> Instance of unexplained movement can be seen in another one of the accused, Mercy Holbridge. On May 27, 1692 Katharine was

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135 "Katharine Branch Re-Identifies Those Who Harmed Her (June 19, 1692)," in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Connecticut State Library). Cited in Hall, 327.



brought to court and asked about her disturbances. The description of Mercy is of particular interest for both the court and readers of the case. The court demanded that she tell them how she became aware of Mercy's name change. While originally Katharine said that it was Mercy Holbridge, she then reported she changed her name to Disborough. The court was flabbergasted in how she came to know this information when Mercy lived in another town. Katharine informed the court that she had been to Compo and, "she went hither on foot by day and that Mercy was her pilot, thither and back again."<sup>136</sup> Anxieties about communication and movement went hand in hand. This piece of evidence is critical because it provides an answer to how Katharine was able to gain that information, which leads them to believe that only witchcraft could be the cause even though it was determined at a later date that she overheard rumors on Goody Holbridge.

During this time, New York was under Dutch authority. While one may assume that hostilities between English and Dutch colonies would have been common, Pieter Stuyvesant, the New Netherland's Director-General, extended an open invitation to English colonists to settle in Dutch lands. During the 1660's he negotiated with New Haven colonists to settle in New Jersey and provide them with civil and religious autonomy.<sup>137</sup> However, this good nature was limited when it came to witchcraft trials. While this attitude no doubt stems from a general tendency for the Dutch to hold a questioning eye to cases of witchcraft, Stuyvesant's decision was influenced by his own experiences with the English and witchcraft trials. His sister-in-law, Judith Varlet, was accused of witchcraft during the Hartford craze in 1662. While the primary focus of the Hartford trials was Rebecca Greensmith, Judith Varlet is mentioned as an accomplice and a

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136 Ronald Marcus, "Katharine Branch Is Visited by Witches (May 27, 1692)," in *Elizabeth Clawson ...Thou Deservest to Dye* (Stamford, Connecticut, 1976). Cited in Hall, 319.

137 Evan Haefeli, "Dutch New York and the Salem Witch Trials: Some New Evidence," *American Antiquarian Society* 110 Part 2 (2003) 292.

frequent member of nightly meetings. Later historical accounts have her in heated arguments with neighbors in her town such as the marshal Jonathan Gilbert who she said, “if it lay in her power she would do him a mischief, or what hurt she could.”<sup>138</sup> Judith’s brother, Nicolas, was sent to Hartford to defend her and brought with him Stuyvesant’s plea for her innocence, “wee realy beleeve & out her knowne education, Lyfe Conversation & profession of faith we deare assure, that Shee is innocent of such a horrible Crimen & therefore I doubt not he [Nicolas] will now as formerly fynde your honnrs [of Hartford] favour & ayde for the Innocent.”<sup>139</sup> Judith lived out the rest of her life in New York, never to return to Connecticut. Familial relations trumped any attempts at peacekeeping between colonies.

Movement is a difficult concept to wrap one's head around in relation to witch-hunts not only because it was thought to run between the invisible and visible worlds but because the English sources poorly document sense of place at a regional level. What can be said about both unexpected movement, which played with people’s senses, and regional movement, which brought a possible spread of witchcraft, was the communal influence. Unexpected movements signaled evil in the physical world. It reflected a witch’s power to move in between worlds in a fluid and unanticipated way. Even those who were not physically afflicted by witches brought forth their concerns about these movements. The idea of magical movement in the community brought a heightened awareness of the situation at hand. Regional movements were also a communal issue, however it was one that pinned community against community. A suspect’s fate was in the hands of the community. This is especially in terms of movement because the basic idea of movement in the colonies was already looked down upon. Of course movement between colonies occurred and even became more common as the century moved forward.

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138 “Rebecca Greensmith’s Confession (January 8, 1663),” in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Annmary Brown Memorial Library). Cited in Hall, 357.

139 Haefeli, 292.

However, movement that was associated with witchcraft was examined under a different light. A suspect's community, both the new and old, had a voice in determining their fate. Opposition or opinions on regional and unexpected movement were made to assert control and to protect the larger community.

### **Chapter III: The Witching Hour: The Formal and Informal Records of Witches in New England**

Officially, the witch-hunts of colonial New England spanned over a forty-five year period, which resulted in the execution of 36 persons and a total of 234 cases.<sup>140</sup> Witch-hunts were tangible phenomena that existed as a consistent occurrence in 17th century New England. The belief in witchcraft is a mindset that permits supernatural powers use for evil. While the witch-hunts may be placed within this finite time period, belief in witchcraft was continual. Witch-hunts are easily studied and measured as they are based on facts, and while instances of witchcraft beliefs reveal themselves within the records of the hunts, it does not paint the entire story of everyday beliefs in supernatural forces.

It is difficult to pry the hunts from the beliefs because the former would not have occurred without the latter. However, it is imperative to recognize that while the notion of witchcraft and witch-hunts correlate with one another, beliefs in witchcraft have a much longer and fluid history than the hunts themselves. This distinction between the two contributes to the formal and informal histories of witches, both of which are needed to understand the presence of witches in New England court records. The records uphold the formal witch-hunts as actions against the accused. Informal or unofficial information on beliefs is harder to uncover. Officially, witnesses testified against the accused and presented evidence that spanned back years and even decades. Scholars have often questioned this extended suspicion and multiple trials. The answer lies in the distinction between the undertaking of witch-hunts as an action against the accused and the beliefs of individuals and the community at large regarding witchcraft. This distinction also helps explain the slow decline of witch-hunts and the ambiguous nature of the trials'

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<sup>140</sup> Demos includes civil suits for slander within this count. Furthermore, a case means either an indictment and or a complaint filed. John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*, Updated ed (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University, 2004) 11.

outcomes. While witch-hunts ended in 1692, the belief in witchcraft took longer to subside.

### *Prolonged Time in Witch Hunts*

Goody Cole underwent two decades of suspicion of witchcraft. She was formally accused of witchcraft three times although her time living Hampton, New Hampshire, was spent in and out of the Essex and Norfolk counties prisons beginning as early as the 1640s. Her first accusation in 1656 resulted in a probable conviction and imprisonment including public whippings in Boston. After a decade of being imprisoned she moved back to Hampton as a widow after her husband passed in 1662. She was tried for witchcraft twice more: once in 1673 and again in 1680.

To understand Goody Cole's lengthy court dealings and multiple convictions her constructed relationship with the community is necessary. Even before the formal accusations, Eunice and her husband often ran into issues with their neighbors. Moving to Hampton in 1644 with her husband, Goody Cole was brought to the court many times in cases of slander against other women.<sup>141</sup> Her neighbors' distaste for her was something exhibited by many suspects, which often extended through the decades of her suspicion. As noted in previous chapters, she is suspected of fortune telling, child and animal harming, and even expressed knowledge of other witches in town. A burden to the community, Goody Cole's actions were not only troublesome, but also dangerous, and posed a threat to the community at large. Furthermore, the Coles' economic situation was dire as William was ranked fifty-first among sixty householders in 1647 and dead last out of seventy-two in 1653.<sup>142</sup> This was troublesome for Goody Cole after William's passing because she was not endowed a trust and was greatly dependent on the community for support. Included within her 1656 trial was her complaint of the community's

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141 Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1998) 53.

142 Demos, 321.

lack of support after her husband's passing. Town officials were quick to dismiss her when she asked for help maintaining her estate. Frustrated, Eunice believed she was more entitled to assistance than others in the town such as Goodman Robe. Robe, who Eunice refers to as "lusty" and seemingly undeserving, received help from the town after his cow and sheep mysteriously died. Eunice was told that she should seek God in question about why the town refused to help her. She replied that it was the devil that hindered their assistance. Goody Cole's remained bitter towards her community. The town perceived her as an ungrateful burden and their annoyance with her contributed to her lowly and deteriorating status in society.

Among members of Hampton, there was a general movement against Goody Cole. In her 1656 trial, her neighbor Joanna Sleeper reported a strange incident involving a cat at Goodman Wedgwood's home during the winter of 1655. Joanna visited Goodman Wedgwood, who had been very ill, but recently had been improving. When she was about to leave, a gray cat jumped onto Wedgwood's chest. Wedgewood exclaimed and called to the Lord for help because he believed the cat was killing him and, "[breaking] his heart."<sup>143</sup> Showing her the housecat, Goody Wedgewood asked Sleeper if that was the one that afflicted Mr. Wedgwood. Although they looked rather similar, Joanna remembered the cat being much larger. Ultimately Goody Cole was blamed as Joanna noted that Cole had visited that afternoon.

In the same trial, both Goody Marston and Goody Palmer reported Eunice Cole of talking about witchcraft and her firm belief that there was a witch in town. Cole was seemingly aware of wicked activity in Hampton for the past thirteen years and claimed she had first hand knowledge of the devil's whereabouts, who Hampton's witches were, and the fact that they had bewitched Marston's child. Although she was reported of condemning these witches, her knowledge of the

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143 "Goodman Wedgewood Hurt by a Cat (September 4, 1656)," in *Trial for Witchcraft in New England* (Harvard University: Houghton Library) Cited in David D. Hall, ed., *Witch-Hunting in Seventeenth-Century New England: A Documentary History, 1638-1693*, 2nd ed (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) 214.

occult contributed to her neighbors' suspicion.<sup>144</sup> Other women testified to strange occurrences regarding conversations about the Marston child. When Goody Moulton and Goody Sleeper were discussing the thirteen-year-old incident and Goody Cole's queer remarks about the child, they heard scraping at the window. Although they looked outside and saw no one, the scraping continued as they discuss the topic further. The noise was so loud, they described it as if a dog or cat was trying to get in the house, although they could not see the marks on the door.<sup>145</sup>

Her trial record indicated a pattern of mistrust and anxiety. Although little Ann Smith's brutal encounter with Goody Cole dominated the testimony from her 1673 case, the record exhibited a blending of old and new testimony.<sup>146</sup> No statute of limitation existed that would have prevented Cole's neighbors from coming forward. Angered defendants brought forth their woes from as little as a one year to as long as 16 or 17 years prior.<sup>147</sup> The number of disturbances swelled over time, but even the oldest and seemingly miniscule incidents had their day in court. These latent testimonies remained detailed and thorough as if they happened the previous afternoon. A delayed response from an individual's accusers was expected. Even Katherine

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144 "Goodman Wedgewood Hurt by a Cat. Cited in Hall, 214.

145 "Goodman Wedgewood Hurt by a Cat." Cited in Hall, 215.

146 The 1673 trial centered on Goody Cole's attempts to intense Ann Smith to live with her. Seeing Ann Smith and Ann Huggins, another young girl in town, walking outside her house, Goody Cole went outside and tried to persuade Ann Smith to come with her. Cole told her "there was a gentle man within who would give her some plums". Unclear who this man was, as her husband died a decade prior, Ann Smith refused. At this time, Cole used physical force to get her inside the house, but Ann Smith was able to escape. According to some, the attack became very violent and demonstrated Cole's sorcery. Sarah Clifford found Ann Smith in the garden covered in blood and crying. When she brought her inside the house, Ann said that Eunice Cole tried to get her to live with her and promised her a baby and plums. After Ann refused, Cole threatened to kill her and hit her in the head with a rock. Cole then turned into a dog and ran away, then transformed into an eagle. Ann Smith became very ill after this encounter and believed that cats were stalking her and felt pins were constantly pricking her. "Sarah Clifford and the Harming of Ann Smith (October 12, 1672)," in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Essex County Records 135:5, cited in Hall, 218 – 219.

147 Jonathan Thing's account depicted Goody Cole's unexplained movements from 16 or 17 years ago. He described Eunice walking 20 rods behind him, although perhaps not directly ("triangle sideways of me"). Moments later, Eunice was 20 rods ahead of him. Quickening his pace, Thing caught up to Cole and did confirm her identity. When he arrived to his house, he saw no one and went inside. Moments later, he saw Goody Cole outside with his cattle. When he inquired further, she stated "what is that to you, sawsbox" (saucy or impudent). When Goodman Thing tried to approach her, "she seemed as it were to swim away". Uncertain if he actually means swimming or not, Thing did attempt to follow her, but was not able to catch up. "Jonathan Thing and Eunice Cole (September 5, 1673)" Hall, 215.

Harrison, the infamous witch whose case disturbed Wethersfield during the late 1660s faced accusers from many years prior to her formal trial, including William Wells's testimony, which depicted her among his cows causing trouble about 7 or 8 years before her 1668 case.<sup>148</sup> Like Goody Cole, the community despised Harrison. Katherine often expressed grievances and reported sufferings of her animals, including broken bones and knives stabbed in their back.<sup>149</sup>

Testimony against John Godfrey, the nomad who sparked controversy through his incessant movements throughout Essex county in the 1650s, exhibited this prolonged duration between strange occurrence and formal complaint, stemming from as long as 26 years prior to his formal investigation.<sup>150</sup> While the argument can be made that Godfrey's accusers took so long to formally charge him because they came from various towns throughout Essex County, the pattern of extended disputes applied to many of the accused witches. Social conflict was universal in 17th century New England. No witchcraft case was comprised of a one-off accusation. Rather a behavioral precedent had to be established.

Witchcraft lore came over on the ships that carried the English settlers to the New World. While belief in witchcraft never went away, an individual's experience with witch-hunts was built off of daily experiences within a community, which ultimately determined the action against the accused. Where social tension existed, witch-hunts were sure to follow. Follow being the operative word as most formal cases occurred years, even decades, after these initial social tensions.

John Demos discussed the importance of external conflict or affliction outside a community's control and upheld the importance of placing the cases within the greater context of

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148 "John Wells Sees Katherine Harrison," in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Connecticut State Library). Cited in Hall, 174.

149 "Katherine Harrison's House Is Attacked (October 6, 1668)," in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Annmary Brown Memorial Library). Cited in Hall, 171.

150 "William Howard and John Godfry," in *Court of Assistants Records* (Connecticut State Library). Cited in Hall, 125.



New England history. These events contributed to witch-hunts in twofold: they cases they delayed trial proceedings, while also increasing anxiety. The Indian Wars were a great source of this tension. In Wethersfield, for example, conflict with Natives during the spring of 1637 resulted in the kidnapping of two girls.<sup>151</sup> It was a hectic period, also containing religious controversy, which subsided by the 1640s. Wethersfield first witchcraft trial occurred in 1648 and resulted in the execution of Mary Johnson after she confessed to signing the devil's compact.<sup>152</sup> Katherine Harrison's case also existed within this latent period between the Pequot and King Philip Wars. On the eve of Eunice Cole's first trial in Hampton, the community was well established and self-sustained.<sup>153</sup> Even Alice Young, the first recorded person to be executed in New England for witchcraft was killed fourteen years after the settling of Windsor, upheld as a stable time period. While the record on her execution is brief, "One [Alice Young] of Windsor arraigned and executed at Hartford for a witch,"<sup>154</sup> her case falls within the pattern of the latent period between chaos, which the establishment of a new settlement no doubt was, and order.

Developing off a need to place the witch-hunts within the context of 17th century history, Demos outlined "harms" and "signs" that furthered created "anxiety, stress, or outright sufferings" for New Englanders.<sup>155</sup> Relying on solely primary sources, Demos categorized uncontrollable occurrences that directly impacted New Englanders. Weather and illness fell within the harm category. Weather is of particular interest because of the *extremes* that had a significant impact on daily work, such as dreadful hurricanes that destroyed crops. Similarly,

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151 Cave, 120.

152 Cotton Mather, "Mary Johnson and the Devil," in *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcraft and Possession* (Boston, 1689), 62–63. Cited in Hall, 23.

153 Demos, 322.

154 Matthew Grant, "Alice Young Execution," in *Diary, 1637-1564* (Connecticut State Library). Cited in Hall, 21.

155 Demos, 372.

diseases spread to crops throughout the mid 17th century. Instances such as these expressed a punishment from providence. They were a tangible affliction caused by God's displeasure with mankind.<sup>156</sup> Signs, on the other hand, were signals of a punishment to come. These included comets, eclipses, meteors, and earthquakes. Both signs and harms are built into the New England witchcraft narrative as they increased anxiety. While direct patterns of causation are clouded, the ebb and flow of external conflict, resulting in a pause in witch-hunt, and harms and signs, which increased awareness of unworldly forces, is undeniable. Stress and anxiety were high in colonial New England, both from tangible and intangible forces.

However, it is imperative to place Demos' harms and signs as primers for witch-hunts, not direct causes. Testimony did not reveal direct concern with these afflictions, rather, concerns centered on personal harm. As we have seen, testimony focused on harms to animals, children, and fluid movement in unexpected spaces, not great tempests or outbreaks of illness. The relational tension amongst neighbors was the driver of witch-hunts. This notion sheds light on prolonged time between afflictions and trials. Social interactions and tensions are built up over time. They are stirred by gossip and further negative interactions. Hence why witchcraft trials were usually absent from early town settlements; they did not have the communal relationships formed to warrant accusations. Similarly, large population growth, such as in Harford in the 1640s, only increased conflict amongst neighbors. More inhabitants led to broadening of social activity and economic practices. In most communities, witchcraft accusations came about one decade after the settlement was established. The next two decades were riddled with doubt and gossip, only increasing anxiety and ultimately caused actual trials to arise.

Tension between neighbors, like seemingly supernatural signs and harms, left a residual and underlying anxiety, which did not get immediately reported. The formal history of the trial

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<sup>156</sup> Demos, 377.

records does not implicitly demonstrate this. However, this informal history can be found by reading in between the lines of the trial. Victims turn to accusers over time because there is a time delay in which anxiety developed and other neighbors confirmed these anxieties.

Colonial experience of witchcraft depended on others to reinforce their greatest fears. Rumors of harm spread throughout communities, which increased the residual anxiety over time. In Goody Cole's case, Goody Moulton and Goody Sleeper were gossiping about the incident with the Marston child, which occurred thirteen years beforehand. Furthermore, Elizabeth Shaw's testimony, who claimed she heard what sounded like puppy noises coming from Cole during the Sabbath, was reinforced by Mary Perkins who heard that she heard similar noises, which she discussed with Goody Shaw.<sup>157</sup> Anxiety caused by conversations was especially true when it concerned other neighbors because it was a direct threat to the community. If a rumored witch was to have said harmed an animal, everyone's animals were at risk.

Internal conflict was the most damaging cause of witch-hunts. They were exacerbated with time and ultimately reached a tipping point. Backed by other neighbors, accusers' complaints often related back to other testimonies that preceded their own. While the formal history only brought these concerns forth at the specified moment of the trial, concern with witchcraft was ever-present. However, in the trial records, it existed as an undercurrent and concealed aspect of everyday colonial life. Only when society had time for these cases did these concealed anxieties emerged.

### *Suspicious but not Guilty*

So, what did happen to Goody Cole? After three trials for witchcraft and dozens of accusations from her neighbors, one would imagine that she met the same fate as many of the

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<sup>157</sup> "Eunice Cole and Animal Familiars," in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Suffolk County Records 13:1228, cited in Hall, 228-229.

other New Englanders accused of the craft. However, Goody Cole was not executed. The court concluded, “In the case of Eunice Cole now prisoner at the bar not legally guilty according to indictment but just ground of vehement suspicion of her having familiarity with the devil.”<sup>158</sup> Cole returned to Hampton where she resided until she died. Cole is not the only one who received the verdict of suspicious but not guilty. Out of the sixty-one official trials,<sup>159</sup> thirty-nine were acquitted; twenty-seven of which occurred after 1660. While the trend suggests an increase of skepticism as the century progressed, these outliers should not be ignored. While many scholars have focused on the decline of witch-hunts after the infamous Salem trial in 1692, the majority of cases did not result in execution even before 1660.

The decline of European witch-hunts can help glean causes of the New England decline. While the decline was a slow process, it was no coincidence that the dealings with witches began to radically change in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century even though skepticism had long been present. The religious and scientific change that came about during this period contributed to the acceptance of skepticism amongst scholars and elites alike. While the ideas of the common classes and the ruling elites were often varied, ultimately the gradual decline of witch-hunting developed from the adoption of newly accepted skeptical thought within the actual judicial operations, which became imperative after the destructive witch hunts in the 1660’s.

In general terms the religious zeal, that was once vast in Europe, was waning. The Reformation had created intense local forms of Christianity, which had often contributed to large-scale witch-hunts that were common during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Religious conflict was fading out of focus, especially after the peace of Westphalia in 1648. This is not to suggest that religious orthodoxy was on the decline, rather the Christian climate was changing, especially

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158 Joseph Dow, “Eunice Cole Verdict,” in *History of the Town of Hampton* (Salem, Massachusetts, 1893). Cited in Hall, 229.

159 This number does not reflect number of indictments.

amongst the Protestant branches. Calvinists had come to believe that God was the true sovereign power and that his acts were independent, thus directly opposing the notion of Satan, and by extension witches, having any power of his own.<sup>160</sup>

Another contributing factor to skeptics' disbelief in witches was the Scientific Revolution and its reflection of early Enlightenment's rationalist thought. There was a growing understanding that fixed laws controlled the universe. This application of Aristotelian perspective by scientists like Galileo, Kepler, and Newton portrayed Earth with machine-like qualities.<sup>161</sup> Rene Descartes work proposing the nonexistence of incorporeal beings suggests celestial bodies followed the same earthly laws.<sup>162</sup> The establishment of the Royal Society in 1662 in England also emphasizes the growing scientific mindset among the elite. It is hard to deny the timing of the Royal Society's enactment and the decline of witch-hunting in England, as there was no room for magical elements within this new scientific community.<sup>163</sup> However many historians maintain that even though this period was becoming the age of the disenchantment, "it was the abandonment of magic which made the advancements of technology possible, not the other way around."<sup>164</sup> Even though the technology associated with the Scientific Revolution did not directly impact ideas about witchcraft, the rational thought emerging within literature did. New England began to feel the impact of the scientific revolution during the late 17th and early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Skepticism, closely linked to the Enlightenment, continued to develop throughout the next century. Thomas Hobbes believed that accused witches should be punished as they proved

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160 Brian P. Levack, "The End of the Witch Trials," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002) 382.

161 Levack, "The End of the Witch Trials," 378.

162 J. A. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) 260.

163 Sharpe, 262.

164 Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) 647.

to disrupt society.<sup>165</sup> Influenced by Descartes, Hobbes writes, “ I find in Scripture that there be angels and spirits, good and evil, but not that they are incorporeal, as are the apparitions men see in the dark or in a dream or vision.”<sup>166</sup> Skepticism was now coupled with the emerging scientific and philosophical thought. This evolving skepticism is best seen in Balthasar Bekker’s *The Bewitched World*. As a Dutch Calvinist, rather than solely discounting witches, he maintains that the Devil is incapable of intervening in the physical world.<sup>167</sup> This notion is based on the growing Protestant idea of God’s total sovereignty. Even though the skepticism surrounding witches was not a novel discussion, influenced by the changing atmosphere of the Enlightenment allowed for these ideas to be accepted, especially within the courts. The intersection between the Devil’s lack power and rational thought of the Enlightenment is best seen through the newfound need for empirical proof. Many judges were less willing to use victims’ accounts of misfortune as evidence. Judges were unwilling to accept evidence such as the Devil’s mark, which had been accepted as evidence for a century. Moreover, judges were also reluctant to evidence proposed the image of a specter or spirit, which is influenced by the disbelief in incorporeal beings.

This evolving court system also took place in the colonies such as after the Stamford-Fairfield Witch-hunt in 1692. William Jones, the deputy governor of Connecticut, reexamined what was to be considered actual evidence in cases. He defines two modes of conviction: less sufficient and more sufficient. Those less sufficient were gained by torture such as the swimming test and branding. He also denies a sick person’s vendetta. While it was cause for suspicion, it could no longer be used as evidence. The only acceptable proof was either a confession from the accused party or testimony from two honest witnesses that have first hand accounts of the

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165 Thomas Hobbes, “Leviathan,” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, ed. Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 2004) 299.

166 Hobbes, 303.

167 Balthasar Bekker, “The World Bewitched,” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, ed. Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 2004) 315.

accused's practice. Even though he upheld that this evidence was hard to come by, he still believed it was a possibility.<sup>168</sup> It was not an authoritative magistrate denying witchcraft, rather attempts to restrict witch-hunts.

The issue of actual witch accusations is a difficult question to deal with and reflects the differences between the common beliefs about witches and the growing scholastic ones. Roger North, a lawyer and historian in England, described beliefs of witchcraft as a mere matter of the common sort, thus distinguishing the elites learned understanding from the popular delusion.<sup>169</sup> As Owen Davies suggested in his *Witchcraft, Magic, and Culture* (1999), the fact that the number of actual witch trials declined during this period does not suggest an actual decrease in suspicious made by the common people.<sup>170</sup> This is similar to the colonial experience as popular belief of witchcraft remained at large throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the distinction between witch-hunts and the belief in witchcraft aids the historiography surrounding the decline of witch-hunts. Emphasis on empirical findings and questions of incorporeal bodies stayed within the intellectual circles and did not extend to the populace, whose notions about the superstitious world continued. In short, witch-hunts ended, but the belief in witchcraft remained.

Demos applied a similar framework to the New England trials noting that while witch-hunts are left in the 17th century, the belief in witchcraft continued as seen in diaries and personal papers through the 19th century.<sup>171</sup> Even still, skepticism towards witchcraft increased after the Stamford-Fairfield and Salem witch-hunts. Judge Samuel Sewall's apology after he condemned 20 persons to death in the Salem trial was a famous example. Five years after the trials concluded, Sewall issued a public confession demonstrating personal remorse, taking in his

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168 "Updated Witch-Hunting Evidence Requirements," in *Will and Doom* (Collection of the Connecticut Historical Society, 1895). Cited in Hall, 351.

169 Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, 232.

170 Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Culture, 1736-1951* (Manchester, UK ; New York : New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed in the USA by S. Martin's Press, 1999), 273.

171 Demos, 387.

words the "Blame and Shame" for his part in condemning innocent people.<sup>172</sup> Thus introspection and guilt played a role in the decline. Furthermore, historian Keith Thomas (1991) proposed that happenings the scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment coupled with the decline English of witch-hunts further contributed to growing skepticism in New England. They sought to understand certain phenomena rather than blame God or the supernatural.

However, the skepticism developing in the late 17th century did not account for acquittals in the mid-century. The fact that more suspects were acquitted than executed should not be ignored for each case presented ample amounts of testimony that could, and perhaps should, have resulted in guilty verdicts. It was not a question of suspicion, as many of those who were acquitted were deemed suspect by both their neighbors as well as the court. Yet, the jury who found Katherine Harrison guilty of tormenting Wethersfield, Connecticut in the 1660s was ultimately released by the court and banished to New York. So too, Elizabeth Seager's case, who was accused in the Hartford trials, was delayed by the governor in 1665 and ultimately cited lack of evidence and her release from prison a year later. Caleb Powell's, who was the initial suspect in the Morse house haunting, verdict read,

Upon hearing the complaint brought to this court against Caleb Powell for suspicion of working by the devil to the molesting of the family of William Morse of Newbury, though this court cannot find any evident group of proceeding farther against the said Caleb Powell, yet we determine that he hath given such ground of suspicion of his so dealing, that we cannot so acquit him, but that he justly deserves to bear his own shame and the costs if the prosecution of the complaint.<sup>173</sup>

It was not until late 17th century cases, such as the Stamford-Fairfield, that scholars have researched an explanation for such acquittals. Before this, no records exist that either explains the reason for the innocent verdict or what happened after the verdict was given. Only when a

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172 Richard Francis, *Judge Sewall's Apology: The Salem Witch Trials and the Forming of an American Conscience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006) 187.

173 "Caleb Powell Hearing," in *The Massachusetts State Archives*, Essex County Records 13:1228, cited in Hall, 239.



suspect is tried more than once, such as Eunice Cole, do the records reflect their experience. This further contributes to the separation of formal and informal histories. While the record rarely reflected tension between neighbors outside the official trials, it is fair to assume that they continued to exist. In the minds of their neighbors, suspects remained guilty, but for the court, guilt was more difficult to prove.

## “Hung, in History”

Witchcraft was hung, in History,  
But History and I  
Find all the Witchcraft that we need  
Around us, every Day—<sup>174</sup>

Cases of witch-hunts are an especially convoluted topic because they are presented differently across historical times. Interpreted and remolded, witch-hunts have been used as metaphors for other historical periods –almost always signaling an affront against a minority group. It should be noted, that these depictions are in fact disconnected from the original occurrences during the 17th century, and events of the colonial period are often overshadowed by later historical or even modern depictions. This thesis seeks to depict the 17th century witch-hunts in the context of that period and dig deeper into the experiences the colonists faced. It is impossible to know the exact daily activities of people of the colonial era, as few diaries of everyday household. Collecting source material becomes a problem when examining any historical time period. How can historians talk about the colonial period without sufficient documentation? Is it fair to make judgments about the period with the limited material we have and can we apply patterns to the majority of New England witch-hunt cases?

The backbone of this effort is built of off environmental, spatial, and architectural historiography of the colonial era. The research made it abundantly clear that there is no reason to separate witch-hunts as a stand-alone phenomenon of the colonial period. While it was no doubt a unique and fascinating phenomenon, it makes up one facet of the larger historiography. The mystique of the supernatural powers that arose from the witch-hunts sometimes blinds scholarship and perception of the hunts. At heart, they were one of many everyday practices

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174 Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas Johnson (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1960) 656.

ingrained in society. Katherine Grandjean's work provides essential context for understanding the everyday fear of witchcraft. While her *American Passage* (2015) does not reference witchcraft in any way, it addresses colonial communication and movement. The importance of colonial communication is shown through the primary sources as key themes, and it is imperative to use secondary scholarship on other parts of colonial history to discuss them.

This thesis does not seek to correct past notions of witch-hunts historiography, rather it aims to complicate preexisting scholarship. The vast majority of historical scholars have used primary sources in their work –no proper historian would omit this step. However, most do not engage in a thoughtful conversation with court cases. Through this thesis process, trial cases were placed in the forefront and judgments were made without the possible biases of secondary scholarship. Revelations from the Wyllys Papers were extremely helpful when focusing on the importance of each individual case, rather than viewing them as a precursor to Salem. Having first completed this phase, secondary scholarship was used to both challenge ideas and/or confirmed the implications.

This process was particularly useful in the diction selected for this argument. Purposeful terminology needed to reflect the specifics of what happened in the courtroom. Certain words carry weight and invoke various meanings: “Indeed many academic disciplines have developed unique words, idioms, lexicons, terms, concepts, and constructs to describe, explain, discuss, and promote understanding” and many scholars believe that the best way to understand a topic is to comprehend the terminology.<sup>175</sup> Why is “wild” or “wilderness” never brought up in the trial cases although it is used to describe the land beyond their settled property by most historians? Why is it important to differentiate witchcraft and witch-hunts and what did the documents

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175 Jeffery Scott Mio, ed., *Key Words in Multicultural Interventions: A Dictionary* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1999) vii.

reveal about their overlapping, yet distinct histories? It is only through an in depth examination of primary sources from the popular history that these details shine through.

Most scholarship, especially in the cases of the witchcraft trials, uses the primary sources to fill the narrative and to show what happened, rather than what was experienced. That seemingly small difference is critical in understanding that period's reality. It attempts to root out details and themes that often go overlooked by most scholars because they are considered tedious. The mundane testimony allows a clearer understanding of daily communal and agricultural activities in the context of witch-hunts and vice versa. Relying on the testimony enables for an examination of spatial relationships and how the testimony reflected the formation of society –which relationships mattered and which ones proved to be harmful. Coupled with scholarship that lay outside traditional witch-hunt scholarship, the primary documents are placed within a larger colonial context.

The overlooked and repetitive documents that are often taken for granted and at face value have the possibility to reveal a new understanding of any time period. These, seemingly mundane, details complicate the traditional historiography. Themes that are repeated ultimately form patterns, which become important. However, scholars tend to focus on the disrupters. For a period like the colonial era where primary critical pieces are missing from primary sources, one must pay close attention to any documents that reflect the populace's belief to understand the actual experience.

Most of the people that were accused of witchcraft remained tethered to the community, but never actually accepted by it. The cases of widows, and the occasional bachelor, reinforced this. The dependency of the accused proved to be a burden, and said person was ostracized. However, none of the accused are automatically accepted as guilty by the court; rather, each

worked through the judicial process, and, as the final chapter notes, most were acquitted. Even some of the most extreme cases, such as Katherine Harrison and Eunice Cole, were released back into the community.

A difference remains between the puritan ministers' perception and the everyday experience. By focusing only on the clerical sources and using them as the primary basis for historical scholarship, it is no wonder why witch-hunts are considered an extra-ordinary phenomenon. However, the trial records themselves did not speak to these mysterious afflictions in the same way as the clerical writing did. While there was no doubt discussion of supernatural afflictions, the devil, and floating objects, it was not as prominent. Instead, the testimony revealed the actual concerns of the populace –harms that made it difficult to do the work and afflictions to the family. These afflictions, or types of afflictions, are categorized into harms of space and harms of movement. Both relate to each other and have overlapping themes, but they both speak to the importance of relationships.

Entering in and out of private spaces, harming animals within this space, and killing children who were supposed to be protected by these spaces, were cause for concern because colonial society, like all societies, was based on relationships with those around them. The colonial society was in flux and not as rigid as many scholars depict it as. Instead, the witch-hunt case trials suggested more fluid relationships, which left many vulnerable. Ultimately, suspicion arose when people threatened the, already unstable, communal relations.

Neighborly condemnation occasionally erupted into large witch-hunts. 1692 marked the beginning of the Stamford-Fairfield witch-hunt. Initiated by the possession of Katharine Branch (a young servant working for the Westcott family), the witch-hunt resulted in the accusation of six Fairfield women. Most of the documents centered on Elizabeth Clawson and Mercy

Disborough. Clawson, about 50 years old, had trouble with the Westcott family in the past. Although both Disborough and Clawson were tried and searched for witches marks, they maintained their innocence. Goody Disborough voluntarily underwent the dunking test, however she floated, which pointed to her guilt. However, what truly made the difference between the two accused was their neighbor's support. A petition signed by 80 people swore that Clawson was not malicious in nature. Her neighbor, Eleazer Slawson, testified "that he lived near neighbor to Goody Clawson many years and did always observe her to be a woman for peace, and to council would answer and say 'we must live in peace, for we are neighbors.'"<sup>176</sup> Their combined hearing held October 28 resulted in a split decision: Clawson marked as innocent and Disborough as guilty and sentenced to death. In this case, Clawson's positive relationships with neighbors saved her. Those who overtly lacked these relationships and were subject to persecutions, like Goody Disborough, were convicted. Neighbors were the origins of the accusations. Although the court made the ultimate decision on the case, public opinion mattered and had the power to sway the verdict.

While there are gaps in the documents, the testimonies demonstrated a great dependency on neighbors. New England colonists worked, lived, and prayed together, it is no wonder why concern and accusations stemmed from broken relationships. Witch-hunts were the results of these broken relationships. When damage was done in domestic spaces, colonists turned to those around them for blame. And while some questions will always remain regarding the colonial experience, the best way to understand a bottom-up perspective of New England witch-hunts is through court documents. These spatial and interpersonal relationships reveal the dimensionality of the witch-hunts of 17th century New England.

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176 "Neighbor's Support Goody Clawson," in *Samuel Wyllys Papers* (Connecticut State Library) Cited in Hall, 325.

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