Subversive Implications of American Indian Literacy in New England's Praying Towns from 1620-1774

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

Approved June 2016 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2016

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines literacy development among the Algonquian-speaking Indian peoples of New England from approximately the years 1600-1775. Indians had forms of literacy prior to the coming of European settlers, who introduced them to English literacy for the purpose of proselytization. I describe the process of English-language literacy taking hold during colonization and argue that Indians in the colonial period subverted the colonizing intent of English-language literacy to preserve their mother tongues, their claims to land and affirm their nationhood as a people.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Joe and Sue Langenfeld, my grandmother, Virginia Agnes Divita, and my grandfather, Edward P. Langenfeld.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not exist without the encouragement of Dr. James Riding In, Pawnee; Dr. Eunice Romero-Little of Cochiti Pueblo; Dr. Tennille Marley, White Mountain Apache; Dr. David Martinez, Gila River Pima/O'odham; Joyce Martin; Donna Ghost Bear, Blackfeet/Cherokee: Paint Clan and Wolf Clan: Denise Moreland, Cherokee/Choctaw/ Seminole; R. Michele Sixkiller, Cherokee, Wolf Clan; Walter "Bunky" Echo-Hawk Jr., Pawnee; Janice Rice, Ho-Chunk; Omar Poler, Mole Lake Ojibwe; Dr. Chantal Norrgard; Dr. Lucy E. Murphy; Dimitra Varvarezou; and Jerri Thomas.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My quest to learn Native American history began as a search for lost knowledge. Growing up in the Midwest, my family encouraged me to have pride in my Wisconsin German heritage. But I sought knowledge of the place where I was living. I wanted to know the history of its indigenous people, who had been here before, why the state now looked the way it did and why the surviving Native people had been displaced. Several of the tribes I discuss in this thesis, including the Brothertown Indian Nation, had their origin in New England praying towns, These praying towns consisted of a mixture of English and Indian building styles, farming, cultural practices and legal customs. Protestant Christian Indians inhabited these towns under English jurisdiction from 1651 to 1675. The Brothertown were "removed" to New York, and then underwent further displacement by being pushed into Wisconsin because of land-hungry settlers. White New Englanders joined their former Indian neighbors in the state.

While white New Englanders became leading citizens of Wisconsin, Indians were thrust into obscurity, their histories not commonly known. This lack of knowledge is deliberately constructed, a deliberate omission or sleight of hand. I remain committed to telling the truth about American Indian people and their communities, the traumas they endured, continue to endure, and the extraordinary feats that have enabled their survival today. Such truth-telling will do much to dispel harmful myths, stereotypes and Indian hatred, and advance justice and healing for indigenous communities.

I am not only preoccupied with finding and sharing such knowledge, but with the reasons how and why the knowledge and history of indigenous communities was

deliberately lost, covered up, erased and chosen for omission. This historical retooling is a fundamental strategy of settler colonialism. As the novelist Toni Cade Bambara wrote, "What are we pretending not to know today?"[1] Novelist Toni Morrison asks in a similar vein, "What intellectual feats had to be performed…to erase me from a society seething with my presence… what are the strategies of escape from knowledge? Of willful oblivion?"[2] I'll expand this question. What are we- the collective, mainstream American society- pretending, denying or forgetting to know about Indian people? How are we pretending not to know it and why? Drew Lopenzina, a scholar of early American and Native American literature, links indigenous erasure to a theoretical intellectual process he calls "unwitnessing". The gap between settlers' lofty cultural ideals and the violence and denigration visited upon Indian people during colonization was widespread, and left a sort of societal cognitive dissonance or trauma at the heart of colonial culture. Unwillingness to confront undesirable knowledge leads to intellectual contradiction, where knowledge of traumatic events is ever so briefly acknowledged, then dropped, "stricken out", or *un-witnessed.* "The dominant society manifests this trauma by exhibiting historical or cultural amnesia, a willful forgetting of their complicity in acts of violence by which they claimed an 'emptie' land for themselves."[3] Such history has been simultaneously recorded, but also "meticulously forgotten…repressed."[4]

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[1] Toni Cade Bambara, *These Bones Are Not My Child: A Novel* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 168.

[2] Toni Morrison, *Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988), 136.

[3] Drew Lopenzina, *Red Ink: Native Americans Picking Up the Pen in the Colonial Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 10-11.

Such un-witnessing is itself a violent act, which perpetuates cycles of violence, inequality and oppression by relying on colonially distorted narratives. Cultural critic and historian Richard Slotkin observes that "a people unaware of its myths is likely to continue living by them, though the world around that people may change." Those who sought a rational republic ignored racism, slavery, environmental destruction and the killing or subjugation of Indians and people of color. The opportunities of the New World could only be obtained through violence and the "myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience."[5]Social change can only occur when we bear witness to historical trauma and injustice, because "repression, disassociation and denial are phenomena of social as well as individual consciousness. [6]

I argue that American Indian literacy in colonial New England, as part of peoplehood, was and continues to be both a defensive response and a radical reaction to colonization. It represents a defensive measure because Indians have sought to cope with the mass devastation of their societies from the ill effects of war, relocation, deprivation, political subjugation, and disease. It was a radical reaction because it enabled Indians to fight injustice. American Indian literacy and intellectual writing was an act of intellectual sovereignty, done in defense of language and ancestral homelands at a time when language and land of their people were severely threatened.

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[4] Ibid, 12.

[5] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 4.

[6] Lopenzina, *Red Ink*, 13-14.

My thesis focuses on the Algonquian New England tribes because they were the first to encounter Euro-American colonialism and experience the concepts of English literacy and education in a Western sense. These cultural and linguistic conflicts encompass the rise of the bi-cultural, colonial Christian Indian intellectual as a public figure, the conversion of Indians to Christianity in "praying Indian" communities, and the impact of King Philip's War. To place the Indian encounter with literacy in perspective, I also discuss the social and cultural significance of literacy for New England settlers and their English and European forebears, and the fear of acculturated Indians evidenced by the testimony of the Salem Witch Trials.

Because English attempts to instruct Indians in Euro-American literacy were carried out to convert, they were often informed by anti-Indian bias. Dakota scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's refers to this as "anti-Indianism.", an inherent bias against Indians that permeates the United States government and society from its founding until today. She compares anti-Indianism in America to anti-Semitism in Europe. Indians and Jews were considered vile, subhuman for what the Church saw as their obdurate resistance to the Christian message, and anything belonging to a Jew or an Indian, including land, was considered the rightful property of Christians, to dispose of as Christians alone saw fit. As with the Jews, Europeans used a litany of negative racial stereotypes to rationalize their criminality against Indians.[7] They advanced a narrative of their own racial and cultural superiority and the inevitability of Indian cultural demise.

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[7] Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekaya's Earth* (Champaign-Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

Despite facing anti-Indianism, Indians have always sought to assert the permanent, persistent presence and "voice" of their communities. This is a direct challenge to colonial tactics of erasure, omission and silencing which seek to displace Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies and to re-inscribe settler history as the "true" history of a place. Taiaiake Alfred notes that the settler state *must* denigrate indigeneity and indigenous knowledge to avoid interrogating the fragility of its own occupation on the land or admitting the illegality and illegitimacy of the entire colonial endeavor.

He writes, "Aboriginality in a true sense must necessarily be excluded and denied. Otherwise, it would seem ridiculous that the original inhabitants of a place should be forced to justify their existence to a crude horde of refugees from another continent. As the European scholar Faye Korsmo pointed out, the loss of collective memory is an essential requirement for creating a colonial reality: the people already living in the area have no role in the new myths."[8]

Patrick Wolfe notes that settler colonialism practices ideological theft to justify land theft and the genocide of indigenous people. "Settler colonizers come to stay… invasion is a structure, not an event", a structure possessed of a "logic of elimination". This logic of elimination "destroys to replace" and must destroy and denigrate indigenous peoples and their knowledge to found the settler society[9] Contemporary history in the Euro-American canon participates in and perpetuates this dynamic of indigenous erasure

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[8] Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 88.

[9] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native", *Journal of Genocide Research* 8: no 4, (2006): 388.

by relegating Indigenous people to the margin and portraying white Euro-Americans as the bringers of "civilization" to a benighted people.

My thesis examines the literacy- mother tongue and English- including its practices of reading and writing, as it developed among New England tribes from the time of first contact in the early 1600s to the time just prior to the American Revolution. Literacy historians such as Harvey J. Graff have mostly focused rather narrowly on alphabetic literacy. Graff cautions that literacy is complicated, historically variable, and very contextually specific.[10] Indigenous-language advocate Leanne Hinton, however, recognizes literacy's importance for documenting indigenous languages. But she notes that oral languages have just as much complexity as written ones and that written languages may impede language learning, compromise sacred or secret knowledge, interfere with cultural transmission and stop linguistic evolution. Literacy is also a reflection of a society, including a set of values. Tomson Highway, a Canadian Cree, links indigenous gender equality to indigenous myth and linguistic structure, stating: that Ojibwe, Dene and Cree lack gender in a formal sense.[11] Some Indian languages are as strongly gendered as European languages. The Algonquian language has two genders,

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[10] Harvey J. Graff, *Literacy and Historical Development* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), 5.

[11] Tomson Highway, Repairing the Circle, in *Masculindians: Conservations about Indigenous Manhood*, ed. Sam McKegney (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 24.

one animate gender and one inanimate. Animals, humans, spirits, and trees, were all addressed by the animate pronoun.[12]

I define literacy more broadly, as the ability of a person and a community to read, write, communicate messages to each other through a set of mutually understood symbols. While I will discuss literacy in the English alphabet, other forms of pre-contact literacy existed among northeastern tribes. These Indigenous peoples primarily include the Wampanoag of Massachusetts, the Pequot, Nipmuc and Narrangansett of Connecticut, the Mohegan of Connecticut and upstate New York, and the Montauks of Long Island. Social disruptions including epidemic disease, land loss, war, and migratory occupations caused drastic changes in their ways of life. Literacy and colonial education accompanied the attempt to forcibly assimilate them. But to view Native American literacy and the rise of New England bilingual, bi-literate Indian intellectuals as mere evidence of assimilation is short-sighted. In fact, figures such as Samson Occom, Joseph Johnson, and Caleb Cheeshauteaumuck left their marks because they utilized literacy in the English language to affirm and defend the rights, continued existence and undying presence of their people. In this milieu, Natives who had fallen under the heavy hand of English oppression developed orthographies to preserve native languages, record claims to native land and sovereignty, and perpetuate native ways of life. This thesis seeks to demonstrate the creativity and ingenuity these early Native writers used while wielding literacy as a tool for liberation, survival and resistance. The writings of these Indigenous

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[12] Shirley Silver and Wick R. Miller, *American Indian Languages: Cultural and Social Contexts* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale. *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice,* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 239-50.

men demonstrate the stresses of colonization and the rapid pace the colonies brought in the wake of their creation. They also show New England Indians' unwavering bond to their ancestral land, despite the often violent attempts to remove them. Their rise as successful intellectuals within the colonial culture challenged ideas of Indian inferiority. These Indian intellectuals also used the written and spoken word to question the mythology that the colony told about itself. They challenged the notion that colonizers were the virtuous bearers of superior civilization. I have mainly used secondary sources, although I have used primary sources whenever I can. These include missionary writings and writings by Indians themselves.

Methodology

My thesis will not partake in the canon of settler-colonial denial, but will follow the model of indigenous historiography that places Native voices in the center of the narrative, seeks to revive Native culture, land, governing structures and languages, asserts tribal sovereignty, and challenges anti-Indian assumptions present in conventional historiography. Therefore, my thesis is written within the paradigm of American Indian Studies at Arizona State University, which "focuses on the protection and strengthening of Indian sovereignty, self-determination, self-sufficiency and human rights" and views this as a "sacred responsibility to Indian nations undertaken for the sake of cultural survival." I humbly hope that this study will contribute to respect, pride, survival and a knowledge of place. I also sincerely hope that, in the process, I will cause my country to

own up to its harmful anti-Indian past, face the lies that it tells itself, and begin the long walk towards justice for Indian people.

How, when, by whom and under what circumstances were Algonquian-speakers in New England first taught to read, either in English or their own languages? And what can this tell us about the role of literacy in American Indian education and cultural continuity?

To answer these questions, this thesis will examine literacy and the literary process among Indians in colonial New England. The history of Indian literacy is important because it represents the creativity American Indians used to adapt to volatile circumstances stemming from colonization and ensure their survival. Though literacy was a tool of colonial masters, imposed on Indians to forcibly promote proselytizing, it provoked an unprecedented amount of subversive individual and collective empowerment against colonialism by allowing Indian voices to be collectively heard in an American society and aiding the affirmation of Indian rights to cultural sovereignty, political power and territorial integrity. The development of literacy was more spontaneous, complex, uneven and emancipatory than its originally intended purpose, Cherokee anthropologist Robert K. Thomas articulates indigenous sovereignty in terms of the peoplehood paradigm. "Peoplehood consists," he writes, of four interlocking concepts: sacred history, ceremonial cycles, language, and ancestral homelands."[13] Seminole American Indian Studies scholar Susan Miller observes poignantly, "The removed tribes' resistance to forced relocation from their homelands makes greater sense

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[13] Thomas, paraphrased by Lindsay G. Robertson in Jeff Corntassel and Richard C. Witmer II, *Forced Federalism: Contemporary Challenges to Indigenous Nationhood* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), xvi.

as reluctance to leave one's terrestrial Mother and community of spirits." Requesting the return of human remains from colonial institutions also shows this respect for community, family, and land.[14]

According to Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism is a land-based project of an ongoing nature. The structure of settler colonialism requires the physical killing and displacement of Indigenous people and the renaming of Indigenous places with English names. This certainly occurred in New England, where places were renamed and monuments were erected in settler towns to declare what Wolfe calls "the romantic stereotyping" of alleged extinction.[15] As settler colonizers obtain land, they try harder to denigrate and destroy indigeneity in larger forms such as Native religion, Native languages, political structures, economies and cultures. Coercive attempts at Native education in later boarding schools were also settler-colonial attempts to divest indigenous people of land. Adams notes that boarding schools were located in or near large urban areas far from reservations or Indian homelands and that schools actively encouraged alumni to marry non-Indians.[16] This fits in to another tactic of elimination described by Wolfe, "officially encouraged miscegenation."[17] Cherokee anthropologist Robert K. Thomas has discussed the "peoplehood paradigm". According to Thomas, Indian people have a commonality in land, language, religion and sacred history. Settler

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[14] Susan A. Miller, "Native Historians Write Back: The Indigenous Paradigm in American Indian Historiography," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 1 (2009): 25-45.
[15] Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 402.

[16] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 20-21.

[17] Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 388.

colonialism was an assault on the idea of peoplehood. New England Indians underwent this settler-colonial process. But because literacy has complex and unpredictable outcomes, its role was not exclusively a colonial one. Alphabetic literacy arrived as a settler-colonial tool of conversion and assimilation, but Native people used it to establish their permanence in literature, land and culture. Native uses of alphabetic literacy were a combination of older, pre-alphabetic information-recording practices and newer ones introduced by colonists. I also examine the writings of the Mayhew family[18]who preached to the Wampanoag of Martha's Vineyard, A few eccentrics went against the tide of their times by viewing Indians in a favorable, yet still ethnocentric, way, like Thomas Morton of Merrymount[19] and Roger Williams[20] of Rhode Island. This thesis will examine literacy and the foundations of American Indian intellectual history through a critical settler-colonial lens. It will also explore the emancipatory quality and often contradictory nature of literacy; literacy had a power to maintain peoplehood even as colonizers sought to undermine it.

Literature Review

Indians wrote very little about themselves in the early period of colonization, or wrote in ways that did not survive to the historical record. Cohen and Glover provide an excellent description of pre-contact writing and reading practices among American Indian

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[18] Experience Mayhew and Laura Arnold Leibman. *Indian Converts: A Cultural Edition.* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press), 2008.

[19] Thomas Morton, *New-English-Canaan* (Carlisle, Mass: Applewood Books, 2011).

[20] Roger Williams and Howard M. Chapin, *A Key into the Language of America* (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1997).

societies, including how those technologies transitioned and transformed after contact into colonial-era literary styles.[21] John Eliot wrote *Indian Dialogues* in the mid-1600s after working with the Algonquian for years and setting up "praying towns" of Christian Indians. [22] Published books and writings by Indians in English begin to appear by the time of the American Revolution. Samson Occom, a Mohegan preacher, tried to use his literacy to defend his people's land and political power from colonists, and fulfill a traditional leadership role in his community. His voice of resistance often conflicted with his duties as a pastor and public figure. [23]

His disillusionment with colonial society would lead him to dream of a multi-tribal Christian confederation, which his son-in-law, the diarist Joseph Johnson, also shared.[24] Works specifically about Native American literacy are still comparatively rare. Drew Lopenzina is the most exhaustive in his description of Native writing and reading practices with various media and materials before and after contact. He attempts to construct a "longhouse of the archive" rooted in Native epistemology. [25]Hillary Wyss maintains that Christian Indians and their writings thrived because they found their own

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[21] Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover, eds., *Colonial Mediascapes: Sensory Worlds of the Early Americas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 2014.

[22] John Eliot, Henry Warner Bowden, and James P. Ronda, *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980).

[23] Samson Occom and Joanna Brooks, *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[24] Joseph Johnson and Laura L. Murray, *To Do Good to My Indian Brethren: The Writings of Joseph Johnson, 1751-1776* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).

[25] Lopenzina. *Red Ink*, 18.

concept of the divine, consistent with traditional beliefs[26]. James P. Ronda and Joanna Brooks also celebrate the hybrid culture of Christian Indians as source of strength for survival. Joanna Brooks also speaks positively of Occom and Johnson's fusion of Mohegan and Christian symbolism.[27] James P. Ronda describes what he believes is an "Indianization of Christianity" on Martha's Vineyard and discusses the texts that the Vineyard people produced.[28] Margaret Connell Szasz describes early Indian writers as "cultural brokers", intermediaries between their people and non-Indians who were able to have the best of both worlds and successfully guide their people into the future.[29] E. Jennifer Monaghan concludes similarly that New England Indian literacy was more similar to that of Anglo-Americans than different, although she acknowledges the pivotal role that Indians played in documenting their languages and preserving a sense of Native nationalism.[30]

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[26] Hilary E. Wyss, *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity and Native Community in Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

[27] Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African American and Native American Literatures* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2003.

[28] James P. Ronda, "Generations of Faith: The Christian Indians of Martha's Vineyard," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1981): 369-94.

[29] Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

[30] E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America.* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press), 2007.

Francis Jennings and Lopenzina are both skeptical of the writings that Christian Indians produced, seeing Christian Indian identity and literacy as acquired under duress.[31] Jennings posits that Indians accepted superficial trappings of Christianity purely for survival, and emphasizes that Christian Indians were a minority within Indian communities. Jill Lepore even sees Christian Indians as tragic figures, belonging to neither culture, their literacy more of a liability than anything else.[32] Kristina Bross takes a middle view, recognizing that Christianity and literacy were a means of survival for Native people.[33] Native literacy was both a response and a reaction to conflict and war. Nash notes the links between anti-Indianism, Puritan theology, and economic inequality: Puritan cultural dissension and land greed fanned the flames of war between the two peoples.[34] Slotkin argues that the violence of the colonial encounter became fundamental to American culture as it simultaneously destroyed and appropriated aspects of Native identity. The lives of many Christian Indians were certainly uprooted and affected by violence.[35] Cronon provides a detailed description of the ecological colonialism wrought by English presence in the Northeast and how it imperiled Indian economies, but does not

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[31] Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

[32] Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

[33] Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 2004.

[34] Gary B. Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

[35] Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (*Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

really mention the link between Indian spirituality and land.[36]Salisbury discusses the encounter between Algonquian animist spirituality and Puritan Christianity. Though Indian spirituality was linked to the land's physical features and to particular animals, commonalities between Algonquian and Puritan spirituality existed. These commonalities drew Indian converts to the new faith who had been devastated by conflict and disease and looked for a new source of spiritual power.[37] Cave describes northeastern warfare as mainly ceremonial and non-violent prior to contact: European militarism changed this dynamic when tribes resisted colonial hunger for their land and resources.[38] O'Brien notes that the creation of Natick, Massachusetts, the de-facto capitol of New England praying towns, represented a continuous attempt to articulate a pan-Indian Christian syncretism.[39] My study follows the lead of O'Brien, Salisbury and others who believe that Christian Indian identity and literacy was a successful experiment in ensuring Indian physical and cultural survival.

However, none of these studies analyze literacy and Native writing through the lens of the peoplehood paradigm and the AIS paradigm I am seeking to fill this void in the literature by examining Indian literacy through the perspective of peoplehood and nationhood. Literacy was, in many cases, an aspect of peoplehood for New England

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[36] William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Macmillan, 2011).

[37] Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[38] Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).

[39] Jean M. O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees; Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650-1790*. (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Indian peoples, as it expressed culture, sacred (albeit Christianized) history, language and the peoples' relationship to land.

CHAPTER 2

CULTURAL ROOTS OF ENGLISH LITERACY IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

Literacy often serves as a tool and a weapon of colonization. Referring to colonial Africa, Ngugi wa Thiong'o remarks, "the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard."[40] This is certainly true of Algonquian-speakers' first encounters with literacy in what became known as New England. They were already fluent in their native languages for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans in their homelands, they had multiple avenues of literacy and various ways to record those languages, in systems of meaning inscribed on bark, skin, or stone. Their first exposure to literacy in the English language often occurred in the context of wrenching societal changes wrought by a European invasion, that included such devastation as land loss, warfare, cultural assimilation, depopulation from Old World diseases, political subjugation, Native language prohibition and obliteration, and conversion to Christianity. Audre Lorde similarly warns, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."[41] For Lorde, using the "master's tools" of Eurocentric education gave only temporary victory to people of color, not radical change of a status quo.

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[40]Ngugi wa'Thiongo, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), 8.

[41] Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House: Comments at 'The Personal and the Political' Panel," (Second Sex Conference, October 29, 1979), in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzalda and Cherre Morraga (New York: Kitchen Table, 1983), 98-99.

For many Algonquian-speaking peoples along the eastern seaboard and elsewhere, institutional education became a scholarly incarnation of the master's house. Its very existence rested on the premise of their exclusion, silence, and subordination under European hegemonic control, expressed through literacy, language and technologies of communication. The English language contained the inherently oppressive worldview imposed by the colonizers. [42] This imposition included the "stamping out of an indigenous literacy"[43]; suppression or ignorance of literate traditions in American Indian languages that predated contact. If earlier forms of Native writing were destroyed because of imposition of alphabetic literacy, Native languages themselves were preserved in alphabetic script, in a settler-colonial fashion, to act as tools of conversion and commerce. Yet this linguistic colonization had unexpected effects and consequences. According to Collins and Blot, "The process of creating, through schooling, a select class…also opened a space for the creation of a 'counter-subject.'" This led to the retention of "an identity which incorporated native meanings into the colonial discourse in ways *contra* the colonial order. It is here where the subalterns' struggle for voice is located."[44] I aim to amplify their struggle for cultural survival and their efforts to establish a voice to defend their identity, sovereignty, rights, culture and

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[42] James Collins and Richard Blot, *Literacy and Literacies; Texts, Power and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 122.

[43] Ibid., 130.

[44] Ibid., 122.

land. Literacy was "weapon and shield" and the "language of the conquered" was "*transformed* by the colonizer" for missionary purposes.[45]

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Native Literatures and Literacy

Stigmatizing Native Americans as a people without writing was part of colonial strategies of erasure., meant to proclaim Indian inferiority. As Collins and Blot note, "Without writing, native history is delegitimated, native history is elided. Without history, the natives can more easily be remade (inscribed in the texts) using molds provided by the right of conquest and Christendom."[46] Although European missionaries did introduce the idea of alphabetic literacy, Native people throughout the hemisphere had pre-existing ideas about pictures, representation and art. For instance, Mesoamericans had up to thirteen different kinds of writing, designed to secure the rights and history of their noble elite, as well as for purposes of religion, accounting and astronomy. The Aztecs had two types of schools. The *telpochcalli* taught commoners to be soldiers, policemen or bureaucrats. The *calmecac* taught the sons of noblemen learned songs, writing, reading, oratory and verse.

In common with other native literacies, Aztec literacy existed alongside oral tradition as a supplement to it. Reading was a performative, oral act that used pictographic writing as a mnemonic device. The priests who codified the Nahuatl

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Collins and Blot, *Literacy and Literacies,* 124.

language used it as a lingua franca to evangelize Indians, against the wish of the Spanish crown. Native language literacy both facilitated and subverted the aims of colonization.[47]

Sequoyah, the inventor of the Cherokee syllabary, had a white father and spoke English, yet created an alphabet that helped his fellow Cherokees to persist in peoplehood, a system drawing on ancient Cherokee symbols. The Cherokee alphabet helped his people become literate, found a newspaper, defend their political sovereignty, and declare claims to land and property. [48]

A nineteenth-century Cree syllabary also has a unique style, and a Cree origin story. It is written with "a series of triangles, angles and hooks of various configurations, each of which is mirrored in four directions. Each symbol depicts syllables rather than individual sounds, and to these are added a number of accent characters that represent terminal consonants and vowels. ""[49] According to Cree scholar Winona Stevenson, the Cree believed their syllabary was a sacred gift, given from the spirit world. Cree people wrote it on birch bark. This is strikingly similar to the case of Silas John, a Western Apache from the Fort Apache Indian reservation who received a vision with a "set of sixty-two prayers" and "a set of graphic symbols with which to write them."[50] These symbols also contained an aspect of oral performance. One symbol "simultaneously

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[47] Ibid. 126.

[48] Ellen Cushman, *The Cherokee Syllabary: Writing the People's Perseverance* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

[49] Winona Stevenson, "Calling Badger and the Symbols of the Spirit Language: The Cree Origins of the Syllabic System," in *Native Historians Write Back: Decolonizing American Indian History*, eds. Susan A. Miller and James Riding In (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011), 90.

[50] Collins and Blot, *Literacy and Literacies,* 150.

required speech and action: the linguistic utterance *yo'o'sn bi ha'dndi'n* 'God, his sacred pollen', and the speaker sprinkling a pinch of cattail pollen upon ritual paraphernalia, thereby blessing it."[51] The prayers were written with paint on tanned deerskins, used as memory aids to perform Apache ceremonies in an Apache-Christian faith created by Silas John and his followers.

Although the efforts by New England Indians and missionaries to codify their languages predate the writing of Cree and Cherokee, their entry into alphabetic literacy was broadly similar. The project of codifying Algonquian into a written language and translating it for written texts relied heavily on the linguistic skills, literary input, and intellectual and physical labor of Indians themselves. Without James Wowaus the Printer, Job Nesutan, and Cockenoe, Algonquian would never have become a written language, and these men too drew upon older systems of cultural meaning to construct it.

Lopenzina argues that the book, as the center of the Euro-American Christian narrative, promotes a dualistic, all-or-nothing worldview, which requires Native erasure for its own validation. Lopenzina writes, "To accept that Natives were accurate repositories of their own histories and origins would be to acknowledge them as legitimate civilizations and delegitimize the entire basis for colonial expansion."[52]

Aztec and Mayan literature is well known, but other tribes also possessed writing systems prior to contact. The Jesuit father Brebeuf remarked upon the burial of a seventeenth-century Huron chief, noting that the chief's daughter "placed at his side his *Atsatonewai,* his package of council sticks, which are all the books and papers of the

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[51]Ibid*,* 149-54.

[52] Lopenzina, *Red Ink,* 40.

country."[53] Brebeuf also noted that the Huron language already contained a verb for "to write" at the time of his encounter with it. "In the Northeast, carved messages known as *awikhigans* were left on trees"[54] and communicated events in precise detail to informed passerby. Similar markings wee made on birch-bark paintings and animal-skin coats. Germaine Warkentin writes of a textual system done with equal facility on rock, hide, or paper, a "pictographic communication" among Plains people. This writing was used to record observations of their land and natural world, their religion and ceremonies, and their conception of time.[55] Learning these systems probably took years of study, total immersion in the writing as children, and profound leaps of thought.

John Heckewelder, a Moravian missionary among the Delawares during the 1760s and 1770s, observed that "they have certain hieroglyphics, by which they can describe facts in so plain a manner, as easily, indeed, as we can understand a piece of writing." These markings were written on large pieces of bark or on trees with the bark removed. Heckewelder further claimed that the "hieroglyphics" were in widespread, common, and longstanding use, mutually comprehensible to neighboring tribes. "I have seen the Delawares read with ease the drawings of the Chippeways, Mingoes, Shawanos and Wyandots." Markings on trees and "a kind of sundial" were used to tell the location

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[53] Georges E. Sioui, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), 150.

[54] Lopenzina, *Red Ink,* 54.

[55]Germaine Warkentin, "Dead Metaphor or Working Model? 'The Book'" in Native America. in *Colonial Mediascapes*, ed. Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 50-82.

of game and the time at which it had been killed so that women could retrieve it for processing.[56]

In New England during the 1640s, Roger Williams described two terms in Narragansett for painting and for writing- *wussuckwhommin* and *wussuckwheke.* Williams described *Wussuckwheke* as being "closest to English letters", a form of lettering also used on Narrangansett clothing. Puritan minister, author and pamphleteer Cotton Mather, while dismissive of Native traditions, noted that there were rocks in the countryside engraved with "unaccountable characters." Wampum, the clamshell beads with spiritual and monetary value in the early Northeast, were recognized as legal tender for two hundred years.

Arguably, wampum also served as an archival material, a kind of book and diplomatic tool for the Algonquian-speaking people of the northeastern seaboard. Messages were "spoken into" wampum belts and the belts were called words.[57] Slotkin agrees that wampum's spiritual power protected commercial transactions from evil.[58] Rath highlights that wampum recorded and continued Indian traditions of oral culture in an important way. Wampum represented words, but it "confirmed and preserved" them. It also solemnized treaties and alliances by song and shout between the giver and

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[56] John G. E. Heckewelder, *An Account of the History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations, Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States,* (Philadelphia, PA: Abraham Small, 1819).

[57] David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 125.

[58] Nash, *Red, White, and Black,* 43.

recipient. "Speech, wampum and nonverbal vocalizations" made negotiations binding. [59] Colonists' failure, to recognize the evidence of literacy and the transmission of knowledge among Indian people of the Northeast represented a deliberately induced amnesia, an averting of the colonial gaze, one ingredient in a long collective spell of forgetting. To acknowledge Indian culture as being worthy of survival in the English world would be to question the idea of Indian inferiority that justified genocide of Indians and the taking of Indian land.

Bi-cultural Indian intellectuals used their newly acquired literacy skills to defend land claims, set up Indian-only court systems, and argue for cultural and racial equality. By doing so, they asserted their indigeneity, despite the cultural fluidity with Anglo-America that their educations required. They exposed harmful myths of American jingoism and vociferously reminded settlers that societal amnesia was not possible or desirable. These writers remedied what Taiaiake Alfred calls "intellectual violence done to indigenous people through the continued denial of their reality in the dominant mythology."[60]

According to historian Alfred A. Cave, most northeastern tribes prior to contact practiced a highly ritualized form of war, which was not especially bloody in nature. Contact with English militarism changed the dynamic of war, however. Contact intensified casualty rates in war, and generated conflict and war among formerly peaceful groups. The Pequot and Western Niantic tribes allied themselves with the Dutch, while

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[59] Richard Cullen Rath. "Hearing Wampum: The Senses, Mediation, and the Limits of Analogy," in *Colonial Mediascapes*, ed. Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 290-324.

[60] Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness,* 81, 88.

the Mohegans, Mohawks, and Narragansetts sided with the English, as were the Montauks of Long Island. But prior to contact, all these tribes had coexisted on relatively peaceful terms through such means as trade relations, military alliances and intermarriage. For example, Uncas, who played a crucial role in leading the Pequot massacre, himself possessed a mixture of Pequot, Niantic and Narragansett blood. The Pequot were not vilified by the English at first, and were even lauded as “just and equal”, “not treacherous” [61]to men of any race. Cave concludes that the Pequot were anciently indigenous to the coastal area of the Niantic River in Connecticut and the Wecapaug River in western Rhode Island[62] In the early 1630s they numbered around 16,000 people. By the outbreak of the Pequot War in 1636, their number had been reduced by smallpox to about 3,000 people. They lived in hilltop forts at Mystic, Connecticut and Weinshauks (modern New London). The forts may have been constructed as a response to difficulty with Europeans. Like other northeastern Native leaders, Pequot sachems governed by consensus.

Their lands, however, stood in the way of English expansionism. Commerce and the ensuing demand for European trade goods also added tension to tribal rivalries and compelled many tribes to forge new alliances. The Pequots and the Narragansetts were prominent trade rivals. At the height of their power in the 1630s, the Pequots functioned as the principal middlemen in the fur and wampum trade with the Dutch and commanded tribute from client tribes in the Connecticut Valley and eastern Long Island. Long Island allies provided white and purple whelks and clamshells for wampum, and access to the

[61] Cave, *The Pequot War*, 40.

[62] Ibid., 43.

Connecticut River gave the Pequots easy control of the interior's furs. Wampum also had a spiritual significance as well, since reflective materials like crystal, shell and precious metals were considered the gifts of spirits and "Other World Grandfathers."[63] Wampum was given as a gift in marriage and in mourning, as payment for crimes, as political acknowledgement of war, protection, or peace and as ransom for captives. Pequot desire to maintain their power and control over the trade in fur, wampum and European goods caused the conflict, *not* aggression or fierceness on their part! White wampum served as a gift for happy occasions, and purple wampum from quahog shells for solemn ones.[64]

Colonialism and the Creation of an Imperial, Transatlantic Literacy

Puritans and other colonizing Europeans believed that the Christian God had granted North American lands to Christian, European nations by divine right.[65] This was the ideological premise of their colonization. They quickly laid claim to land through writing and discovery. The 1620 charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony declared English dominion over most of the east coast of North America, described as "deserts". This document describes Indians as brutish people, savages and barbaric nomads providentially falling victim to "plague." The charter averred that the lands in question did not really belong to Indians or any other Christian country, and listed Christian

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[63] Ibid., 53.

[64] Cave, *The Pequot War*, 147-53.

[65] Steven T. Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2008), 98.

conversion of Indians as the first reason for colonization, behind the desire for land and wealth.[66]

Yet, the history of English colonization is deeply entwined in the history of English literacy. An Englishman named John Wycliffe printed the first English-language Bible in the turbulent decade of the 1400s. Wycliffe was an Oxford theologian, and his views largely presaged the staunch Protestantism, particularly the Puritanism, espoused by the English colonists of North America. Wycliffe and his followers sought to promote literacy for the common people because they believed in the doctrine of "dominion by grace", where every individual was immediately responsible to God, did not require an intercessor, and needed to obey God's law. This directly challenged the authority of the Roman Church and its clerics. For Wycliffe and other 'Bible men', God's law was found in the Bible, *not* Catholic canon law. Personal faith in Christ was what mattered. Therefore, to correctly obey God's law and be a good Christian, every person needed to be made an individual Bible reader.[67]

Wycliffe and his Bible-men largely created the idea of Bible literacy as the center of Protestant faith, an idea deeply in the minds of Puritans who wanted to teach literacy, Christianity and "civilization" to the Indians. In the 1630s, Puritan colonizers carried these cultural beliefs about the superiority of Bible literacy across the Atlantic. They held

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[66] Ben Perley Poore, *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the United States, Part 1* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1878), 922.

[67] Frederick F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English* (Cambridge, England: Lutterworth Press, 2002).

unbridled confidence in their own cultural superiority and insularity, and a vituperative hatred for the Irish.

The English Protestant colonization and settlement of Ulster, at the invitation of Oliver Cromwell, was roughly contemporaneous with the settlement of Massachusetts, and in both instances, the derogatory language used to describe and displace both indigenous populations is nearly the same. Like their countrymen and relatives who would participate in the slavery of Africans for labor and the killing and displacement of Indians, they needed to believe in their own racial whiteness and degrade the Other. In 1609, at the time of the English settlement of Ulster, Sir Charles Cornwallis likewise believed that the Irish deserved extermination or exile, because they were "enemies to God and Man, a race of savages" and "a disgrace to human nature."[68]

The Irish had been subdued by the superior political force of the English empire. Colonists coming to North America hoped that their own military might and Christian religion would win similar victory among Indians and cause them to adopt English ways. If Englishness represented the apex of civility and culture, then Indians could be likened to incomplete Englishmen, in a sense. Just as the ancient Britons had transformed their culture in response to a new religion, Christianity, and Roman imperial dominion, the Indians would too. William Strachey wrote that the Anglo Saxons had also been nomads, wanderers "in the woods" who hunted and slept in caves. But the Romans had built towns, castles, and cities, brought political centrality by making the "barbarous island" a colony, and brought the people into the use of "divine reason." Thus, Strachey believed, Englishmen could take Indians out of "barbarous" customs and into a different way of

[68]Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (New York: Verso, 1994), 31.

life. Robert Johnson concurs that the Romans had made Britons "tame and civil" in their culture and religion.[69] Oberg argues that the "expansive, commercially minded, and aggressive" attitudes of frontier whites ultimately prevailed over grander metropolitan ideas of assimilation to "civility."[70]

English Puritans inhabited an intensely metaphorical world, where the anxieties about the dark tendencies of their own culture could be dispelled into the figure of the dark-skinned, exotic Other. Their theology almost required a sense that they were besieged or "surrounded" by demons and unbelievers in a Satanic sense. Lacking the traditional enemies or political persecution they faced in England, Puritans often invented enemies- witches, theological dissenters, people of color and Indians. Because they believed they had been sent to the New World on a divine errand, they marginalized Indians into a side role. "Friendly" Indians were Godly; "unfriendly" Indians Satanic agents. Puritan captivity narratives particularly stressed that Indians and their land were diabolical and uncultivated.[71]

Puritans considered their bodies "houses", and considered their houses to be embodied spaces. The physical body, the spiritual body meant to occupy a "new house" after the Resurrection, and the body of a house were conflated. The various embodied houses or house-like bodies were, in turn, equally vulnerable to attack. American Indians who painted their faces were compared unfavorably to the artifice of sacrilegious English

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[69] Michael L. Oberg, *Dominion and Civility: English Imperialism in Native America, 1585-1685* (Ithaca, NY. Cornell University Press, 1999), 53-54.

[70] Ibid., 50.

[71] Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978).

theatrical people. Long hair on men, whether on an English dandy or unconverted Indian, was unbearable to Puritan divines like John Eliot and Cotton Mather, who derided it as a sign of "corruption" and "lust". The symbolic cannibalism of taking the host for communion, the Body and Blood of Christ, fired the Puritan imagination with worry about the "cannibalistic" class exploitation and consumerism within their own culture. These attitudes led them to stereotype the American Indian people they encountered as being cannibals. No ethnographic evidence, however, for cannibalism among Massachusett, Mohawk or Pequot people exists. Conversely, colonists did sometimes cannibalize Indians, to chilling effect. In 1677, a group of women in Marblehead, Massachusetts beat two Indian prisoners to death, beheaded them, and cut off some flesh for eating.[72]

To the Puritan colonizers, Indians represented a dark mirror to English fears of laziness, sexuality, filth and disease. William Baker, a man who lived among the Pequot was condemned in 1637 by Roger Williams for his "nakedness", "cutting of hair", and the "many whoredoms" he had engaged in before marrying a Pequot woman. To Williams, Baker's defection into Pequot society was a troubling indication of colonial culture's weakness, relativity, and possible savagery. He also worried that Baker's example would "fire whole towns" to desert the carefully crafted Christian vision of their founders.[73] Native American societies and bodies were objectified for their artifice and

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[72] Robert Blair St. George, *Conversing by Signs: Poetics of Implication in Colonial New England Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000),149-50.

[73] Roger Williams to John Winthrop, January 10, 1637, in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams, Volume 6: The Letters of Roger Williams* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007), 84-85.

their alleged monstrosity and ability to cause disruptions in patriarchal or civic order, an inversion of bodily hierarchy, “portents of God’s hidden will.”[74] John Winthrop, Puritan governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, believed that Indians ought to be “rooted out” of the land as members of the “cursed race of Ham”, destined for slavery and death. Winthrop, like Williams, disapproved of whites who were too friendly to Indians, calling them “loose people.”[75]

Colonists also wrought ecological change, which was devastating to Indian culture, subsistence upon the land, and the very meanings of identity for Native people. In Native cosmology, plants and animals are not simply resources to be used. Rather, they are distinct “peoples” of their own, valued relatives who anchor humans to the natural world, of which humans are only a part. There is no dichotomy between nature and culture: culture arises from nature and it is a part of nature too.[76] Plants are meant to be approached with humility and respect for their sacredness, power, and ability to give or take life. Alteration or abuse of plants and animals would cause negative consequences for humans and would be a violation of “rules” set in place at their creation.[77]

Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete explains that Indian peoples experienced a collective soul identity rooted in the experience of life on ancestral lands, which he terms

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[74] St. George, *Conversing by Signs,* 169.

[75] John Winthrop and James Kendall Hosmer, *Winthrop’s Journal: History of New England 1630-1649.* (New York, Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 18-19, 57.

[76] Daniel R. Wildcat, *Red Alert! Saving the Planet with Indigenous Knowledge* (Golden, Colo: Fulcrum Publishing, 2009), 134.

[77] Diné College, Diné Policy Institute, Diné Food Sovereignty, September 20, 2014. http://www.dinecollege.edu/institutes/DPI/Docs/dpi-food-sovereignty-report.pdf, 37.

“ensoulment”. This unique relationship of Indians to the natural world “represented the deepest level of psychological involvement… a map of their soul”[78] and a belief that the Earth herself was a living soul. The Cartesian dualism of eighteenth-century France that underlies much of Western philosophy, including its philosophy towards nature, is thus a foreign concept for Cajete. He elucidates, “In the Indian mind, spirit and matter are not separate: they are one and the same.”[79] He points out that many American Indian creation stories reflect the belief of Indian people that they emerged from the earth, springs, mountains or caves with the aid of “earth spirits”, and the word ‘indigenous’ comes from the Greek word for entrails- being so native to a place that you reflect its entrails, its innermost part.

This Indigenous sense of place was preserved and maintained through ceremonies, spirituality, and Indian ecological stewardship. Land was culture and culture was land. But the experience of forced relocation endured by many American Indian tribes acquires a renewed horror through Cajete’s lens. Exile from the homeland, for many tribes, represented a kind of spiritual death, deicide, or loss of collective soul. Connections to land also symbolized their kinship to the rest of the plants, animals, living beings and non-living beings in the home environment, to “the spirit of life itself”[80] as Cajete so eloquently defines it. Northeastern Algonquians saw themselves as synonymous with the land in a similar manner. They divided the universe into the sky,

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[78] Gregory A. Cajete, “Ensoulment of Nature,” in *Native Heritage: Personal Accounts by American Indians, 1790 to the Present*, ed. Arlene B. Hirschfelder (New York: Macmillan, 1995), 55.

[79] Ibid., 56-57.

[80] Cajete, “Ensoulment of Nature,” 57.

called the Upper World, the earth, or the Middle World, and an underworld below the sea. All of these worlds had malleable boundaries that could be crossed by people, animals, shamans, and non-human spirits.[81]

Conversely, incoming English into New England saw the ecological changes wrought by their colonization of the land as part of their divinely ordained mission to settle the land. In their eyes, the area was a "remote, rocky, wild-woody wilderness"[82] and to change it was wholly positive. The landscape was never viewed as a totality, its own entity, but as a canvas consisting of valuable resources to be marketed and commodities to be exploited and sold. Several centuries before, at the onset of the first colonization, England experienced a shortage of firewood, which led to restrictions on the cutting of timber. With this condition continuing into the 1600s, England demanded timber from the colonies, coloring the way the settlers perceived forests. They treated "members of an ecosystem" as "isolated and extractable units."[83] John Dunton, an English bookseller who visited New England in 1686, observed that the Indians harvested wood selectively, allowing heavily tapped areas of forest to re-grow. Some Indians interviewed by Dunton also believed that the English came to their country solely for wood.[84] The Indians were, in a broad sense, correct!

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[81] Anne Marie Plane, *Dreams and the Invisible World in Colonial New England: Indians, Colonists and the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 52.

[82] Cronon, *Changes in the Land,* 5.

[83] Ibid., 21.

[84] John Dunton, *John Dunton's Letters from New-England* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1867), 292-93.

The English expressed amazement at the region's vast quantities of fish. The same was true for wildfowl, waterfowl and birds. The settlers described killing birds by the tens or hundreds with the greatest of ease. Wild turkeys were particularly relished as fatter, sweeter-tasting, and much tamer and easier to hunt than turkeys bred for sale in England.[85] The extensive hunting of large, slow-moving, plump turkeys even changed the American wild turkey's physical appearance and genetic makeup. Large, plump turkeys were more easily killed, and smaller ones survived to reproduce.[86]

Indians and Europeans, alike, loved the abundance of shellfish along the Atlantic Coast. Oyster banks spread a mile wide, clams grew huge in size, and mussels existed in tens of thousands. The landscape the English invaded was not strictly natural, however. Native hands had altered their environment for thousands of years. English settlers marveled at the "poverty" of Indians, but, as usual, they misinterpreted the Indians' way of life, undertaken for reasons which would have seemed diametrically opposed and opaque to the English even if they had known of them. Many settlers were dismayed to discover what Indians had always known: the landscape gave of its food only in particular seasons, and at particular times. It was not a Paradise or Arcadia of perpetual abundance, that useful image of colonial propaganda. Abundant fish, fowl, and wild berries were written off by spring and summer visitors, who did not live in the area full-time, nor contend with comparatively leaner autumns and winters. New England Native peoples adapted their lives and their diets to this seasonality, while settlers did not

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[85] Ibid. Also see, Cronon, *Changes in the Land,* 22-23.

[86] Andrew F. Smith, *The Turkey: An American Story* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 40.

anticipate it and often starved to death. Natives had an "intimate understanding of the ecology"[87] of local plants and animals, and made themselves, their houses, and their communities mobile to harvest them. Penobscot and Abenaki Indians in the northerly regions of Maine, who did not practice any agriculture, lived on fish and shellfish in the spring months, migratory birds and their eggs in spring and early summer, and nuts, berries, wild plants, birds, porpoises, whales, walruses and seals in the late summer. In autumn and winter, villages broke apart into family bands and moved inland from the coast to hunt game animals. If snows were deep, animals could be tracked easily and hunting was good. If snows did not come or were too thin, it was easy to starve. Early Maine Indians calmly accepted that February and March would be times when food was scarce, an acceptance that baffled Europeans.[88]

The agricultural Indians of southern New England, whom Europeans first encountered, used their fertile soils to grow crops. This food provided a buffer against the uncertainty of purely seasonal food supplies, and consequently, agricultural tribes were able to maintain much larger populations. By one estimate, agricultural tribes constituted eighty percent of New England's Indian population at the time of contact. They grew corn, beans, squash, pumpkins and tobacco all in the same mound, which English observers acknowledged as an agricultural method superior to their own. It minimized erosion of the soil while preserving the soil's mixture created very high yields per acre, discouraged weed growth, and provided a balanced diet. Women did the farm work and

[87] Cronon, *Changes in the Land,* 37.
[88] Ibid., 74.

made most of the food.[89] They owned wigwams and most household goods, and were responsible for household migrations and the gathering of wild plants. Men engaged in hunting and fishing. Female food harvesting or gathering and male hunting both peaked in late summer. This surplus resulted in large gatherings of people for festivals in which they shared or gave away extra food.

Times of surplus made summer the warring time. As soon as harvest-time festivities or hostilities were concluded, southern New England Indian men, like their northern cousins, hunted for wild game to sustain them in autumn and winter, which women butchered, processed, and skinned. Winter was when the villages would regroup in treed valleys, away from strong winds, where wood for fires was plentiful and in close proximity. Hunger between hunts was a common occurrence in winter. Like the Indians of Maine, agricultural peoples further south accepted seasonal hunger in winter and spring with a fortitude that astounded and perplexed colonists. Hunting and gathering activities around one particular locale, the depletion of firewood and agricultural soils, and the accumulation of garbage and fleas around human settlements, necessitated that Indian communities move often. Indians maintained their forests by setting fires twice a year to burn off "bushes, brambles and cumbersome under-wood"[90] or undergrowth. Thus, the open, park-like appearance of the forests, much remarked upon by the English, was maintained by Native cultural practices rather than by nature. The preservation of large, widely spaced trees made hunting easier, and the periodic burning of the undergrowth allowed grass and herbs to grow, increasing game animals' food supply.

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[89] Ibid., 84.

[90] Ibid., 50.

At the time of first contact, Native New England peoples were clearly taller, cleaner, and better nourished than the newly arrived Europeans. Because of connection to and knowledge of the landscape, they were also better equipped to find food. These European newcomers were so incompetent at sustaining themselves that they frequently starved, robbed Indian graves for anything edible, or, in desperation, ate each other. Each group was apparently astonished at the appearance of the other. The Indians might have seemed handsome to the English. New England Natives held a dim view of the dirty newcomers, who, according to Bittinger, "did not take baths regularly, and they were physically weak, sexually untrustworthy, atrociously ugly and just plain smelly."[91]

Why is an ecological discussion so important to a paper ostensibly on literacy? The phenomenon of New England Indians accepting Christianity and entering into a literate colonial world cannot, in my view, be extricated from the larger processes of ecological disruption created by colonial invasion. Europeans hunted wild game to decline, while their introduced plants and weeds displaced the wild foods Indians used. Perhaps the most disruptive to Indian lifestyles was the introduction of livestock, whose extensive grazing and fecal matter imperiled the entire basis of Indian economies.

From the beginning of their intrusion into North America, the ethnocentric English consistently and deliberately failed to see how Indian nations marked the landscape or use of the land. The Wampanoag leader Metacom or "King Philip" is best known for leading his people against the English settlers in what was called "King Philip's War" of 1675.

[91] Cynthia D. Bittinger, *Vermont Women, Native Americans & African Americans: Out of the Shadows of History* (Charleston, SC: The History Press,2012), 22.

But what is curiously striking and almost unknown about him is that, at one point, he was known amongst the English as a 'keeper of swine". Perhaps no animal was as disruptive to traditional American Indian hunting and gathering lifestyles as the pig; its foraging habits when turned loose in the American forest meant that it ate acres of vegetation, destroyed acres more in its messiness, and left behind deposits of highly toxic parasites and fecal matter. This imperiled the food supply for wild game, as well as other wild fruits, vegetables and plant foods. Pigs also ate shellfish and the crops from Indian fields. Metacom's brief and bizarre career as a swineherd is a testament to individual Indian adaptability and enterprise in the face of socioeconomic and ecological change. This is also a potent symbol of Metacom's attempt to obey an English lifestyle and English legal code. Conflicts over livestock reflected larger disputes about subsistence practices, land use, property rights and political sovereignty.[92] Settlers saw Metacom's pigs on Metacom's land as a threat. It is this kind of adaptability that touched off King Philip's War. The Indians who fought for Philip sought to preserve their sovereignty and their existence, to remain in their land and resist subjugation. The English viewed the war as a similar existential struggle between English "civilization" and Indian "savagery", a Satanic plot against the "godly" colony chosen by God.[93]

English settlers believed they were building an Eden out of wilderness, but they were occupying a space that had known millennia of Indian culture, a culture they were

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[92] Virginia DeJohn Anderson, King Philip's Herds: Indians, Colonists and the Problem of Livestock in Early New England, *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (1994): 620-624.

[93] Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 24.

trying to render invisible. The idea of the New World as "wilderness", as the untamed, blank canvas of a Puritan utopia, is itself a colonial construct. The spaces that the European colonizers imagined as wilderness were actually a charnel house, the landscapes left untended and untilled because entire Indian communities had been eradicated by disease. Discussing this point, historian Cronon writes, "It is tempting to believe that when the Europeans arrived in the New World, they confronted Virgin Land, the Forest Primeval, a wilderness which had existed for eons uninfluenced by human hands. Nothing could be further from the truth. In Francis Jennings's telling phrase, the land was less virgin than it was widowed."[94]

Jennings estimates a ninety percent mortality rate for New England tribes from 1600 to 1674. Offering an interesting philosophical answer on colonial society's assignation of low status to the remaining Indians, Jennings writes, "In a sense, one can say that the Indians universally failed to acquire capital because they did not want it. Therefore, they sacrificed status as well as opulence and incapacitated themselves for assimilation to the dominant European society except as laborers, fighters, or small peddlers". There were relatively small amounts of good land in New England, "rich enough and deep enough" for easy farming. Population pressure was relatively light at first, especially since large coastal areas had been scythed by epidemics. The founding of Connecticut and the expansion of Massachusetts stimulated more colonial land hunger, Indian resistance, and war.[95] English colonialism weakened Indian land tenure, relocated indigenous communities, disrupted hunting, gathering and fishing practices, and placed

[94] Cronon, *Changes in the Land,* 12.

[95] Jennings, *Invasion of America,* 110.

individual Indians in debt to English merchants for trade goods. The landscape did not reflect a false binary of a "virgin" state and a settled state: it reflected the disparate environmental practices of two different cultures, two ways of relating to an environment.[96] Why did the Wampanoag tolerate the first colonists at all? Multiple sources suggest that they hoped to use the English as an ally against their powerful rivals, the Narrangansett.

Therefore, coastal Algonquian Indian communities sought out Christianity and literacy because of the impact of colonization, as a response to rapid and unwelcome ecological and social change. Only a small minority ever lived in the praying towns. They did so to preserve some aspects of their traditional subsistence lifestyle, have access to English technology and trade goods, and secure protection from rival tribes. Their old ways of life no longer sustained them and they needed a new cultural model that would ensure their individual and collective survival under new circumstances. This was perhaps the primary motive for their Christian conversion, despite the specious Puritan emphasis on their sudden love of Jesus.

Puritans saw the conversion of Indians and the political structure of the "praying town" as a realization of their idealized theocratic community, a community free of the monarchy they so detested. Prophecies of the blissful messianic time foretold by Scripture required the end of all temporal political authority and the conversion of "heathens", including Jews and Indians.[97] Conversely, the unconverted Indian was an

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[96] Cronon, *Changes in the Land,* 89.

[97] Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization,* 28.

affront to them, because if they could not control the Indian and direct society according to their will, their divine mission would fail and "surely be answered by God's wrath."[98]

These social changes frightened Puritans with visions of "idle and masterless men" in an "anti-community."[99] Similarly, "the discovery of New World cultures revealed a body of peoples ripe for utopian molding"[100], due to a "displaced and anomic condition" caused by conquest, disease, and the disarray of Native political structures. Early-modern English missionaries compared Native Americans to another European population that was displaced and of mysterious origin, not only, in this case, the despised Irish but rather the Hebrews or Jews. The wholesale conversion of Indians to Christianity was thus a prerequisite for the dawn of utopia, just as the wholesale conversion of Jews was believed to be necessary to bring about the New Testament's messianic time. "Its conversion and utopian fixing" was a "pressing political project for the latter days… the raw material for constructing an eternal commonwealth."[101]

Puritans wanted to live their fantasy of a "primitive" church untainted by corruption and governed in apostolic simplicity. They saw the potential for this primitive church among Indians in the New World, calling them "soft wax" to be molded. The social disorder of the seventeenth century that roared all around them was not a cause of concern to Puritans; rather, it was a source of creative energy and inspiration that convinced them a new social order was urgently necessary. Puritanism was a reaction to

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[98] Nash, *Red, White, and Black,* 95.

[99] James Holstun, *A Rational Millennium; Puritan Utopias of Seventeenth-Century England and America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1987).

[100] Ibid.*,* 35-36.
[101] Ibid., 34-35.

displaced populations but also "a cause of their displacement" by encouraging the individual's removal from the customary social matrix of rural household, local parish, and monarchy and a reorganization into the Puritan family, the congregation, and the "theocratic state or regenerate community in continental or colonial exile."[102]

Literacy was a key component of both their exile and their religion. For Puritans, literacy, faith and conversion were synonymous. Their religion forbade an earlier Catholic focus on images, art, and relics as objects of veneration, which Puritans and other hard-line Protestants regarded as idolatry. This led to a new, stronger relationship between faith and the printed word for Puritans. When reading, discussing and interpreting the Bible and other works of Scripture became Protestantism's main tenet, the act of reading was in itself considered as sacred and associated with devotion. As Kellaway writes, "His religion was based on the printed word; if the Indians' was to be likewise based, they must be taught to read."[103] Holstun concurs in this assessment, writing. "One crucial trait of Puritanism is the central importance it lends to the printed word." a word that "crystallized the myth of England as an elect nation and a people of the Book."[104] Their emphasis on Scripture represented a rebellion against the Anglican hierarchy, and its multifarious interpretations wrought much dissension. "The word united men in revolt and divided them in victory."[105] Slotkin also suggests that the

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[102] Holstun, *Rational Millennium,* 38.

[103] William Kellaway, *The New England Company 1649-1776, Missionary Society to the American Indians* (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1962), 25.

[104] Holstun, *Rational Millennium,* 41.
[105] Ibid., 42.

primacy of the book in Puritan culture arose from their distaste for other forms of communication and entertainment, like theatre.

The discipline and orderliness structuring "praying towns" of converted Christian Indians was much based on Scripture and how to made Scripture the foundation of political structure, a preoccupation that, in itself, was "the font of a stream of print.' Puritan utopists believed that the creation of a rational civil society was only possible through rigorous order. They followed the lead of the Czech Protestant philosopher John Comenius (1592-1670), who wrote that order preserved the entire universe… "*ordo anima rerum,* order is the soul of things. Whatever is well ordered is stable and permanent as long as it is in order. But if it loosens order, it weakens, wavers, collapses and falls in ruins."[106] This echoes Fanon's belief in the use of order to impose colonial hegemony on a space, because a colonized world "is a compartmentalized world."[107]

Missionaries who brought literacy and Puritan Christianity to New England Indians used this logic of compartmentalization to divide, conquer, and culturally sanitize Indian cultural difference. Literacy in English or in Native languages was part of their dividing line between the "civilized" praying Indians and the "savage" Indians practicing traditional religion and culture. Both cultures had different ideals of masculinity, which clashed heavily in the conversion effort. English masculinity and the masculinity of tribes like Wampanoag and Narragansett people were somewhat similar. They believed strongly that a good man should be pious, have physical prowess, and be physically and

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[106]Ibid*.,* 276-77.

[107]Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2007), 3.

spiritually superior to an enemy vanquished in war. Both colonists and Indians valued storytelling and prized leaders who were talented speechmakers and orators.[108]

Stories told to Wampanoag children of the legendary giant Maushop tended to emphasize Maushop's feats of physical strength, skill in hunting and fishing, and generosity in sharing his food and tobacco. This was an example of the value placed on reciprocity and sharing of resources by Native people, who considered individual economic competitiveness to be rude and greed to be antisocial. Maushop "pulled up the largest trees" to cook a whale and share it in a feast. While smoking "all the tobacco on Martha's Vineyard", he is said to have formed the isle of Nantucket by knocking the snuff out of his pipe. Maushop also performed the heroic function of a monster killer when he slew Wompsikuck, the Great White Eagle. Maushop pursued the eagle with magic moccasins embroidered in purple wampum, which gave him the power to leap leagues in a single bound. Wampanoag people believed that the "lifeblood of the eagle" was responsible for the red streaks in the cliffs at Gay Head. Maushop offered sacred tobacco to Kiehtan, the chief god, in celebration of his victory over Wompsikuck. Mists from the southwest wind were the work of Maushop's pipe, the trail of smoke from his offering.[109] Despite such stories, the English believed that the Indians were insufficiently manly. Cotton Mather wrote that the Christian Church was like an ox when it was controlled by the "Antichrist" (Roman Catholicism). His association of Antichrist with a

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[108] R. Todd Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians; Masculinity, Religion and Colonialism in Early New England* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 18.
[109]Delores Bird Carpenter, *Early Encounters; Native Americans and Europeans in New England*, *From the Papers of W. Sears Nickerson* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 157-63.

negatively feminine Catholicism is interesting. He could be reacting against the idea of the cloistered nun or the entire belief system of Mariology. According to Mather, only with the Reformation did the Church become “like a Man”, whose duty it was to convert Indians to “Manly Christianity.”[110] The ways in which the English categorized and colonized Native space to create colonial space are fascinating.

John Eliot became known as the “Apostle to the Indians” for converting Massachusett and Wampanoag Indians to Puritanism, transcribing the entire Bible into a dialect of the Algonquian language, and constructing fourteen “Praying Towns” where converted Indians relocated and lived. Praying towns were located near English settlements. Their residents were the coastal Algonquian survivors of epidemics, governed by Indians but according to English law. They were meant to be sites of forcible assimilation, but in practice contained a mixture of cultures.

Jennings believes Eliot to be something of an opportunist and a huckster. In Jennings’ view, Eliot took up preaching to Indians in order to appease wealthy benefactors in England and assure himself a comfortable living. His fortunes changed quite suddenly, with a generous subsidy given to him by Lady Mary Armine.[111]

Like his fellow Puritan contemporaries, Eliot harbored millennial sentiments about the coming of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth by the creation of a utopian social order and was militantly anti-royal. He emigrated to Roxbury, Massachusetts in 1631 and was a teacher and pastor there, as well as among the tribes. England came relatively late to the endeavor of converting Indians when compared to its Spanish and French imperial

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[110] Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians,* 1-29, 30, 32.

[111] Jennings, *Invasion of America,* 233.

competitors, causing much panic for English clergymen. They hoped to allay anxieties at home and abroad that England's enemies had "won unnumbered converts to their faith" in the New World, "threatening to create a vast body of adherents to Romanism who would overwhelm the Protestant settlers whenever the two came into contact."[112].

John Eliot and other Puritans rejected the notion of Indians as potential citizens of a new Christian commonwealth, because to them, unconverted Indians were "devil worshippers", "idolaters" and "witches" who employed "many kinds of enchantments." This concept of the Indian-as-Other, the total reverse of the Englishman, would quickly take on genocidal implications in the Pequot War of 1637-38, which Eliot witnessed. The Pequot War resulted from struggle between the English and Dutch colonists over the New England fur and wampum trade. Puritan colonists sought Pequot land to accommodate their growing population, and to control the trade. They had a spiritual motive as well; they had just exiled the heretics in their own midst, led by Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams. Spiritual anxieties became redirected towards Indian-killing during the Pequot War, relieving Puritan religious aggression. "Dead Pequots were offered to God as atonement for Puritan failings." Nash says bluntly.[113] The time of the Pequot War was also a time of increasing economic inequality among white New Englanders, fueling land greed and anger towards prosperous Indians.[114]

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[112] George Parker Winship, *The Cambridge Press 1638-1692: A Reexamination of the Evidence Concerning the Bay Psalm Book and the Eliot Indian Bible As Well As Other Contemporary Books and People* (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945), 151.

[113] Nash, *Red, White, and Black*, 86.

[114] Ibid., 217.

The Narranganset killed an English trader in 1636 to prevent him from trading with their Pequot rivals, and blamed the Pequots for his death. The Narragansett, at the urging of Roger Williams, allied with the English against the Pequot. This led to battles between the English, the Dutch, and their tribal allies, and the wholesale massacre of the Pequot at their fort near Mystic, Connecticut. The Mohegan sachem who led his people in an alliance with the English in the Mystic massacre was Uncas. Uncas and his descendants would later play an important role in the spread of literacy and Christian education among New England Indians. On May 26, 1637, John Mason, William Bradford, Uncas, and the Narragansett allies stormed the Mystic fort. Pequot men had been led astray by a diversion. Wequash, a Pequot whose name meant "Swan", had allied himself with the Narragansett in hopes of gaining power and trade. When it became clear that the English were intent on massacre, Wequash and the other Indian allies fell to the rear and pulled back. Mason, Underhill and the British soldiers went on ahead, attacking the Pequot women, children and old men with the full force of their swords and bullets. Mason himself shrieked "We must burn them"[115] and set the wigwams aflame. The terrified Pequots ran from the soldiers, only to perish in a veritable wall of fire. Other observers recalled "streams of blood" and the scent of human flesh "frying in the fire."[116]

Wequash, Uncas and the Narragansett yelled "Mach it, mach it!" urging the Englishmen to stop, but were ignored. Six or seven hundred Pequot died that day. Others who tried to escape were "bound hand and foot and thrown into the ocean. A group of

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[115]David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 113.

[116] Ibid., 114.

women and children who tried to flee through a swamp were murdered, their bodies simply cast into the mire[117]. Survivors were either forced to settle with other tribes, including the Narranganset and Mohegans, or deported to slavery in the West Indies, particularly Bermuda, marking the end of the Pequot tribal unit for the next three-and-a-half centuries.[118] After the end of the Pequot war in 1638, anyone caught by the colonial authorities speaking the Pequot language in public was guilty of a capital offense and could be legally punished by beatings, enslavement, or death.[119] Survivors became incorporated into Uncas's band of Mohegans. The aftermath of the war was English control over fur and wampum trade. Pequot lands were annexed to become the nucleus of English expansion into Connecticut, and the war's aftermath convinced other tribes that the English were dangerous.

Eliot had opposed the Massachusetts Bay Colony's earlier "friendship treaty" with the Pequot in the 1630s prior to the outbreak of the war, because the governor and his magistrates had concluded the treaty without the consent of their constituents.[120] The war delivered to Eliot a refugee, a Montauk Indian of Long Island named Cockenoe, who was to act as his first interpreter. The Long Island Montauks were the best wampum-makers in the Northeast and a principal client tribe of the unfortunate Pequot. Cockenoe lived in Dorchester, Massachusetts, as a servant to Richard Colicott of Dorchester.

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[117] Ibid., 113-115.

[118] Cave, *Pequot War*, 147-53

[119] Valerie Alia, *The New Media Nation: Indigenous Peoples and Global Communication* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 75.

[120] Convers Francis, *The Life of John Eliot, Apostle to the Indians* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1840), 16.

Jennings maintains that Cockenoe, as an Indian captured in war, was actually a slave. Cockenoe was multilingual, able to speak English, Montauk, and other Algonquian dialects. Cockenoe taught Eliot to speak Algonquian, meaning he played an instrumental role in developing a written alphabet and grammar that would produce the first Algonquian texts. Cockenoe was praised as "ingenious" by Eliot and many others; his name translates to "He marks, takes knowledge, instructs or imitates."

In his later career, Cockenoe was an intercessor in land disputes and land cessions between Indians and whites in Connecticut and Massachusetts. A typical payment for his services was the recorded gift of a coat, gunpowder, lead, a hatchet, and sixteen shillings' worth of wampum. He successfully defended the land claims of his fellow Montauk to Shelter Island.[121] Eliot also convinced the Massachusetts Bay Colony to pass laws regarding converted Indians, subjecting them to a law against blasphemy, and set fines for "idolatry", preventing them from visiting their pow-wows or medicine men.[122]

Literacy in New England for people of any color continued to be related to religious instruction. Though colonial New England achieved mass literacy among men, and considerable literacy among women, this literacy was essentially conservative and tied to ideas of a Christian commonwealth. Lockridge demonstrates this in a study of signatures in wills in colonial New England. Mass male literacy was the result of public

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[121] William Wallace Tooker, *John Eliot's First Indian Teacher and Interpreter, Cockenoe de-Long-Island* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1896), 21, 29, 37.

[122] Michael P. Clark, *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter* (Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 10.

schools with religious motives.[123] For Anglo-American New Englanders, literacy in itself remained an expression of traditional values, not a disruption of them. The desire to appear legitimate and Godly in the eyes of the mother country was often in conflict with the Puritan desire to make money. Though New Netherland displayed pictures of wampum and beaver on its colonial seal, the Massachusetts Bay Company viewed themselves, conversely, as giving their "superior…patronage" to the Indians rather than admitting their economic dependence on Indian trade. The mercantile aspect of their relationship with the Indians was "fused with…ascetic and holy altruism of their response to the natives' hapless cry, 'Come over and help us.' "[124]

Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, sought for civic conversation between Narragansetts and whites, and the assimilatory civic integration of Native people into the colonial society of a literate social order.[125] He imagines a dialogue between a Christian Indian, Miantonomi, and a native traditionalist. In this fictive conversation, Miantonomi states that the English Christian religion is superior because it has written texts[126] Williams was a firm proponent of the equality of all Protestant believers. His 1643 book, *A Key into the Language of America,* gave an account of the Narragansett language, customs, and way of life. He was not mystified or appalled by the idea of

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[123] Kenneth A. Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England: An Enquiry into the Docial Context of Literacy in the Early Modern West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974), 41.

[124] Philip H. Round, *By Nature and By Custom Cursed: Transatlantic Civil Discourse and New England Cultural Production, 1620-1660* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 215, 254.

[125] Ibid., 251.

[126] Ibid.

female labor. He praised Indian women's agricultural acumen and their skill at trapping otter and beaver. Williams also admonished English Christians not to feel racially or culturally superior to Indians, a tolerant attitude perhaps linked to the tolerance for dissent and plural modes of worship in early Rhode Island which made it a home for exiles and misfits. "Boast not proud English, of thy birth and blood/ Thy brother Indian is by birth as Good."[127] He commented on their hospitality and good cheer, and their generosity with food and lodging. "They offer them to eat of that which they have, though but little enough prepared for themselves", and "make their neighbours partakers with them". For a stranger they "give him to eat of what they have."[128] Williams recorded the Narragansett belief in dreams as omens or prophecies, the conviction that they originated from further west and that souls would go to the west when they died. "Therefore they have a Tradition, that to the Southwest…the gods chiefly dwell; and hither the soules of all their Great and Good men and women goe."[129] He praises the fortitude of men who are able to subsist on nothing but boiled cornmeal. The people reverenced crows and did not kill them, because of a tradition that the first corn and beans were brought to them by crows[130].

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[127] Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 53.

[128] Roger Williams and Howard M. Chapin, *A Key into the Language of America* (London: Gregory Dexter, 1643/ Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1997), 16.

[129] Ibid., 86.

[130] Ibid., 90.

The dictionary's purpose of allowing "civility" between English and Indian is belied by some of the phrases, including four different phrases for "there is an alarm"[131], "why are you fierce?",[132] four phrases for robbery when traveling[133], and three phrases referring to sickness- "I am sick. Are you sick? How long have you been sick?"[134] The longer chapter on disease mentions pox, plague, "great plague", swelling, fever, tremors, and chills[135]. The tensions of colonialism were never far from the surface. "They commonly abound with children, except the plague falls amongst them or other lesser sicknesses and then having no means of recovery, they perish wonderfully."[136] He referred to his hosts as "these ravens"[137] when praising their generosity. Williams gives a word for fatherless children, remarking that "there are no beggars among them, nor fatherless children un-provided for."[138] The Narragansett called Englishmen Chaquaquock, or "Knife-Men."[139] He mistranslates *manitou* as "God" or "a god", when the reality was more complex. Manitou was "a force, spirit or energy that was present in

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[131] Ibid.,184.

[132] Ibid., 182-83

[133] Ibid., 76.

[134] Ibid., 193-94.

[135] Williams and Chapin, *A Key into the Language of America,* 196.

[136] Ibid., 148.

[137] Ibid., 17.

[138] Ibid., 29.

[139] Ibid., 38.

all things,"[140] including rocks, trees, plants, animals (especially black foxes), special landscapes, storms, and people. People could possess manitou or earn it as well. Williams noticed their preoccupation with honesty, and with telling the truth as a prerequisite for honor. There are many phrases for hiring and paying Indian guides. The Narrangansetts apparently asked him to write letters and take dictation for them.

There are large sections on trade for beaver or money and the importance of wampum. A section on debt shows how indebted the Narragansett and other tribes were becoming to English merchants, and how sickness made them give money and goods to medicine men. "I was fain to spend my money in my sickness."[141] There is a section on the sale of land. This is perhaps where Williams shows his greatest sympathies, writing the phrases for "The Indians are not willing, they want room themselves, we are friends. I will give you land, be not churlish."[142] There are words for fear, scorn, and other emotions of war. The grim phrase "Pequttoog paququanan"- "The Pequots are slain"[143]- particularly stands out. In his narrative, Williams often compared the Narragansett people favorably to the English. He often included expressions like "I love you, mercy, let us cease arms, let us agree, I love you, my heart is true."[144] perhaps in hopes that the bloody wars between English and Indians would cease.

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[140] Edward J. Lenik, *Making Pictures in Stone: American Indian Rock Art of the Northeast* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 4.

[141] Williams and Chapin, *A Key into the Language of America,* 169.

[142] Ibid., 166.

[143] Ibid., 188.

[144] Ibid., 189.

But he too was not above the virulent racism of his day; non-Christian Narragansetts were still heathens, “wolves with men’s brains”[145]; Mohawks were “mad dogs”, and surviving Pequots needed to be hunted down and killed like animals, “removed from their dens.”[146] This type of Indian-hating considered Indians subhuman, undesirable weeds.[147] Drinnon also has an intriguing, almost Freudian theory about the Puritan psyche’s role in Indian-hatred. Having repressed the natural sensuality of their bodies, Puritans vented their repression into overweening piety and harsh punishments for nonconformists, and apparently relished doling out punishment.[148] To survive, the Puritan social contract needed its followers to believe that they were pioneers, building a New Israel out of desolate wasteland peopled by hostile savages. Mingling with the “savages” would result in racial and religious contamination. Not all Englishmen followed this script, however.

Thomas Morton, an eccentric libertine aristocrat, openly admitted in his 1632 memoir that he preferred the beautiful American landscape, and enjoyed the company of Native people (especially Native women), whom he found more noble in character than his fellow English. In 1625, Morton and his people built a settlement called Merrymount, where they lived peaceably with Indians. Merrymount residents hunted with Indians, danced with them around a festive Maypole, intermarried with them and otherwise acknowledged Indian humanity and the beauty of the land in which they lived. The rites

[145] Drinnon, *Facing West*, 39.

[146] Ibid., 53, 99.

[147] Ibid., xxvi.

[148] Ibid., 56-57.

at Merrymount combined Indian spirituality with a kind of carnival-like English folk culture rooted in English pagan tradition, “high” Anglicanism and Catholicism, “pagan, Dionysian elements in the English character.”[149] A May-Day poem recited at Merrymount urged its inhabitants to “drink and be merry, merry boys” while delighting in “the Hymen’s joys” with “lasses in beaver coats.”[150]The erudite Morton, formerly a lawyer, also incorporated traits of Greco-Roman classicism. This is a long way from Puritan stoicism! For refusing to see America as desolate and Indians as savages, Morton was imprisoned three times. His utopian vision was quite distinct from the Puritan one. He sought a metaphorical and literal union between English and Indian people and cultures, which would produce a hybrid race of strong, handsome, free men and women[151]. The Puritans attempted to deport him back to England several times as well, and razed his settlement at Merrymount. He always returned, though age and frail health essentially put a stop to his ideological challenge of colonialism[152].

John Eliot noted that many Indians held steadfastly to their land, which impeded conversion and the adoption of an English lifestyle; “the business about land giveth them no small matter of sticking.”[153] According to Bross, upon first hearing Eliot preach and converting to Christianity, Indians began attempting to secure their land rights in English

[149] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence,* 58.

[150] Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (Carlisle, MA: Applewood Books, 2011), 91.

[151] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence,* 60.

[152] Drinnon, *Facing West,* 9-20.

[153] Round, *By Nature and By Custom Cursed,* 252.

courts.[154] "Praying Indian" is a literal translation of an Algonquian term, and Christian Indians took their role, and their equality to fellow Christians, very seriously.

The message of Ezekiel about dry bones returning to life, and communities being strong upon their land, resonated among Indian listeners who had suffered catastrophic losses. The very idea of resurrected, vibrant Indian communities was threatening the settler-colonial right to that land demanded by neighboring English communities. Indian residents of Gay Head, Massachusetts, petitioned against the appointment of Elisha Amos, an Englishman, as their judge. Amos was well-known for corrupt land deals. Gayhead residents wrote in their own language, to "beseech" that he be taken away from them, citing the Bible verse Job 24:30, "Let not the hypocrite rule."[155] The Bible was described as a "sword", but the "sword" of literacy could be taken up by colonized communities in their defense. The Christian Indian Ponampam did this when discussing a desire to flee the colony and run away to Connecticut. But he refused to. Ponampam blamed his temptation on the Devil and secured a place for himself in his community by affirming a Christian identity, his rights to land. He also called into question the notion that the English were a chosen and godly people by emphasizing his own saintliness amid the temptation of English civilization. This neatly reversed the trope of the savage wilderness as satanic territory.[156]

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[154] Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 26.

[155] Ibid., 73.

[156] Ibid., 82.

Some English people were so convinced of the strength of Indian literacy that they mistrusted it as a form of code-switching. When a group of praying Indians wanted to establish a church in Roxbury, Massachusetts, the English ministers interrogated them vigorously regarding the sincerity to their conversions and lifestyles. Samuel Danforth castigated a man named Nishohkou about sinful habits, demanding that Nishohkou "*answer me in English*" about his candidacy for church membership.Danforth evidently worried about Nishhohkou's sincerity, Nishhohkou's desire to appear holy before his fellow tribal members, or the inadequacies of translation.[157]

The missionaries in praying towns found themselves defending Indian land tenure inadvertently. But Roger Williams was one of the few Englishmen to openly defend Indian land rights, criticizing the Bay Colony's usurpation of Indian land. Though he believed, like all his countrymen, in the superiority of English culture, his critique of colonial land tenure led to a demand that his manuscript on the topic be burned. He obtained food and shelter with the Narragansett people before finding passage back to England. In his Algonquian dictionary, he expressed hope that civil conversation would eventually "make a nerer Neighborhood & society with that great body of the Narranganasetts."[158] To prove to metropolitans in England that they were indeed a godly, civil people, they needed "Indian conversation"[159] as a demonstration of their religious sincerity.

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[157] Ibid., 76.

[158] Round, *By Nature and By Custom Cursed,* 249.

[159] Ibid., 253.

For Puritans, alphabetic literacy in the English language was highly gendered and synonymous with a confession of sincere Protestant faith. Indians first encountered alphabetic literacy in a religious context, too, but their uses of literacy were bilingual and complex. Like Puritans, praying Indians used the written word to proclaim their Christian identity. Their reasons for proclaiming such an identity differed from the intent of the colonizers, however. They used English writing systems and English courts to establish claims to land, defend Indian political sovereignty, and challenge English jurisdiction over their towns. I also believe that they were simultaneously engaged in a larger imaginative exercise. They were placing their individual selves and their communities into the written record of colonial history, affirming their continued existence and presence. The continually existing presence of Indian communities persisted, despite the best efforts of colonial authorities to relocate, kill, or otherwise destroy them. The written affirmation of Indian existence was also often an attempt to demonstrate continuity in the face of rapid changes to Indian customs and ways of life. Those changes, and the role literacy played as a response and side-effect to change, are the subject of my next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

BECOMING LITERATE: INDIAN RESPONSES TO LITERACY

Prior to contact and colonial devastation of the eastern seaboard, most New England Indians lived in seasonally migratory villages, combining fishing and hunting with agriculture of maize, beans, and squash. Most villages were located along rivers for the easy access to hunting, fishing, shellfish and good farmland. Prior to the arrival of the English to Plymouth Bay, the main Indian peoples of the region, the Pawtucket, Wampanoag and Massachusetts, had already traded with the French and Dutch. Through this trade came an unexpected consequence; hepatitis, causing the great epidemic of 1618-19. This was a "virgin-soil epidemic", to which Indians had no prior immunity.[160] Whole villages therefore disappeared. An observer in 1622 noted that Indian fields were overgrown with weeds and that the skulls and bones of dead Indians made "a new found Golgotha." The disease swept away "young men and children", with population declines of 75 to 90 percent estimated.

Because of the recurring epidemics, many Indians began to live at coastal sites year-round in order to ensure access to shellfish for the making of wampum, now in great demand as a trade item. European-made drills sped up the manufacturing process of wampum, and its use as money caused an inflation in the price of material goods. Rivalry and competition over European trade in furs and wampum forced many villages into "permanently fortified sites housing relatively dense populations" due to increased, and

[160] Oberg, *Dominion and Civility,* 10, 15, 84.

increasingly violent, inter-tribal warfare.[161] Many survivors abandoned their old villages to join relatives in other places, and formed political alliances with stronger tribes like the Narragansetts and Micmacs in order to survive.

Narragansett people, like their neighbors, were polytheists, despite Puritan efforts to paint them as proto-Calvinists. Their creator god was one of many gods, and destroyed the first human pair upon making a second pair. Man and woman were equal to each other and created separately from each another in Narragansett cosmology. Although they believed that good people were rewarded and bad people punished after death, the Narragansett believed that the majority of people were good, and that the afterlife would include a plenitude of sexual activity, or, as Roger Williams stiffly put it, "carnal joyes."[162]

According to John Winthrop, the god Hobbamock, whom Puritans regarded as the devil, appeared to Indians who were working as servants to English families of Boston and Martha's Vineyard. Hobbamock warned against English religion and explicitly mentioned the dangers of acculturation through literacy. "About this time (1637) the Indians, which were in our families, were much frighted with Hobbamock…appearing to them in divers shapes, and persuading them to forsake the English, and not to come at the assemblies, nor to learn to read."[163]

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[161] Ibid., 94-95, 99.

[162] Williams and Chapin, *A Key into the Language of America,* 130.

[163] John Winthrop and James Savage, *History of New England from 1630-1649* (Boston: Phelps and Farnham, 1825), 254.

Survivors of the epidemics also experienced a loss of faith in their traditional religion. Their old political balance of power, based on reciprocally equal relationships, was lost, and their autonomy compromised. Their resistance to Christianity was fiercest where leadership was strongest, and where it was weakest, they looked to its tenets to provide order and direction. They harbored the belief that they had been "rendered spiritually powerless."[164] A political alliance with the English, including accepting Christian conversion, was an antidote to the disarray of their communities. It would bolster them against attacks by rival tribes, expand their political influence, grant access to trade and trade goods, and raise their prestige in the eyes of their neighbors. They needed to politically redefine their relationship to their own sachems and leaders, and secure a place to live in the wake of English expansion. They wanted to learn new skills such as carpentry, blacksmithing, spinning and weaving. Some clearly hoped that the English alliance would strengthen their compromised spiritual power, too.

In many cases, they retained older understandings of spirituality even in new Christian contexts, which would inform their acquiring and practice of literacy. They associated sacredness with specific places, spaces, and landscapes. Sacred events could mark out and hallow a particular place. A group of Indians quizzed John Eliot as to "what countrey man Christ was, and where he was borne? How far off that place was from us here?" To the Indian audience, spiritual history and geography were one; they viewed a new faith through an old and accustomed lens. Eliot preached that the Word of God could be "read" not just through Scripture, but through observing animals, "the book of the creature… every creature being a word or a sentence." This resonated powerfully with

[164] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 100-36.

New England Indian listeners, for whom particular animals were symbols and sources of spiritual power. They asked him whether they could be "saved" by reading "the book of the creature." They appreciated ideas like the immortality of the soul, spiritual communion through prayer, and used the imagery of "Christ the physician" to attribute shamanic qualities to Jesus.

In the wigwam of Waban, one of the first "praying Indians", sermons and prayers took place, as well as extensive intellectual questioning of Christianity, in the Algonquian language, which John Eliot learned and began to preach in. This reflected English belief in the "civilizing" nature of domestic space.[165]

Jennings and Peyer both agree that Waban was basically a political non-entity and not a sachem or authority prior to his association with the English. In a topsy-turvy post-contact world, individual Indians sought benefit and influence through such alliances. Peyer notes that "Eliot's subversive tactics" for obtaining converts often meant promising ambitious individuals relief from their tributary duties to sachem" if they lived in praying towns.[166] Waban agreed to an alliance with the English when he received permission from them in 1650 to construct the town of Natick, Massachusetts, the first of the praying towns. In Algonquian, "Waban" means "east" or "dawn" and derives from the same root as the word "Wampanoag" meaning "easterner". The Wampanoag historically built their wigwams with the doorways facing east toward the rising sun. "Waban" is a word also

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[165] Kathryn N. Gray, *John Eliot and the Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay: Communities and Connections in Puritan New England* (Lanham, MD: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 69.

[166] Bernd C. Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-writers in Antebellum America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 35.

associated with the white rabbit, a much-reverenced trickster figure who would appear at unexpected times to help his people. The Christian sachem Waban also represented the spiritual power, or *manitouwock,* of books. Thus, Waban's name and appointment to the first "praying town" must have signified hope that the Algonquians would survive the onslaught of colonization and war.[167]

The people of Natick consisted of Nonantum Indians, Nipmucks, Pawtuckets and Neponsets. The name Natick was an Anglicization of the word "Nittauke", meaning "my land" in Algonquian. It is almost a fierce proclamation of the peoples' desire to remain in their traditional homeland and avoid further erasure and displacement! Jessie Little Doe Baird, a Mashpee Wampanoag linguist who has done much to revive the language in modern times, adds a poignant layer to the meaning of Natick or Nittuake. The pre-contact Wampanoag believed for generations that land was an aspect of themselves as a people, part of their peoplehood or nationhood. "This is my land and my land is me, and I am it. We come from it, we eat from it, and when things die they go into the land." This was expressed and implied by the phrase *Auke,* simply means 'land'. But to say *Nittaukin* signifies that "I am physically the land, and the land is physically me."

Little Doe observes that the word *Nittaukin* was used more frequently in Indian communities after the arrival of Europeans. She suggests that the word itself may be a colonial construct. For her, the word is tragic in what it does not say or define; namely, that the complex relationship between land and people could no longer merely be indicated by the older word *Auke,* and that an estrangement from land and peoplehood

[167] Lopenzina, *Red Ink,* 100-04.

was possible, necessitating the use of *Nittauke or Nittaukin*.[168] A Mohegan sachem in the eighteenth century expressed a similar concept. Appagese, a Mohegan sachem, said in 1703, "from a boy their ground and he grew up together… and why our ground and we should be parted now, we know not."[169]

Stephanie Fielding, a contemporary Mohegan linguist, also notes the ways in which her language is reflective of peoplehood and a "communally minded culture" rather than the individual. "In an English conversation, a statement is typically built with the first person- 'I'- coming first. In the same statement in Mohegan, however, 'you' always comes first, even when the speaker is the subject."[170]

Conflict over land was never far from the mind of English or Indians; Indians selected the town site of Natick because, according to Eliot, they had lived there "of old, even beyond the memory of the oldest man alive."[171] Yet the land on which Natick was built fell within a land grant for the town of Dedham, causing much conflict and bickering between Eliot, the Indians, and the colonists of Dedham. Dedham eventually agreed to give over the land, provided that the Indians did not set traps on land marked by a fence, and provided that the community be confined to the north side of the Charles

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[168] *We Shall Remain: After the Mayflower*, directed by Chris Eyre (2009: New York: Apograph Productions, Tecumseh LLC and Native American Public Telecommunications, 2010), DVD**.**

[169] Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 77.

[170] Patricia Cohen, "Indian Tribes Go in Search of their Lost Languages,: *New York Times*, April 5, 2010, accessed May 19, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/06/books/06language.html?_r=0.

[171] O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*, 34.

River. Expansion of the town caused a legal battle, which was surprisingly decided in favor of Natick. "Although the legal right of Dedham thereto cannot in justice be denyed", a judge wrote, the "improvements" of the Indians in their mode of life, plus "their native right…cannot, in strict justice, be utterly extinct."[172] The establishment of Natick was an attempt to protect Indian land rights and communities by having English colonial courts acknowledged Indian land title. Jennings likewise concedes that "to accept the missionaries was to obtain a secure habitation."[173]

Waban, a Wampanoag, eventually became the town's chief justice and law enforcer, a sort of "first citizen." At its peak, Natick contained a population of two hundred and sixty-seven people, mostly Wampanoag. Waban enforced a code of laws drafted by the missionaries. The laws required men to build houses and cultivate fields, displacing the role traditionally given to Indian women. Men were required to cut their hair. Women had to wear their hair up and cover their breasts.[174] There were eventually seven praying towns in all. These included Punkapoag, a Neponset settlement in present-day Canton and Stoughton, Magunkog, Hassanamesit (present-day Grafton), Wamesit, near Roxbury, and Okommakamesit. The Indians of Okommakamesit were in dispute with the nearby town of Marlborough, whose English residents were jealous that the Christian Indians had been given prime farmland and grazing land. Other praying towns had similar legal codes. The town of Nashobah (Littleton), a Pawtucket settlement,

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[172]Ibid., 38-50.

[173]Ibid., 243.

[174] Richard W. Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians Before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 54-55, 74-75.

banned drinking, but also banned traditional practices such as "wearing 'disguises' when mourning, having more than one wife, segregating women during meunstration, and greasing the skin. These changes drove a wedge between Christian Natives and traditionalists, including Christians and traditionalists in the same family, which caused bitter division. The rejection of polygamy meant that secondary wives and children were often discarded, and traditionalists often fled the praying towns to live further inland. Polygamy was traditionally a practice of elites, used to cement alliances. Most of the pre-contact Indians already lived in lengthy monogamous unions.

According to Plane, there was a high tolerance among Indians for sexual exploration by unmarried people, and divorce could be easily obtained. However, unfaithfulness in marriage, particularly by women, earned "passionate condemnation"[175]. Indian women also tended the land, carried the raw materials of wigwams on their backs, and bore fewer children than English colonists. All of this made Indians seem "strange" to the English and helped inscribe cultural differences as racial ones within colonial culture. The English courts of New England respected Indian marriage rights as "sovereign"; non-Christian Indians were not required to have a magistrate for marriage. Marriage represented the civic order and separate nationhood of both peoples. Colonists found to be in a sexual relationship with an Indian woman or man were severely punished by New England for violating this order. Their sentence for such behavior was usually a whipping.[176]

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[175]Anne Marie Plane*, Colonial Intimacies; Indian Marriage in Early New England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 30-38*,* 32.

[176] Plane*, Colonial Intimacies*, 30-38.

Like many others, Waban's acceptance of Christianity was predicated by the epidemics that devastated Indian populations and upended the old political, social, and spiritual milieu. "A little while agoe after the great sikness, I considered what the English do, and I had some desire to do as they do." he "wondered how the English come to be so strong to labor… I thought I shall quickly die, and feared lest I should die before I prayed to God."[177] Clearly Waban and other Indians of the era were reacting to the group-wide historical trauma and grief of colonization. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart defines this as "the profound unsettled bereavement resulting from cumulative devastating losses, compounded by the prohibition and interruption of Indigenous burial practices and ceremonies."[178] The early Native peoples of New England certainly experienced this, as they were caught in a tumultuous milieu of disease, death, and conflict. Yellow Horse Brave Heart describes the cumulative or collective nature of the trauma as being particularly harmful to Native communities.[179]

The fear of sickness and death aligned with Puritan notions of guilt. In Puritan eyes, getting well was a sign of repentance, while failing to be cured indicated spiritual discord, a message resonant with Indian listeners. Waban's construction of a Puritan-style fort meetinghouse for prayer meant that the Indians of Natick had come under "civil order." Eliot further wrote that "my argument" for delaying their full church membership

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[177] Clark, *The Eliot Tracts,* 271-72.

[178] Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Josephine Chase, Jennifer Elkins, and Deborah B. Altschul, "Historical Trauma Among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Concepts, Research, and Clinical Considerations," *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 43, no. 4 (2011): 282-90, accessed April 11, 2016.
http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=67458117&site=ehost-live

[179] Ibid., 283.

had "fallen away."[180] The residents of Natick carved out house lots, planted orchards, and laid out streets and a stone-and-timber footbridge over the Charles River. They adapted to the market economy by selling what they hunted and gathered, making crafts such as baskets and working as hired hands on English farms.

However, the Natick Indians continued to live in wigwams. The Naticks also continued to hunt, clam, and fish, putting a dam near the river bridge to catch alewives. They voted to elect their leader and named him in Biblical fashion as a "ruler of hundred", but he was their accustomed sachem, Cutshamekin, and Waban only the "ruler of fifty", a sort of magistrate. The model of government in the praying towns thus drew from English, Indian and Biblical sources.[181]

John Eliot earnestly desired to preserve native languages and preach to Indians in their own tongue. Eliot and others believed that the Algonquian language and other Native languages were worthy of preservation because the languages held "sacred power", a "divine harmony" that had been lost during the "breaking of languages" at the Biblical Tower of Babel. This sacred power could be restored by transforming Algonquian into the "written language of pious Christians, a redeemed "primitive" language whose aural quality was believed to capture the essence of God. This essence of God would hopefully produce a universal Christianity that transcended linguistic boundaries and provide a "medium for accessing divine truth", a clue back to the one original language all humans had once spoken. Making indigenous languages comprehensible to Englishmen would of course facilitate commerce and colonial

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[180] O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees,* 40-41.

[181] O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees,* 44-46.

expansion as well. Indian grammars were "both archive and script for enacting the *translatio imperii*."[182]

At first, Eliot regarded English as alien and unhelpful to native communities because religion, in his view, was an organic social process with its own momentum and Natives should convert other Natives. For that process to occur, all women had to be taught to read and all men to read and write. In an unusually progressive manner, Eliot remarked, "English people can only teach them to read English, and for their own Language we have no book; my desire therefore is to teach them all to write, and read written hand" so that they could have "Scriptures in their own Language."[183]

Another Natick Indian named Monequassun, a "schoolmaster by around 1652", mentions that his desire and ability to read motivated him to accept Christianity. "I was much humbled because I could not reade right… I desired to read Gods Word." He learned to read and was teaching reading and writing among Indian communities as a salaried schoolmaster for years, though he held Christianity at arm's length. After the death of his wife and one of his children, he embraced the new religion, praying and cutting his hair.[184]

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[182] Sarah Rivett, "The Algonquian Word and the Spirit of Divine Truth: John Eliot's Indian Library and the Atlantic Quest for a Universal Language", in *Colonial Mediascapes*, ed. Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 376-407.

[183] Clark, *The Eliot Tracts,* 206.

[184] John Eliot, *Tears of Repentance; Or a Further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel Among the Indians in New England* (London, Peter Cole, 1653), 224.

As a place of cultural change, Gray argues that Natick provided the "necessary space" for Christian Indians to negotiate "the pace and change"[185] of their transformative adaptation and form new identities in a culturally hybrid settlement that was still recognizably Native. When a child died, prayers were led by an Indian named Tutaswampe, who gathered Indians to pray together in large numbers, and express their grief with public "sighs and tears". This is certainly not an English practice! The child was also buried under a tree; trees were believed to be the homes of powerful, nonhuman spirit beings in Algonquian spirituality[186]. This suggests a more complex engagement with the forms and rituals of Christian faith. Natick was also located at a far distance from established colonial towns like Dedham and Watertowne Mill, combining the spatial and racial segregation of whites and Indians.[187]

Due to Puritanism's anti-symbolic religious beliefs, it relied on the written word. Therefore, Eliot, the Mayhew family, and their praying Indian communities sought to train missionaries in the Algonquian language and adapt Algonquian into writing. Reading in order to read the Bible was a more socially accepted and widely taught skill, whereas the potentially dangerous act of writing was more strongly gendered and more limited. Throughout the colonial period, more English people at home or in the colonies were able to read than to write, and more men than woman could write. The most visible

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[185] Gray, *Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay*, 75.

[186] Ibid., 82-83.

[187] Gray, *Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay,* 71.

historic documents were land deeds, treaties, and documents offering alliance, all the purview of male leaders.[188]

By 1656, Harvard had erected an "Indian College" to train future Christian Indian leaders. Eliot hired Christian Indians for the translation of the Bible and other texts into Algonquian. Genesis and the Gospel of Matthew had been printed in Algonquian, due to the efforts of the polyglot Montauk Indian, Cockenoe, and the work of Job Nesutan, a Natick, and a Christian Nipmuc Indian named Wowaus or James, who chose his new last name based on his occupation, "Printer."[189] James Printer, an inhabitant of the praying town of Hassanamesit,[190]was well-suited to the task of typesetting for the Algonquian Bible. His requests for unusual type must have raised a few non-Indian eyebrows, though. The Algonquian language's newly developed print orthography required large amounts of vowels, accent marks, and the letter "K".[191] Eliot solicited English donations for Indian schooling, coyly suggesting that he had "no hope to see the Bible translated, much less printed in my dayes."[192]

First published in 1663, Algonquian Bibles were the first Bibles printed on American soil. Among native communities, Bibles became treasured family heirlooms, often collectively owned. English owners of books wrote inscriptions in books to

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[188] E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 12.

[189] Ibid., 60.

[190] Lopenzina, *Red Ink,* 110.

[191] Kellaway, *The New England Company*, 127.

[192] Cogley, *Eliot's Mission*, 120.

emphasize a sense of individual ownership, such as, “James I wrote it, this times, this 25th of June.” By contrast, an Indian reader wrote in the marginalia of an Algonquian Bible to announce the shared ownership of the book and tribal ideals of unity, collectivity and equality. “This is Joseph’s, and this is his book, and I am Moses Papenau. All the people know it to be so, that he is GOD in Heaven who created us and everything in this world.”[193] Christian Indians also wrote admonitions to themselves or others—“You, Thomas, remember, do not fornicate!”[194]- and the dates of loved ones’ deaths, to “address and sustain their collective identity as a community.”[195]

Indians in Plymouth Colony used their newly acquired literacy in their Algonquian language to declare land deeds, reaffirm communal relationships and codify a land-based identity. The land deeds collected by Goddard and Bragdon are revealing. An Indian in Plymouth named Quateatashshit wrote a will on August 26th, 1679 to deed his lands to his children. The actual scribe of the will was another Indian, Wanamuhkuhkowit, also known as William Numuk. Quatestashshit rejects the idea of selling land and expresses his desire to leave his land to his children and family in perpetuity. “I do not sell this, but I bequeath it.” he proclaimed. After mentioning the names of his children, he repeats that “my bequest is not sold” and that he wants his children and their posterity to have the land “as long as the earth exists…forever and

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[193] Ives Goddard and Kathleen Joan Bragdon, *Native Writings in Massachusett, Part 1* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1988), 443.

[194] Gray, *Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay*, 130.

[195] Ibid.

ever, as long as they have descendants." The witnesses to the will give both their Indian and their English names, "William Numuk and Simon Wekit."[196]

The establishment of a printing press at Cambridge led to the publication of what was later known as the "Indian Library", a collection of twelve Algonquian language texts, including the Bible, for the education and religious instruction of Indians in the praying towns. The Indian Library's texts were entirely funded by a corporation in England known as the New England Company. Pious gentlefolk were distressed by Oliver Cromwell's seizure of power and the tumultuous reaction of the monarchy,and decided to fund the Company's publications. The *Indian Primer,* printed in 1654, was the first such text, listing letters and formations of sounds to help with the Roman alphabet, prayers such as the Catechism, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed in English and Algonquian, with longer expositions of these prayers in Algonquian, and translations of European numbers in Roman numerals up to the number 150, so that readers could look up Bible verses.

Abraham Pierson's "Some Helps for the Indians", published by collaboration with Eliot in 1658, was primarily intended for a "local audience"[197] of converted and pious praying Indians. In this work, as well as another Puritan text, the Covenanting Confession, Algonquian and English are interlinear and the subject is a catechism or instruction on conversion. Some evidence exists that a "symbolic or hieroglyphic"[198] written communication existed among Algonquians, but missionaries insisted on the use

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[196] Goddard and Bragdon, *Native Writings in Massachusett,* 33.

[197] Gray, *Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay,* 133.

[198] Ibid.

of the Roman alphabet, to capture the “sound of Massachusett in its written form.”[199] Eliot wanted to show converted Indians the permanent authority of text, but to let the “living voice”[200] of the writer speak for itself. He and several Indian translators produced Algonquian editions of thoroughly mainstream Puritan texts such as Richard Baxter’s *A Call to the Unconverted*, Lewis Bayly’s *The Practice of Piety*, and Thomas Shepard’s *The Sincere Convert.* The translations of Baxter and Bayly’s work were the most often reprinted. From Bayly’s point of view, the written word creates an unbreakable “bond between text and reader.” This bond is so strong that it has negative consequences if the reader does not desire or reciprocate such a bond! Bayly warns readers that they mustn’t read his book unless they truly want to become sincere Christians, but that even if they do not, they ought to do so to avoid “unexpected death” from God’s wrath.[201].

Eliot and his assistants discovered that Massachusett was a complex language. It had no prepositions, and no comparative or superlative forms. “Degrees of comparison were indicated through the use of additional adjectives”, and the future tense was created by the addition of suffixes to the present tense.[202] It also lacked the substantive verb “to be”, which led to a mismatch between English words and Algonquian grammar. Eliot and his translators imported the verb from the Delaware dialect. Other peculiarities of translation soon arose. Eliot and his translators used English words with Massachusett suffixes for words like ‘book’, ‘horse’, ‘Gentile’ or ‘Psalm.’ The culturally astute

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[199] Ibid., 134.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid., 135.

[202] Cogley. *Eliot’s Mission*, 50.

translation transformed the ten wise and foolish virgins of Matthew 25:1-13 into men, because chastity was esteemed as a masculine quality among New England Indians. Some historians believe that the word "lattice" was translated as "eel-pot" because an eel-pot was the closest thing Algonquians had to a lattice![203]

The printed text of the Bible and other books tended to quicken assimilation and standardization between different dialects of Algonquian. Experience Mayhew wrote that differences in dialect were greater before the creation of printed Bibles, but that the differences "have been happily Lost"[204], and that Martha's Vineyard and Natick people now speak and write alike. Even their word for land became the same.[205]Eliot and his Indian translators wanted to preserve the Algonquian language and believed it could be a "civilized" Christian language, but helped to create a new form of it and codify it. Eliot's Algonquian grammar includes the verbs for "to pay" and "to keep"[206], introducing the idea of money and individual ownership to his audience.

Eliot recorded one Indian's dream vision. The Indian man proclaimed it had occurred two years before the arrival of the English. In this vision the Indian saw a "man all in black" holding a book. This recorded vision is useful for Eliot's settler-colonial purpose; if the English, prior to their arrival, had appeared in an Indian vision or dream, then their settlement represented the fulfillment of a prophecy. Colonists certainly saw their settlement in prophetic terms. But it also represents a bold attempt by an Indian, to

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[203] Cogley, *Eliot's Mission,*121.

[204] Ibid., 196.

[205] Goddard and Bragdon, *Native Writings in Massachusett*, 19.

[206] Gray, *Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay,* 138.

"write himself into the history of the colony"[207] and perhaps, to secure a stake in its future, which would include the perpetuation and survival of his people and culture through the medium of the book.

The literacy scholar E. Jennifer Monaghan affirms that penmanship, or writing, was considered a separate discipline from reading and was strongly gendered in colonial New England, taught by a teacher who was "always a man… with specialized training."[208]

Women taught children to read. The skill passed from mother to child, or was taught in "dame schools", also known as "reading schools"[209]. Men taught boys to write as preparation for work in commerce. The fee for teaching penmanship cost more[210]. Schools were meant to inculcate knowledge of religion and the laws governing the colonies. Legislators for free schools insisted that children must be taught to read to avoid "barbarism", bad manners, and "irreligion"[211], and also learn a trade. Children who could not read, or could not be taught to read by their families, were to be apprenticed to families who could teach them reading, writing and a trade. The fear of "barbarism" connotes the Puritan fear of the wilderness. Education was seen as an instrument of the

[207] Ibid., 59-89, 121-141.

[208] Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write,* 21.

[209] Ibid., 30.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid., 31, 33.

state to make its subjects “civil and civilized.”[212] Everyone had to be able to read the law in order to maintain perceptions of law and order. However, compliance with the laws was not uniform, and varied from town to town. In newly founded towns in the last quarter of the century, public school did begin to include girls. At the time, nothing like free public education existed in England, or almost anywhere else in the world.[213]

The status of Indian literacy in praying towns was more piecemeal, owing to the scarcity of books in Algonquian and available schoolmasters. This situation was not helped by the unequal pay scale for white and Indian schoolmasters, which upheld a racial hierarchy. Indian teachers were paid three to ten pounds per year for their services. Job Nesutan, a translator of the Indian Library texts for Eliot, Eliot’s acquaintance since 1646, received 10 pounds per annum, highly paid for an Indian teacher, but at about a fifth of Eliot’s salary. Nesutan had worked for Eliot on the translations for the Indian Library and lived with the Eliot family. Like other Christian Indians of New England, Job Nesutan took an English first name and adopted his Indian name into a surname. White teachers could receive double, five times, or even ten times as much as Indian teachers![214]

Despite the Indian Library’s best efforts, enough books could not be printed to keep up with demand. Monaghan records that about 31 percent of Indians at Cape Cod could read in their own language, seventeen percent could write it, and only two percent

[212] Ibid.

[213] Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write*, 100.

[214] Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies,* 114.

could read English. Overall in Massachusetts, Indian literacy was at about 25 to 30 percent and the ability to write was about half that.[215]

For Indians, literacy may have been a weapon of colonial missions, but it was a practical tool that, in many cases, may have helped preserve tribal ethnic identity, languages, and survival. The Wampanoag on Martha's Vineyard interpreted literacy this way. Their story was much the same as the other New England tribes. Epidemics killed many medicine men and led to a loss of confidence in old beliefs. But they also produced a sociopolitical vacuum, in which Indians could subvert the old hierarchy by converting and becoming part of the colonial world. Thomas Mayhew the elder and his son, Thomas Mayhew Jr., arrived on Martha's Vineyard, which the Wampanoag called Noepe, in 1641. A man named Hiacoomes had been held "in low esteem" by his fellow Wampanoags, as a "contemptible person" who was slow in speech, retiring in disposition, and apparently quite ugly, although this was phrased in a more delicate way to say that his features were "not very promising."[216] He befriended Thomas Mayhew Jr., learning English and Puritanism.

Hiacoomes' ready conversion was yet another reason for the Vineyard Wampanoags to mock him as an oddity by taunting, "Here comes the English man!"[217] There was widespread opposition to the English on the island, so Hiacoomes was under suspicion. But he soon shed his reticent manners and began teaching his people, to their great wonderment. Mayhew and Hiacoomes were aided by the serendipitous fact that

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[215] Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America,* 61.

[216] Ibid., 56.

[217] Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians,* 92.

none of their converts among the Vineyard Wampanoags became sick, which was taken as evidence of their spiritual strength. Hiacoomes learned English and became a minister, and a pastor in the Vineyard's second Indian church.

He also became the progenitor of an influential Indian Christian family. His son, Joel Hiacoomes, was one of only four Indians to graduate from Harvard College prior to 1700. Joel died, murdered after a shipwreck off Martha's Vineyard when returning to Boston just before graduation. He may have perished in the event of the wreck itself, or been murdered by looters who wanted the goods aboard ship. His fellow students at Harvard and his professors remembered him as a good student and a devout Christian. Another son, Samuel Coomes, scandalized his father by drinking excessively and having a relationship with a white woman. Monaghan comments wryly that literacy may have been an easier skill to transmit than piety, since many second or third-generation Christian Indians rebelled against the constraints of strict religious families[218].

Caleb Cheeshahteaumuck, another high-ranking Vineyard Wampanoag, the son of the sachem of Holmes Hole, accompanied Joel Hiacoomes to Harvard and was his close friend. Caleb lived long enough to graduate from Harvard in the class of 1665, the first Native American to do so. His thesis, written in Latin and addressed to "honored benefactors", compares the English colonists to the Greek myth of Orpheus. He saw Orpheus' redemption of Eurydice as a symbol for education, being led from a lower place

[218] Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America,* 72.

to a higher place.[219] In particular he emphasized Orpheus' descent into the "nether world" to bring back his wife. Lopenzina speculates that Orpheus' origin in oral traditions as a liminal , shamanic figure triumphing over death may have had parallels in Native culture for Caleb.[220] Of course, Orpheus' redemption failed and Eurydice died. Perhaps Caleb viewed the English with the ambiguity inherent in that legend. Less than a year later, no doubt emotionally weakened by the loss of his friend Joel, he contracted tuberculosis, "turned his face to the wall and died."[221] A classmate of theirs, remembered only as Eleazar, wrote an elegy in Latin and Greek on the death of the Reverend Thomas Thacher, one of his tutors. He expressed the hope, like Caleb, for a moment when "death dies…blessed life returns to Life."[222]

The situation for literacy on the Vineyard was different than in mainland Massachusetts. Schools and praying towns there had a more liberal code. The Mayhews would not have been able to impose strict regulations, even if they had desired them! The Wampanoags maintained their numerical majority on the island for the entirety of the seventeenth century, and the intervention of Hiacoomes meant that the adoption of Christianity and literacy became a native-directed project. Consequently, the Mayhews

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[219] Wolfgang Hochbruck and Beatrix Dudensing-Reichel, "Honoratissimi Benefactores," in *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays*," ed. Helen Jaskoski (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-12.

[220] Lopenzina, *Red Ink,* 131-32.

[221] Frances Ruley Kartunnen, *The Other Islanders: People Who Rowed Nantucket's Oars* (New Bedford, MA: Spinner Publications, 2005), 36.

[222] Hochbruck and Dudensing-Reichel, "Honorissimi Benefactores"*,* 9.

did not insist on radical culture change. Indians continued older traditions and incorporated English technology, such as looms and plows, into familiar lifestyles.

Indian Literacy and the Outbreak of War

King Philip's War in 1675 decisively changed the political dimensions of Native literacy. The war began with the murder of John Sassamon, a praying Indian schoolmaster and minister at Natick, who had helped with the translation of the Algonquian Bible. Sassamon had been orphaned at a young age and raised in an English home, becoming one of the few Indians to attend Harvard, albeit briefly, and survive its environment. Philip, also known as Metacom, was the son of Massasoit, the sachem who had greeted the English upon their arrival in Plymouth. In 1662, the year of the publication of the Indian Bible, Massasoit's elder son, Alexander or Wamsutta, his chosen successor, died under suspicious circumstances (perhaps poisoned by the English), and Philip was chosen to replace him. Philip embodied older traditions of leadership, as the son of a sachem, being deeply embedded in Wampanoag society through kinship obligations.

Sassamon traveled to Philip's home, Mount Hope, Rhode Island, to assist him as a scribe, secretary, and counselor. Did Sassamon act as a double agent, seeking to spy for the English or convert Philip? His motives remain unclear. Philip wanted to drive the English out, because he could see that his people were becoming more and more heavily dominated by the English and losing their land, sovereignty and culture. In 1667, Plymouth colonists violated an earlier treaty with Philip to establish the town of Swansea. In 1671, the English forced Philip to sign a treaty surrendering all Wampanoag guns.

Sassamon gave Philip false information about the Narrangansetts, a rival tribe, and Philip expressed outrage to see Sassamon preaching to the Wampanoags at Plymouth with two other Natick Indians, William and Anthony Nahauton. In 1675, Sassamon went to Plymouth to warn the English governor about Philip's plans for war.

Phillip felt angry about Sassamon's duplicity, Sassamon's role as a Christian in converting many Indians, and probably also angry that the praying towns reduced the tribute he was owed as principal sachem of the era. Praying Indians had been exempted by the colony from paying such tribute. Several Wampanoags also alleged that Sassamon had cheated Philip in several land deeds. Philip, in many ways, was the antithesis of men like Hiacoomes and Sassamon, and not only because of his allegiance to traditional Wampanoag culture, religion and sovereignty. Philip, as a sachem, maintained a deeply rooted connection in the Wampanoag world through inherited authority and kin relationships. The English practiced a "divide and conquer" strategy by attempting to recruit Indians into Christian colonial culture and military service. These Indians had already experienced devastation by colonialism, or were considered strange by their fellow tribal members. Early Christian Indians, unlike Philip, had little to lose by siding with the colonists or were made bereft of kin and friends by colonialism, left without much social capital in a kin-based society.

Later that same year, John Sassamon was found dead, under the ice at the bottom of Assawompset Pond. The pond was on Wampanoag land, the site of a summer fishing

camp. Indians built fishing lodges in the area for thousands of years.[223] Huden suggests that the land near the pond may have also been an important trading site for tribes.[224]

Sassamon had suffered injuries to his neck and throat consistent with strangulation, and no water was found in his lungs. Discussing the circumstances of Sassamon's death, scholar Jill Lepore agrees with Audre Lorde that the master's tool will not dismantle the master's house. "If literacy can be wielded as a weapon, what then of that culture's history and who is left to tell it?"[225] She is skeptical of the value of literacy and presents Sassamon as a tragic figure, caught between Indian and English culture and trusted by neither people, like many Native Christians at the time. "In a sense, literacy killed John Sassamon."[226] She argues that literacy was acquired at "great cost", leaving those who embraced it vulnerable to attack and simple derision from English Christians, unconverted Indians and traditional rival tribes.

William Nahauton, Sassamon's colleague, was conveniently available to testify in favor of Sassamon and the English cause. The mixed English and Indian jury convicted three Indians, Tobias, Wampapaquan, and Mattashunannamo, of the crime, but all agreed that the three were assassins doing Phillip's bidding. When one of the accused, Tobias, approached Sassamon's body, it began "a-bleeding afresh, as if it had been newly

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[223] Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, *Native American Architecture* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1990), 55.

[224] John Charles Huden, *Indian Place-Names of New England* (New York: Museum of the American Indian/ Heye Foundation, 1962), 34, 375.

[225] Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 27.

[226] Ibid., 25.

slain"[227], a sure sign of his guilt in English eyes. On June 8th, the three men were hanged, according to the verdict of the English. The execution of two Indians for killing another Indian on Indian land probably also rankled as a defilement of Wampanoag political power. This caused Philip to begin preparing for war; his followers attacked the town of Swansea and killed nine colonists. The war had begun a desperate fight for Wampanoag land, sovereignty and ways of life.[228] Philip had been asked to sign a "treaty of submission" to the English in 1672[229] and surrender the tribe's guns, which was a weakening of Wampanoag sovereignty.

Narragansett people, formerly English allies, joined the Wampanoag, their former traditional enemy, because the Narragansett had been the other formidable power besides the Pequots. They realized that, unless they allied themselves with Philip, they too would share the Pequots' fate.

Furthermore, the coastal tribes had depleted their stock of beaver and could not trade for more, since the remainder of the trade was firmly in the hands of the French-allied Iroquois Nations. But they were dependent on trade goods by this time, and developing an equally desperate dependence on alcohol. This left them increasingly

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[227] Ibid., 23.

[228] Ibid., 105-6.

[229] John S. C. Abbott, *History of King Philip, Sovereign Chief of the Wampanoags: Including the Early History of the Settlers of New England* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1857), 86.

indebted, and vulnerable to cessions of land. Something had to be done, and it was. The tribe rose up in rebellion. They had the "resources and spirit" to challenge the English.[230]

Many Christian Indians fought as English allies, leading to further suspicion and fear towards them, among Indians allied to Philip and the colonists. Some Christian Indians sided with Philip. Matoonas, a Nipmuc chief, was formerly constable of the praying town of Pakachoog. Matoonas' eldest son, Ascooke, also called Nehemiah,[231] was employed as a "laborer in Dorchester". Was Ascooke, like the unfortunate Cockenoe, a slave or at least an indentured servant? In 1671, Ascooke was accused by the colony of murdering Zachary Smith, an Englishman, whose body was found on the road at Dedham. Witnesses had seen Ascooke put a bullet into his gun before the time of the murder, and claimed that they saw an Indian wearing clothing similar to Ascooke's passing by on the road before Smith's death. Ascooke himself remarked, a few days before the murder, that it was easy to shoot an Englishman traveling alone on the road.[232] But according to Drake, it was widely known that Ascooke had been falsely accused of the crime. Ascooke was hanged and beheaded, his head set on a pole in Boston Common. This was a standard punishment for presumed traitors in seventeenth-century England. However, this was a deep affront to Nipmuc burial practices, because even in praying

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[230] Nash, *Red, White and Black*, 124.

[231] Julie A. Fisher and David J. Silverman, *Ninigret, Sachem of the Niantics and Narrangansetts: Diplomacy, War and the Balance of Power in Seventeenth-Century New England and Indian Country* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 100.

[232] Katherine Grandjean, *American Passage: The Communications Frontier in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2015), 150-51.

towns, Indians retained the custom of elaborate burials involving "grave goods".[233] Having Ascooke's head exposed in this way was also undoubtedly a disgrace to someone of Matoonas' rank and an encroachment on Nipmuc sovereignty in judging the crime. No doubt bitter at the execution of son by the English, Matoonas sided with Philip, joining the "main body of the Nipmucks" in "the war dances."[234] Matoonas led the attack on Mendon, Massachusetts in which five people were killed. Matoonas was executed at Boston in 1676.

A jury consisting mostly of English council members sentenced him to death by firing squad. Koehler reports that in the 1670s, Indians tried in New England courts faced harsher punishments than whites for the same crimes. Indians were more likely to be whipped, branded, or sold as slaves than whites. Their whippings were more likely to consist of thirty lashes or more, and if charged a fine, Indians were charged more than non-Indians. Praying Indians could serve as jurors on Indian cases but were "hand-picked" by white jurors and not allowed to comprise more than half the members of any jury.[235] Matoonas' executioner, betrayer and captor was Sagamore John, another Nipmuc sachem who was a deserter from Philip's forces and had gone to the English to save

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[233] Francis P. McManamon et al., *Archaeology in America: An Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009), 144.

[234] Dennis A. Connole, *The Indians of the Nipmuck Country in Southern New England, 1630-1750: An Historical Geography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2000), 167.

[235] Lyle Koehler, Red-White Power Relations and Justice in the Courts of Seventeenth-Century New England, in *The American Indian: Past and Present,* ed. Roger L. Nichols (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 32-46.

himself. Historian Dennis Connole speculates that Sagamore John was forced to betray Matoonas and other tribal members in exchange for this clemency.[236]

Although the English reviled Sagamore John as a "traitor to his own nation," they allowed Sagamore John to carry out Matoonas' execution by tying Matoonas to a tree in Boston Common and shooting him to death. Matoonas confessed before the council that "he had rightly deserved death, and could expect no other."[237] Why did Matoonas resign himself to the circumstances of his death? Was he merely facing up to his fear? His head joined those of his sons on a pike in Boston.

James the Printer also joined Philip. Perhaps he wanted to ally with his fellow Nipmucs, and hoped to be a valued ally or "double agent" for Philip, in the way that John Sassamon had been. James the Printer wrote a warning to English soldiers, placed on a "bridge post" near Medfield. It read: "Know by this paper that the Indians that thou hast provoked to wrath and anger will war this twenty-one years if you will."[238] Even those Indians who had soldiered and spied exclusively for the English were treated like defeated enemies after the war. Massachusetts Colony, early in the course of the war, sent messengers to make a treaty with the Nipmucs, in order to prevent the Nipmucs from making an alliance with Philip. But the Nipmucks had already cast their lot with Philip, and ambushed the English treaty party near a swamp. A small number of English were

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[236] Connole, *Indians of the Nipmuck Country,* 209.

[237] Samuel G. Drake. *Biography and History of the Indians of North America: From Its First Discovery to the Present Time Comprising Details in the Lives of All Most Distinguished Chiefs, Also a History of Their Wars, Massacres and Depredations, with an Account of Their Antiquities, Manners and Customs, Religion and Laws, the Great Question of the First Peopling of America* (Boston: Antiquarian Institute, 1835), 76.

[238] Connole, *Indians of the Nipmuck Country,* 186.

able to survive only through the efforts of three Christian Indians. They were George Memecho, Sampson, and Joseph. And yet even they were treated like conquered enemies, and had to go to Philip for aid against the English.[239]

Other Indians murdered Sampson, perhaps fellow Nipmucs who saw him as traitorous. Joseph was captured in Plymouth by colonial authorities and sold to Jamaica as a slave, only being recalled to New England through the intercession of Eliot. The practice of shipping rebellious Indians into Caribbean slavery dated from the Pequot War, but Indian slaves were actually banned from Jamaica and Barbados shortly after King Philip's War. The unfortunate Joseph wound up in Tangier, Morocco, before being allowed to return home![240] Only Memecho survived the war unscathed.[241]

Jennings posits that the uprising of the Nipmucs is proof that the conversions attempted in praying towns were superficial, forcible, and deeply resented. James the Printer, who was termed a "notorious apostate", but praised for his valuable skills in reading, writing and printing, returned to the English after the war. According to Hubbard, "He affirmed, with others that came along with him, that more Indians had died since this war began, of diseases (such as at other times they used not to be acquainted with), than by the sword of the English."[242] Sir Edmund Andros turned the tide of the fight by calling in the Mohawks of New York, who had traditional tribal rivalries with

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[239] Drake, *Biography and History of the Indians of North America,* 29.

[240] Connole, *Indians of the Nipmuck Country,* 229.

[241] Drake, *Biography and History of the Indians,* 29-30.

[242] William Hubbard, *Narrative of the Indian Wars of New England* (Stockbridge, Mass: Herman Wild, 1803), 204-05.

many of the southern New England tribes. King Philip was drawn and quartered by a Christian Algonquian, who acknowledged Philip's spiritual power[243]. Benjamin Church, the captain who led the hunt for Philip, was given Philip's wampum belts, which Captain Church accounted a great honor. Thus he inherits the literal patrimony of Philip and the symbolic, Euro-mythic mantle of forest king, priest and murderer: Slotkin asserts that Church saw himself as "achieving kingship over his preferred people (Indians) by destroying them in battle… his creative act of love, of self-and-societal regeneration, is an act of violence."[244] Mohawks captured many praying Indians from Algonquian-speaking communities and brought them to Mohawk settlements. Some Algonquians were killed, while others were adopted into the Mohawk tribe in an attempt to recuperate Mohawk numbers. This dynamic of captive adoption, believed to spiritually and physically strengthen the Mohawk tribe, was accelerated by contact and had been going on for generations. The mother of Kateri Tekakwitha, a seventeenth-century Mohawk woman beatified as a Roman Catholic saint, was an Algonquian Christian captive. Greer estimates that adoptees of non-Mohawk descent probably outnumbered the "original" Mohawk by the mid-seventeenth century.[245]

On October 30, 1675, colonists forcibly relocated the residents of Natick and Okommakamesit to Deer Island, a tiny islet in Boston Harbor. This was ostensibly for their own protection, but many died due to overcrowding, lack of food, harsh winter

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[243] Plane, *Dreams and the Invisible World,* 123.

[244] Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence,* 172.

[245] Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (New York:Oxford University Press, 2005), 27.

weather and inadequate shelter. Deer Island was essentially, then, an internment camp. Most praying towns did not survive the war. After the war, the praying towns that did survive were no longer self-governing, English-only education became legally mandatory for Indians, and church membership fell, perhaps due to a loss of confidence in an English faith. Very few Indian Bibles survived, and copies that did were kept more often by English owners. Indians allied to Philip may have destroyed the texts as hated symbols of cultural change and the onerous loss of sovereignty under English domination. Whites mistrusted Praying Indians during and after the war, as people who did not fit easily into English or Indian cultural categories. Praying Indians also caused a great deal of religious anxiety, since even Praying Indians could not conform to the Puritans' polarized theological view of colonization.

They saw themselves as divinely appointed Christians carrying out their religious duty in a land promised them by God; godly people in a wilderness inhabited by pagans. If Indians could leave their old religion and become a part of the divinely chosen colony, then these categories were not so simple and could be overturned, which led to doubts about colonization and an encounter with the humanity of Indians that many colonists found to be deeply unsettling. Confusion between friendly Indians and unfriendly Indians led many to believe that no Indian was trustworthy. Praying Indians were disarmed, confined to their places of dwelling, and not allowed in public unless in the company of an Englishman. They could be shot on sight if alone. One writer referred to them

sardonically as "preying" Indians because "they have made preys of much English Blood."[246]

Mistrust of praying Indians continued to inform later experiences of Indian warfare in the colonial imagination. When the accusations and visions that led to the Salem Witch Trials broke out in 1692, the Salem settlers were engaged in another Indian war, King William's War, in which the Wabanaki of Maine and their French allies attacked English settlers. One accuser described the devil as being a "short black man, not of a Negro, but of a Tawny or an Indian colour." Cotton Mather also averred that most witches described the devil as a "black" man who "generally resembles an Indian."[247] One witness was even more specific. She described the devil as a "black man with a hy-crouned hat on his head and a book in his hand."[248] This is an incarnation of the Indian-as-spirit, who is a demonic plague to English Christians. Just as the Indian demon had to be exorcised from the spirit, the physical presence of Indians had to be wiped out of the land. The high-hatted Indian demanded her signature on a piece of birch bark. "The Devil appeared to her in the shape of a Tawney man. He brought something, which she took to be a piece of burch bark and she made a mark with her finger by rubbing off the whit Scurff. And he promised if she would serve him, she should be safe from the Indians." He commanded her to touch his book, and swore that if she did not

[246] Starkey Armstrong, *European and Native American Warfare*, 1675-1815 (London: UCL Press, 1998), 70.

[247] John Demos, *The Enemy Within: 2,000 Years of Witch-Hunting in the Western World* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 211-12.

[248] Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 140.

touch the book, he would kill her.[249] Given that Indians continued to write in birch-bark paintings and *awikhigans,* as they had before the colonial era, it is intriguing that both objects of Indian literacy are transfigured into sources of fear in the visions.

The ingredients of these visions are clear: a dark-complexioned man described as an Indian, but wearing a fancy English hat and holding a book that is an object of fear. Indian adaptation to English norms was praised by missionaries, but could cause confusion, or even panic, for ordinary English settlers. The hysteria of the witch trials coincided with two major Indian attacks, and Cotton Mather blamed the community turmoil on malevolent Indian spiritual powers of sorcery. He believed that the Indian chiefs of hostile tribes were "horrid sorcerers and hellish conjurers" who "conversed with demons."[250] The descriptions of the devil as "black" might also be due to the fact that the Algonquian peoples of New England customarily painted their faces black for war, mourning and other liminal times. "In southern New England, Indian people blacked their faces before going into battle, as well as at the death of a loved one."[251]

Wampanoags at Martha's Vineyard/ Noepe were able to stay neutral during the conflict, and retained their numerical majority on the island for nearly a century to come. Their experience was therefore unique. The case of Martha's Vineyard may be an exception proving a rule, but the Vineyard Wampanoags were able to preserve their community, perpetuate their language, and avoid relocation. A community of

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249 Ibid.

250 John Demos, *The Enemy Within,* 211-212.

251 Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1650-1775* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 30.

Wampanoags survives on the island to this day. One of the reasons for their survival was no doubt that they had their own court system, and kept legal records of court transactions, using the ability of those who were able to write in Algonquian.

John Eliot, now old and in frail health, brought out a second printing of the Indian Bible for those whose copies had been destroyed during the war. After his death, the Indian Library focused on printing shorter devotional works in Algonquian, and rather than printing in Algonquian only, printed many bilingual texts. Particularly after the turn of the century, most Puritans believed it was easier to teach Indians English than to print books in Algonquian. Cotton Mather argued that preserving Indian languages would merely preserve other "savage inclinations" in the Indian character. Eliot's utopian, millennial vision of Indian languages being brought into the Christian fold was over. The Cambridge Press at Harvard, which had once printed the Indian texts, now printed anti-Indian tracts. The Indian Library closed and the Indian College at Harvard also shuttered. Its four seventeenth-century alumni were all casualties of disease and war.

Experience Mayhew, grandson of Thomas, reported on the "condition" of the Vineyard Wampanoags. In 1720, he wrote *Indian Converts,* an account of the lives and deaths of the Wampanoag Christians from the island. At that time, their community comprised three or four generations of literate Indian Christians. He noted that their numbers had been reduced, but that the communities endured. He complained of a lack of schoolmasters and books. Addressing the matter of literacy, he wrote, "The greatest number can read, either in the English tongue or the Indian"[252] but admitted they understand "the Indian tongue" much better than that of the English. Mayhew

[252] Mayhew and Leibman, *Indian Converts: A Cultural Edition,* 385.

commented that their literacy was akin to "poor men among the English."[253] There were four religious groups on the island: Puritans, or "Saints", Baptists, whose number and importance would grow, the staunch Wampanoag traditionalists, and the people who rejected all three religious communities.[254] The community weathered economic change from a subsistence economy to one of market agriculture. The island's thin soil was not suitable for agriculture, but lent itself to animal husbandry, which began to become a gender –neutral activity. Gift-giving was still used as a social tactic to cement relationships. The first generation of male Indian converts had only Indian names. By the second generation, converts had an English and an Indian name, and by the third generation, the time of Mayhew's writing, they used English first names and Indian names adapted into patrilineal last names. Women appear to have maintained a bi-lateral system of English and Indian naming.[255]

Preaching at the churches was self-led and Native congregations preferred to appoint Native preachers. Mayhew's work *Indian Converts* incorporated Wampanoag oral traditions into its account of pious Indian people, and is also unusual for its focus on women and children. He drew from a Wampanoag oral form known as the *memorate,* tales of encounters with spiritual power that indicated a storyteller's maturity.[256] He also documented the importance that dreams and visions continued to play in Wampanoag spiritual life. The belief in dreams and visions predated contact. Eastern Algonquians

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[253] Ibid., 94.

[254] Ibid., 39.

[255] Ibid., 285-89.

[256] Ibid., 21.

believed that every person had a waking soul and a dream soul, and that the dream soul could travel through time or to the spirit world.[257]

Hannah Ahhhunnut and Abiah Paaonit referred to their faith as being able to help women who were ill or women in childbirth. Abigail Kesoehtaut, shortly before her death in 1709, heard a voice in Wampanoag reciting a Biblical phrase, "there is favor now extended in Canaan."[258] On the night of the death of Abigail Ammapoo, her daughter saw a bright light and two angels, dressed in white, standing at her mother's bedside. Abiah Paaonit saw a vision of "a stream of light"[259] coming out of a window-like opening in heaven to shine about her. Literacy in these narratives relates to a community. One Native minister wrote an affectionate address to his congregation prior to his death[260]. Elizabeth Pattompan asks for her words to instruct and benefit her relatives. People want to protect, preserve and support their community. Converts imagined that Christianity could create a reunion of a larger bi-religious Native community in the afterlife. Wampanoags maintained their identity through Christianity and literacy, despite the loss of economic power.[261] Once again, writing is strongly gendered as a male skill.

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[257] Peter Charles Hoffer, Brave New Worlds: The First Century of Indian-English Encounters, in *Colonial Mediascapes*, ed. Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover, 233-65. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014.

[258] Mayhew and Leibman, *Indian Converts,* 238-39.

[259] Ibid., 250.

[260] Ibid., 148.

[261] Hilary E. Wyss, *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity and Native Community in Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 52-80.

The only woman in *Indian Converts* explicitly mentioned as being able to write is Rachel Wompanummoo, who also possessed the ability to read and write English, and also to read in Algonquian. As Mayhew states, "Having been much among the English…" Rachel "learned to read English and also to write a legible hand."[262] His omission is intriguing. Was she unable to write in her native language? Jerusha Ompan, who read every day and every night, always carried candles to have light with her for reading.

Hepzibah Assaquanhut read poorly, though she was praised as a "giver of victuals"[263] to the less fortunate in her community. Abel Wauwompuhque, a church deacon, lost his hearing after an epidemic and became dependent on the written language.[264] Some Wampanoag became literate as adults while others made sure their children learned when they married Christian Indians. Christianity and literacy were often transferred along elite Indian family lines. In the Wampanoag church, as in English churches, many more women than men were members. Yet, women often lacked the latitude to become literate. For instance, Bethia Sissetom, despite being the fourth generation of a Vineyard Christian family, did not learn to read due to her parents' severe dysfunction. Her father, Oggin Sissetom, was a drinker and spender, and her mother

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[262] Mayhew and Leibman, *Indian Converts,* 299.

[263] Ibid., 234.

[264] Ibid., 192-93.

Hannah's education had been interrupted by indentured servitude in an English household.[265]

Mayhew encouraged his readers to emulate and identify with the "saintly", and not-so-saintly, examples of Wampanoags that he gives. By doing so, he gives Wampanoag people an honorary inclusion in the "Mosaic Tribe" of Puritans.[266] He praised Wampanoag women's literacy as a virtuous influence on their homes and families. He wrote of one convert that ",Tho she could not read very well, yet she was not discourag'd from making the best use of Books she was capable of, Mr Perkins' 'The Principles of Religion', having been translated into the Indian Tongue, was what she took great delight in reading of."[267] He is being charitable, yet also underlining an important spiritual principle, namely, that piety in literacy is more important than perfect reading knowledge.

Many Wampanoag medicine women became prayer leaders and deacons. Hannah Nonohsoo became noted as being skilled with "Herbs, Plants and Medicines"[268] that she supplemented by praying. Other beleaguered wives turned to religion and literacy as a means of coping with difficult marriages strained by alcohol. Typical of the work is Margaret/ Meeksishqune Osooit, who taught her children to read and to recite

[265] Ibid., 336.

[266] Ibid., 1-76.

[267] Experience Mayhew, *Indian Converts, or, Some Account of The lives and Dying Speeches of a Considerable Number of the Christianized Indians of Martha's Vineyard, in New-England* (London: printed for S. Gerrish, bookseller in Boston in New-England, and sold by J. Osborn (etc), 1727).

[268] Mayhew and Leibman, *Indian Converts,* 336.

their “catechism”, who stayed married to her husband Zachariah for thirty-three years and was able to successfully reform his drinking. According to Mayhew,

“She often read the word of God and such other Books of Piety as were long ago published in the Indian Tongue: she also then excited her Husband to pray to God in his House, and prevailed with him so to do, and whereas he was very apt to follow after strong Drink, she used her utmost Endeavour to restrain him from that way of Wickedness, and would have no Fellowship with him in it”[269].

This can be read skeptically as Mayhew’s attempt to portray Native women as loyal, subservient Puritan wives. He praises them for their “charity”: Katherine Wuttonaehtunnooh made baskets, sold them, and used the profit to buy provisions for the sick. Hannah Tiler made stockings for the disabled daughter of an English neighbor. Mayhew praised Sarah Hannit, wife of the minister Japheth Hannit, for keeping her wigwam neat, clean, and orderly, even as he described its details as exotic; the mats made by her hands and “dyed of walnut bark.”[270]

Some Indians learned to read as adults because they were converted as adults. Others, though never literate or Christian themselves, wanted English education for their children because they recognized its value for social mobility. In practice, that desired mobility was often compromised by English insistence on Indian subordination to a lower status.

Mayhew never mentions literacy outside its religious, devotional, highly Puritan setting. To be a good reader, in Mayhew’s estimation, is to be a good Puritan and a good

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[269]Ibid.,, 285.

[270] Ibid., 360.

person. Like Anglo-American parents, Indian parents taught their children to read, but mostly taught boys and men to write. When these men went on to assume leadership positions in their communities, they used literacy and written records to maintain sovereignty and independent political power. The land deeds, petitions, wills and arrest warrants created by the Wampanoag did not destroy oral culture, but reproduced and preserved traditional forms of communication to the page.[271] For instance, legal documents in the colonies required a minimum of two witnesses. Documents kept by the Wampanoag community had as many as twelve witnesses, reflecting an earlier emphasis on communal decision-making. This contributed to the sturdiness of the Wampanoag way of life rather than aiding its decline. The Wampanoags of Martha's Vineyard used it for legal records, recording information on the lives, deaths, and genealogies of family members, commenting on sermons or Biblical texts, and even warning away enemies. Wyss suggests that the prominent families mentioned in the book were fulfilling traditional obligations, "obligations to ensure that … nobody went hungry."[272] Powerful families were thus able to maintain their pre-contact dominance and control in the new Christian churches and secular-civic structures that were emerging.

Wyss calls the process of making Native cultures an intelligible part of colonial culture a process of "re-culturation"[273] that made it more palatable to English people by erasing signs of cultural difference. The Wampanoag, according to Wyss, underwent a

[271] Goddard and Bragdon, *Native Writings in Massachusett,* xvii.

[272] Wyss, *Writing Indians,* 65.

[273] Ibid., 53.

process of "trans-culturation"[274] wherein they adopted English clothing, English styles of farming, livestock and material goods. Yet English words for "currency, land measurement, introduced cultivated plants"[275] entered the Wampanoag language unchanged, which may reflect a boundary demarcation between English and Native identities, such that Algonquian was "clearly the language of the home."[276] Literacy continued to increase on Martha's Vineyard throughout the eighteenth century, but was still associated with Christianity and an elite family status. The English language, when used by Indians, owed direct influence to "patterns of speech, forms of address and direct quotations" from oral tradition, which was evidence of a "successful bilingual literacy" among Christian Indian communities.[277]

New England Native persistence throughout the eighteenth century is a story of adaptation. With their customary ways of living gone or no longer viable because of English colonization, many men and women sought new sources of employment to sustain themselves that did not require land or resources, such as military service, working as hired hands on Anglo-American farms, or working aboard whaling ships. Shipwrecks, falls, drowning, scurvy, yellow fever, and attacks by sharks and whales all took their toll. Those who survived were usually left penniless and needed to ship back out again to earn any money. Whalers earned very high wages and could enjoy high positions at sea, where skills mattered more than color. Many men were proud of their

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[274] Ibid., 29.

[275] Ibid., 58.

[276] Ibid.

[277] Peyer, *The Tutored Mind,* 52.

careers as whalers, often working for twenty or thirty years in their careers and attaining considerable rank on board ship because they were "literate, English-speaking Protestant Americans" similar to white New Englanders, giving them better prospects than the large foreign workforce of sailors. Considered a reliable workforce, they rarely deserted, complained or incited violence and were commended by shipmates for not being over-harsh with corporal punishment. Though drinking was rife on whaling ships, Native whalers appear to have imbibed less. They were offered "protections" at sea equivalent to American citizenship, and laws requiring a certain number of American-born sailors propelled their rise in rank. Racist white Americans also believed that Indians made good whalers because they were "natural" hunters with keen eyesight who would defend their ships like warriors. Some Indian men were officers, but relatively few became captains, whaling masters or ship-owners.[278]

These dangerous activities took them far from home and caused great hardship for Native women and children. Widows represented a third to more than half of all household heads in eighteenth-century Indian New England. Women worked as weavers: fifteen percent of Indian estates in the mid-1700s included spinning wheels.[279]Esther Sooduck, an Indian weaver, had a considerable house when she died, on thirty acres of land, furnished in the English style. She read two Bibles with glasses and dressed in English clothes. Others were not as lucky as she; Indian women were frequently left to

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[278] Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalemen and The World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 1-76.

[279] Colin G. Calloway, *After King Philip's War, Presence and Persistence in Indian New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 103.

wander from place to place in such of wage labor or domestic work, almost in a state of destitution. Mercy Amerquit was recorded in a court case as having "no settled dwelling place anywhere"[280] when she entered the home of an Englishman as a live-in servant. He expected her to move on to the next place; the only reason a court case was made is that Amerquit died in his house. Hannah Comsett also admitted to "strolling about from town to town,"[281] never being able to live in one place for longer than a year.

Indebtedness to merchants often led to the growing problem of indentured servitude, particularly when men signed the contracts under the influence of alcohol. Because of higher male mortality in war and migration, many Native women married African-American men at this time. Observers commented on "squaws who marry Negroes."[282] Enslaved black men often sought Indian wives because children of an Indian mother were born free. Hannah Shiner was described as a full-blood Indian with a "mulatto" husband. She was described as a "judge of herbs" and "weaver of baskets."[283]

White colonists in Rhode Island clearly worried about the growing fellowship among Indians and blacks enough to legally prohibit them from entering taverns or going out together after dark. Several tavern keepers were granted licenses in Rhode Island only on the condition that they would not allow Indians or blacks into their homes and businesses, and could not sell liquor to any "Indian, Mulatto or Negro" person. Another

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[280] Ibid., 105.

[281] Ibid., 106.

[282] Ibid., 94.

[283] Deloraine Pendre Corey, *The History of Malden, Massachusetts, 1633-1785* (Malden, MA, author-published, 1898), 413.

law gave Indian and black servants a curfew of 9:00 pm unless they had the consent of their master to be out later.[284]

A continuity of culture persisted despite massive disruption and change. Family networks, clans, and native community organizations remained important to native groups. Indian cultural features such as communal land-holding, hunting, and foraging continued. Mandell argues that Indian churches, rather than being the engines for assimilation to Anglo-American culture, "actually served to maintain social and cultural boundaries"[285] that formed a "new Indian identity." Sermons were preached exclusively in native languages. Preachers frequently traveled between native congregations, creating and maintaining a pan-tribal, united community. Many churches maintained native rituals such as pipe-sharing, or public confessions of faith rooted in communal, oral culture. Many became "scattered abroad" or "sojourning among the English for their support."[286] This represented both continuity and change, as the migratory lifestyle supported behaviors like hunting, fishing, and gathering, although the products were sold in Boston. Indians often took advantage of chronic New England labor shortages to work for farmers, though their employers grumbled at having to pay high wages. Wage labor was an adaptation to colonialism, but its seasonal and migratory nature was familiar to native traditions. Native people also sustained themselves through a trade in deerskins. The post-war return of men to migratory jobs also left women in charge of their traditional

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[284] Calloway, *After King Philip's War,* 110.

[285] Daniel R. Mandell, *Behind the Frontier; Indians in Eighteenth-century Eastern Massachusetts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 6, 204.

[286] O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees,* 86.

domains of agriculture and clamming. The Indians of Natick had allies in the town of Sherborn, because the two communities worshipped in the same church and their children went to the same schools. Indians practiced a common culture that drew from both English and Native sources, such as Christian churches with native music and ceremony. Land was still held in common, but could not be sold to whites. Different tribes were drawn together by marriage, churches, and military service.[287]

Literacy helped American Indians maintain cultural integrity and a collective identity, respond to the pressures of colonization, and secure their survival both as individuals and as a people, even as they expanded into new occupations that did not require the use or possession of land. Out of this turbulent milieu rose the first English-speaking Indian intellectuals.

[287] Mandell, *Behind the Frontier,* 51.

CHAPTER 4

LITERACY AND SAMSON OCCOM, AN AMERICAN INDIAN INTELLECTUAL

After the American Revolution, Brooks argues that Americans became more "racialized" by assigning positive values to whiteness and negative ones to blackness or Indian-ness. Communities of color fought this by trying to create separate towns, congregations, and redemptive rituals. Samson Occom, a Mohegan preacher from Connecticut, was the first Native American to publish literary works in English. He helped to establish Moor's Charity School (later renamed Dartmouth College) with Eleazar Wheelock. Converting to Christianity at seventeen, Occom had been "brought up in heathenism", or so he said. His parents' names, Joshua and Mary, and the community's ability to understand a preacher, may indicate prior Christian ties. His conversion may have been motivated by his desire to acquire literacy and defend his people in the changing conditions they faced. The Mohegans had been English allies in the Pequot War. Their chief, Uncas, had led the Mohegans and the Narrangansetts in the Pequot massacre at Mystic. The Uncas family still ruled their tribe, but different factions in the tribe supported different candidates in a bitter land dispute with the English. Occom's name appears on a legal brief about the land case in 1743, the year he left for school.[288]

Occom was appointed to the Mohegan tribal council when he was only nineteen. His father also served on the council. At the age of twenty he met Eleazar Wheelock, because his mother worked as a maid in Lebanon, Connecticut, where Wheelock lived. Wheelock gave Occom a partial scholarship to his school, Moor's Indian Charity School. At the school, Occom studied Greek, Hebrew, Latin and French, and qualified for

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[288] Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings,* 10, 52.

admission to Yale. Eyestrain prevented Occom from attending Yale.[289] Wheelock forced him to go on a trip to England to raise funds for the future Dartmouth College. Fearing that he would die of a European disease and be buried in a strange grave, like many Indians before him who had made the chancy trip, Occom went and raised 12,000 pounds for the school.[290] Later, Occom became disgusted with Wheelock's about-face, because the intent to establish an Indian college was quickly abandoned while Occom was in England. Wheelock had not provided for Occom's wife and family as he said he would. With the money Wheelock moved the school to Hanover, New Hampshire, far from Indian communities. Occom's increasing disillusionment with dominant society was sealed when he continued to be paid a pittance for supporting himself and his growing family and had to provide their food. He was compelled to do his own farming, hunting, fishing and livestock raising, relying on traditional Algonquian kinship and village networks.[291]

He wrote in a cutting pun that instead of being an "alma mater" for the Indians, the school was now an "alba mater", white mother, to wealthy white students. Occom was the sixth-best-selling author in the colonies during the 1770s. His sermon on the execution of Moses Paul was reprinted nineteen times. He also wrote thirteen petitions to the colonial government to help Connecticut tribes retain their lands, an autobiography,

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[289] Sylvia Gale, "Resisting Functional-Critical Divides: Literacy Education at Moor's Indian Charity School and Tuskegee Institute," (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2008), 55.

[290] Occom and Brooks, *The Collected Writings,* 265.

[291]Ibid., 35, 39.

and several books of hymns[292] .He worked among other New England tribes by fulfilling some of the social and spiritual role sachems had once performed. After leaving Wheelock, Occom worked with the Montauk tribe on Long Island, where he married a Montauk woman. Describing these activities, he wrote, "I kept School as I did before and Carried on the Religious Meetings as often as ever; and attended the Sick and their Funerals, and did what Writings they wanted, and often Sat as a Judge to reconcile their matters between them." He added proudly, "We freely entertain all Visiters."[293] He firmly believed that "Indians must have teachers of their own Colour or Nation."[294]

Lisa Brooks (Abenaki) writes that the word for "dish" in Abenaki is a cognate to the word for "river valley" where the people lived, and for the phrase "thanks to all our relations."[295] This symbolizes an interconnected web of relationships that all northeastern native peoples tried to sustain, called the "common pot" of reciprocity and sharing. Status was maintained by gift-giving and hoarding was frowned upon. *Awikhiganak,* birch-bark writings, were used for "making messages, remembering songs, and recording stories and communal history"[296] and making maps to commemorate relationships to their land. Lisa Brooks argues that Occom tried to preserve this communal history, or "common pot".

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[292] Gale, "Resisting Functional-Critical Divides," 99.

[293] Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 35.

[294] Ibid., 133.

[295] Lisa Tanya Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 4.

[296] Ibid., 9.

Colonial officials tried to appoint Ben Uncas as sachem of the Mohegans, because they had persuaded Ben to sign a statement releasing title to Mohegan lands. The majority of the tribe, however, contested this and signed a declaration that they had chosen a different sachem, John Uncas, and refused to give up any of their lands.

Occom originally supported Ben Uncas, but switched his allegiance to John. To Occom, Ben had not followed proper policies of communal decision-making and was "consuming the profits of Mohegan in drink."[297] Describing the English plot, Occom wrote, "They want to root us out of our land, root and branch." He wanted to reassert Mohegan sovereignty and land ownership. Petitioning the King of England regarding a land case, he stated, "We have a law and a custom to make a Sachem without the help of any People or Nation in the World, and when he makes himself unworthy of his station we put him down-ourselves."[298] The missionary organization with which he was affiliated withdrew his pension, and forced him to retract the statement. Even in his retraction, he wrote that he had a "duty" as a member and councilman of the Mohegan tribe, to protect their interest. Although a court decided the land case in favor of the colony, the case's outcome reified the importance of Occom's role.

He distinguished himself by his use of "common, plain talk". When writing his memoirs, Occom noted that the "world is already full of books"[299] and was aware that his

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[297] Brooks, *Common Pot,* 91.

[298] Ibid., 89.

[299] David Martinez, *The American Indian Intellectual Tradition: An Anthology of Writings from 1772 to 1972* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 3.

perspective as an American Indian would be of interest to white readers. Occom affirmed American Indian presence, continuity and rights to land.

In 1771, Occom's son Aaron died, leaving a wife and small child, and Moses Paul, a Mohegan who was Occom's friend, was hanged for the murder of a white merchant. Occom preached the execution sermon. He said that bad qualities of men led to "spiritual death." Though he felt sympathetic to Moses Paul, as "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, an Indian, a despised creature"[300], according to Occom, Paul's actions marked him as spiritually dead, despite their common upbringing as literate Christians. Occom is also concerned with the plight of his Mohegan and Indian people. He castigates his "poor kindred" away from drunkenness and from being "mean, ragged and shivering, crying, pinched with cold."[301] He exhorted his listeners to regard their health, embrace Christianity, repentance and presumably temperance. He also added, "If we don't regard ourselves, who will regard us?"[302] Publishers printed the sermon nineteen times.

Moses Paul led a typically rootless life for a displaced Indian man of his time in New England. He was brought out from his tribal home and community at the age of fifteen and "bound an apprentice"[303] to John Manning, an Englishman whose family taught him reading, writing and Christianity. He then served in the army, acquiring

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[300] Occom and Brooks, *Complete Writings,* 188.

[301] Ibid., 192.

[302] Ibid.

[303] Ibid., 194.

"sinful habits."[304] Following his military service, Moses Paul served as a sailor aboard merchant ships and warships where he became "intoxicated with strong Drink"[305] and acquired "other dissolute practices" that Occom did not specify. Paul was sentenced to death at the youthful age of 29 or 30.[306]For Occom, the message was clear. Moses Paul's fate meant that other Indian people, such as him, were mired in a state of despair and spiritual death. In order to survive, they needed spiritual and practical rebirth.

Occom was one of the founders of Brotherton, a multi-tribal Native American Christian community in upstate New York. This was on Oneida territory, where Occom had preached before and had relatives, kin, and friends. "Occom's strategy was to strengthen relationships within the larger coastal networks and to reconstruct a new dish from among the surviving wampum-making nations, a village that could be moved along the waterways to a place with more abundant resources, away from colonial control."[307]

This new town, Brotherton, was to be in New York, composed of people from seven northeastern Christian Indian communities, Pequots, Narragansetts, Montauks, Farmingtons and Mohegans. Brotheton was to be an "all-Indian affair". Their church also had an all-Indian staff. All the tribes supported the idea within their own communities, as they wanted a land base and freedom from colonial domination, and had already been intermarrying and allying with one another.

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[304] Ibid.

[305] Ibid., 195.

[306] Martinez, *American Indian Intellectual Tradition*, 15-20.

[307] Brooks, *Common Pot,* 102.

The Oneida tribe granted them land for this and formally adopted them into the Iroquois "Covenant Chain." "Brethren, we look upon you, as upon a Sixth Brother." The Oneidas urged the New Englanders to regard the Iroquois as their "fathers" and the others in the confederacy as "elder brothers".[308] Occom wrote that the founders had agreed to bear all expenses for creating the town equally among them, and to live in "peace and friendship… they desired me to be a Teacher amongst them."[309] Occom agreed, and admired the quality of the land chosen for Brotherton's town site. Leaves and small bushes on the land were burnt, and the ashes spaded into the ground, with the soil not disturbed.

The second Great Awakening emphasized hymn singing and a reliance on oral confessions, which the Brotherton community adopted. From the earliest days, missionaries recognized that Indians were talented singers.[310] The demand for hymnals soon outstripped supply, leading Occom to print his own, and to advocate for a world in which Christianity was enlivened by Indian spirit, the "concerns, hopes, joys and sorrows"[311] peculiar to them as a people, and reinvigorate community relationships to religious practice. Occom used hymns in a question-and-answer format, a call-and-response style between men and women, a traditional form of song in northeastern tribes. Imagery in the hymns of the "trail through life" also have Christian and Mohegan antecedents. One of Occom's hymns makes the suffering of Christ a metaphor for the

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[308] Peyer, *Tutor'd Mind,* 83-84.

[309] Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings,* 309.

[310] Brooks, *American Lazarus,* 64.

[311] Ibid., 72.

trials endured by Native people. “Mocking, they pushed him here and there, marking his way with blood and Tear”[312] like Christ, Natives have suffered displacement and violence at the hand of an uncaring state. Another hymn tells its listeners to confide in the God who “hears young ravens cry.”[313] White New Englanders called Indians “ravens” because they were poor, dark, and wandering. But here it is asserted that God will hear his ravens, his Indian people. One hymn boldly announced the hoped-for freedom that the wilderness would bring to Christian Indian communities. Another hymn extols God for having a “ruddy, rosy face”[314]- an eighteenth-century declaration that God is red!

Indians were admired as being sophisticated musicians who created their own sacred music, introducing Native inflections, melodies and accompaniments to their worship. Occom began his worship meetings with frequent psalms, songs, and hymns. He believed that Indian-ness could be a spiritual identity as well as a racial one. God had called him to be Indian, and therefore Indians like himself were also godly people. Occom discriminated between “our Indians” and “wild Indians” and promoted the masculine imagery of the pan-tribal Christian community as being “brothers”. Native people developed “new venues for addressing tribal issues, new ways to articulate the spiritual value of Indianness, and new pan-tribal identities and affiliations.”[315] Occom compared Christian conversion to the tale of an old Indian who had a beloved knife. The Indian kept adding new blades or handles but “it was all the time the same” knife.

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[312] Ibid., 189.

[313] Ibid., 83.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Ibid., 62.

In dream about a deceased missionary friend, Occom reported that the man, Mr. Whitefield, offered words of comfort and barked like a dog. "To the Mohegan, dogs held special power as spiritual intermediaries and protectors." Just as Mohegans could become Christian, Occom's white friend could take the Mohegan symbol of a dog shape, a vitality of old and new symbols.[316]

Joseph Johnson, a fellow Mohegan, became Occom's son-in-law, after marrying Occom's daughter Tabitha, who bore a son. The younger man experienced a profound conversion at the age of twenty-one and believed, along with his father-in-law, in the pan-tribal Christian Indian "body politic" being set up at Brotherton and was instrumental in convincing Indian Christians to emigrate there. "When I have true love reigning in my heart, I am willing to spend & be spent, for the good of my poor Indian Brethren. Poverty can't affright me then, from my duty. If an Indian is Capable, is faithfull, & is serviceable as an English man in the business, an Indian should meet with the same encouragement."[317]

Another daughter of Occom's married the son of Moses Paul, so that Moses Paul's grandchildren became Occom's grandchildren, too, among the first baptized at Brotherton. This reveals the hidden, interconnected, and often familial nature of Christian Indian identity. Johnson wrote to Moses Paul before his death, saying that if Paul did not repent, he would fulfill the stereotypes of the "savage" Indian. Johnson's founding of Brothertown sought for a "homeland of the heart and mind." Both men and women

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[316] Ibid.

[317] Joseph Johnson and Laura J. Murray*, To Do Good to My Indian Brethren: The Writings of Joseph Johnson, 1751-1776* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 188.

decided together to move to Brotherton, evoking ancient egalitarian practice, and Johnson himself went to purchase land of the Oneida people, his "kindred, brethren, and warriors."[318]

Though literacy and Christianity began as "master's tools" in the "master's house" they did not stay that way for very long among the Native peoples of New England. New England Algonquians used literacy and Christianity spiritually and legally support claims to land, Native languages, Native ways of understanding the world, and Native sacred history. Despite a dominant society that tried, again and again, to push them to the literal and metaphoric margins of its discourse, Native peoples and writers of New England remained, endured and survived down to the present day.

[318] Lopenzina, *Red Ink,* 308.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

THE PEN AND THE SWORD

Robert K. Thomas wrote that the paradigm of indigenous peoplehood consisted of their religion or sacred history, their ceremonial cycles, their language and their relationship to ancestral land. Through the historical trauma of colonization, the Algonquian peoples of New England suffered relentless blows to all of these aspects of peoplehood. Many of the Algonquians died due to conflict and disease, were forcibly converted to Christianity, learned English in mission schools, and became displaced from their homeland.

Yet Algonquian people's deployment of a bi-literacy in English and Algonquian helped to preserve and perpetuate the very aspects of peoplehood that were most threatened. Petitions, legal cases, and land deeds in English and Algonquian cemented Indian claims to land, according to their own tradition and the new rules of English courts. The Algonquian practice of soliciting many witnesses to a legal document reflects older practices of communal decision-making. The conversion of the Algonquian language into a written alphabetic language preserved it for posterity and continued older pre-alphabetic literacies of recording information among Algonquian-speaking people of the eastern seaboard. These literacies involved the inscription of "hieroglyphics" onto paintings, clothing, birchbark and wampum. Though alphabetic literacy was new and displaced some of these earlier forms of literacy, they were extended and perpetuated with the introduction of ink and paper. The newly inked and printed alphabet recorded

myths, legends, oral lore and other "sacred history." Belief in a form of vision quest, the power of dreams, the "dream soul", were common among literate Algonquian Christians. They also maintained their belief in the sacredness of particular types of animals and trees, and the necessity of burying a person with grave goods. Indians chose bi-lateral English and Indian names or transformed their Indian names into surnames. Thus, even amidst change, they possessed a continued allegiance to the ways of their forebears.

Christianity, refracted through a Native lens, arguably helped reinvigorate Native political structures shattered by conquest and also provided a bulwark against colonialism. Christian churches, though brought by colonizers, became Native institutions of Native space[319]. Native churches also continued some Native rituals, communal land ownership and the ideals of generosity and reciprocity so fundamental to New England Indians. Whether returning to their old lands or forming new, multi-tribal communities further afield, New England Indians displayed their persistence and permanence in continuing to articulate their peoplehood. The language did decline, but contemporary Native linguists Stephanie Fielding and Jessie Little Doe Baird are currently reviving their languages in their communities using these written texts. The texts would not exist without the physical and intellectual labor of bi-cultural Indians.

ASU's American Indian Studies Paradigm focuses on the sovereignty and self-determination of indigenous nationhood as a "sacred responsibility" necessary for cultural survival. Algonquian peoples of New England fought for their sovereignty with the pen and the gun. Even in praying towns, they preserved traditional ideas and roles about appointing a sachem. They hunted, fished, and lived in wigwams. Metacom fought

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[319] Brooks, *American Lazarus,* 71-73.

back against land-cession treaties, the surrender of his tribe's firearms, the defection of his subjects to praying towns, the diminishing of his tribute, and the flagrant disrespect for tribal sovereignty displayed in the persecution of John Sassamon's murder.

Samson Occom and Joseph Johnson also fought against land cession and English meddling in tribal political affairs. Their creation of Brothertown, a multi-tribal community on the lands of the Oneida, in the heart of the powerful Iroquois Confederacy, was a new attempt to articulate the "sacred responsibility" of their peoplehood. They were joining together communities of people who already shared a common lifestyle, interrelationships and marriages, relationships wrought by necessity. These relationships, recapitulated despite the pressure of colonization, helped them survive the onslaught of English domination.

Patrick Wolfe's analysis of settler colonialism and its structural nature is useful here. Settler colonialism, according to Wolfe, becomes a structure that permeates a society. As it envelops indigenous land in order to claim that land, it forces the removal and elimination of indigenous people and the removal of their ideological beliefs from a landscape[320]. New England Indian peoples did undergo violent war and displacement. Physical violence was indeed echoed by the erasure of indigenous place-names and knowledge, as Stannard and O'Brien note[321]. For example, after the Pequot War, the Pequot town of Weinshauks became the colonial town of New London, and the Pequot

[320] Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 388-89.

[321] O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees,* 12.

River was renamed the Thames River.[322] Praying towns were conceived of as zones where indigenous people could be contained, controlled, and segregated from white settlers[323]

Imaginary Indians, already seen as savage and inferior before Puritans' Atlantic crossing, sprang with new force into the collective Puritan mind as demons, devils or specters. Unconverted Indians were sources of terror because they marked a boundary between English "civilization" and Indian "savagery"; converted Indians likewise became terrifying because they confused that cultural and racial boundary. This is no doubt due to the shifting pattern of alliances engendered by King Philip's War. In the preceding pages, I have also argued that Indian literacy terrified Puritans because Indian communities left a paper trail. They wrote themselves into existence and sprang to permanent life on the printed page. By doing so, they directly contradicted settler-colonial attempts and desires for their erasure and offered a physical and ideological challenge to Puritan society.

Indigenous Algonquian people defied their containment. They created names for praying towns like "Nittuake", Natick, meaning "my land", or *Nonantum,* meaning "rejoicing." The meanings of the names were clear. Algonquians intended to stay in their traditional lands, reassert their claim to these lands in English and Indian legal codes, and rejoice. Indians, whites, and blacks often lived side by side, worshipped in the same churches, and intermarried. Reading and writing helped Indians adapt to changes and maintain their way of life. Literacy and education propelled them into new careers like

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[322] Stannard, *American Holocaust,* 115.

[323] Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons,* 23.

weaving, military service and whaling. Whaling in particular gave prestige and power to literate New England Indian men in the latter part of the colonial era, enabling them to earn money and experience some of the benefits of American citizenship.

Many Indians experienced settler colonialism in education. Eleazar Wheelock's "Indian Charity School" was soon abandoned by its founder. But the school, while it lasted, became the alma mater of Samson Occom, several of Occom's male kin, and an entire generation of Native leaders.

Modern librarians have tried to follow the lead of India's S.R. Ranganathan, who claimed that every book has an intended reader and every reader has an intended book.[324] Expanding the scope of that quote, I believe that literacy and the book have to power to describe and define identity, and decide individual and communal questions related to identity.

This is exactly how the Indians of New England were able to resist and survive the coercion of settler colonialism in the face of war, English political domination, and massive population losses. Over and over again, they proclaimed their individual and collective identity for the historical record. This proclamation of identity, proclaimed to themselves and others, helped to sustain them against a colonial society ravenous for land. Their identity and their writing kept them alive, despite many attempts to kill, enslave, displace or erase them. The strength of the pen could not entirely defeat the strength of the sword. But the Indian pen has outlasted the Puritan sword. Indian texts

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[324] S. R. Ranganathan, *The Five Laws of Library Science* (New Delhi, India: Ess Ess Publications, 1931), 3.

will forever speak the life of their communities and speak the honor of their dead, This strength should forever cause the swords to go silent.

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