Performative Rhetoric and the Early American Female Criminal

by

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Abstract

Female criminals, in a variety of ways, entered into public discourse and utilized forms of performance in order to leave their mark upon a culture that often severely limited the ways or extent to which women could engage with it. A label such as criminal is meant to erase, but can also become a moment of powerful cultural subversion. In this dissertation, I provide a closer examination of performance in female criminals in order to start untangling a complicated negotiation of identity. Analyzing the rhetoric surrounding those deemed female criminals through this lens allows us to enhance our discourse about the ways women communicated, expressed agency, and maintained a voice even under stringent methods of control and effacement. I examine the gendered performance of criminality in eighteenth-century American texts through the intersection of performance and rhetoric in order to deconstruct the idea of a dominant cultural narrative. My first section explores the Salem witch trials where witches took the central focus of a community in turmoil from war, economic issues, and religious strife. Their bodies intertwine with rhetoric during the trials to create meaningful texts of fear and control. My second section examines eighteenth-century infanticide narratives that had ministers attempting to adapt the voice of the female criminal to be suitable as a warning for the community. My third section analyzes how this same process can be read through the example of Elizabeth Wilson whose texts span all the possibilities of female crime literature in this time period in America from trial narrative to fictionalized sentimental account. Though often controlled by a dominant voice, such as ministers or leaders of the community, female bodies and behavior also became the vehicle through which women gain visibility and, at times, a voice.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Female Criminality, Power, and Rhetoric

In the mid-1630s, Anne Hutchinson became the focal point of a controversy that upset the very equilibrium of the new Massachusetts Bay Colony. During her two trials and eventual exile, she becomes infamous in her community and surrounding ones. On the surface, her crimes are ones of a religious nature. There is a disagreement between her and many prominent religious figures over the issue of a covenant of grace versus a covenant of works. However, this is not the only reason that Hutchinson becomes, perhaps, the most well-known of all the early female criminals in early America. Her trial offers clues as to the reasons that she was seen as such a threat that she must be removed forcibly from the community. During her trial, when she asks what crime she committed, her accusers, including Governor John Winthrop and prominent Puritan minister John Cotton, answer with "why the Fifth Commandment" (Hutchinson 483). This small question and response gives valuable insight into the nature of the trial and controversy. The trial itself includes many instances of her questioning the men standing before her when a path of submission would have been more acceptable. It is also notable that, in the eyes of Winthrop and other prominent male leaders of the community, this is a sin of not respecting authority. The accusations levied against her in trial and otherwise echo this sentiment of her, essentially, leading where she should be following. Another crime of hers includes her leading a spiritual discussion group with women from the community. Cotton reprimands her by claiming that the "filthy sin of the community of women…" will lead to various other sins including the mixing of men and women "without distinction or relation of marriage" (Adams 522). To the powerful men of the community, her spiritual groups with women represent their lack of control over community members. These groups of women, given too much freedom,

would lead to dirty, sinful consequences including the breakdown of authority even at the level of marriage. Hutchinson represented the worst of this anxiety, leading the charge defiantly.

She is quickly perceived as an element that is no longer welcome in the community. Reverend John Wilson reads the exile sentence to her with the following words:

> Forasmuch as you, Mrs. Hutchinson, have highly transgressed and offended ... and troubled the Church with your Errors and have drawen away many a poor soule, and have upheld your Revelations; and forasmuch as you have made a Lye ... Therefor in the name of our Lord Je[sus] Ch[rist] ... I doe cast you out and ... deliver you up to Sathan. (Round 142)

This declaration clearly illustrates the perceived threat of Hutchinson to the community. She is dangerous because she is perceived as powerful enough to lead many souls away from God and the authority of the Church. She is also delivered to Satan and, even after her exile, watched by the community. John Winthrop, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and prominent Puritan leader, continues to follow her life after exile and uses her stillborn child and her being killed by the Siwanoy during Kieft's War as proof of her evil nature and his righteousness in exiling her. These occurrences become proof of her sins in the eyes of Winthrop and also represent the continuing preoccupation of the community with Hutchinson and her actions. Hutchinson is a complicated historical figure and her life illustrates many of the concerns that influence the perception and treatment of female criminals in Early America.

At the core of her story is the perceived threat and desire to control the female body and voice that is disrupting the proper order of society. She is acting in ways that are not considered proper including leading groups of people and acting defiant during her trial. In short, she is not

performing her gender as expected and this incurs the wrath of those who fear that slippage away from gendered norms. Their reaction to her reveals their interpretation of her failure to maintain gendered expectations for behavior and the consequences of not following those expectations. Her exile highlights the issue of control at the center of many of these texts. She must be removed from the community to control her actions, but in this removal and through these trials she also becomes an incredibly well-known figure. Finally, these tensions are also mired with concerns over the female body particularly. This is most clearly seen when Winthrop uses her stillborn baby as evidence against her. The gendered body becomes part of the evidence at the same time as her words. All of these various facets of meaning and perception become the heart of my discussion of female criminals in Early America. Criminality opens a space for women to be visible and vocal in ways that might not be available otherwise. This space is a performative and ritualistic one. The woman is expected to perform a role, but her performance is fluid rather than fixed. Finally, the rhetoric from and about the female criminal reveals cultural and gendered nuances of the time.

A label such as criminal is meant to erase, but, as seen with Hutchinson, can also become a moment of powerful cultural subversion. The constraints of the label also become the tools of agency and communication. The trope of performative transgression is repeated through various female criminals including, but not limited to Hutchinson. Female criminals, in a variety of ways, entered into public discourse and utilized forms of performance in order to leave their mark upon a culture that often severely limited the ways or extent to which women could engage with it. The figure of the female criminal is one that is fluid, ambiguous, and dynamic. I wish to provide a closer examination of performance in female criminals in order to start untangling the complicated process, negotiation, and delicate construction of identity. Analyzing those deemed

female criminals through this lens allows us to enhance our discourse about the ways women communicated, expressed agency, and maintained a voice even under stringent methods of control and effacement. Criminality, in itself, is a term placed on people to control, label, and maintain that which might disrupt the desired order of a given cultural system; at the same time, however, the label of "criminal" incidentally opens up a space for dialogue for those typically shut out of public discourse. Criminals before the nineteenth century were frequently given the chance to speak in a variety of ways at the gallows and their own trials. Bits and pieces of their stories exist in a variety of forms including trial transcripts, dying speeches, and transcribed confessions. I will analyze the rhetoric of both written texts and speech acts of early American women who worked within and with the label of criminal. The performative power of criminality, or the unique subversive ability of public performance, deconstructs the idea of a master cultural narrative and rather portrays the breaks, the cracks in the wall, the gaps where women inserted themselves into a constructed narrative of the world and would not allow themselves to be forgotten.

Criminality is a label placed on women in order to decrease power or threats to the culture. In many ways, this label was used by those in power to control the community as a whole through public trials, executions, and texts like execution narratives. However, this label is by no means a complete effacement. It paradoxically opens a site of access or an entry zone into this rhetoric of power. Manipulating this opening and the powers of both speech and written text allows a moment of cultural negotiation where the female criminal is not disenfranchised, but instead becomes a powerful cultural figure. It is a creative, slippery power that can turn the power against community leaders. As Gay Gibson Cima states, women who performed meaning "offered various ways of claiming American-ness while articulating a sense of identity separate

from the dominant formulations" (4). The creative power of performance allows rhetorical acts by women to embrace multiple identities in one and form a voice that asserts itself as both American and not the monolithic form of American that the ones technically in power wish to assert. To be accused of a crime actually allows a public platform for performative negotiation, subversion, and exploration through the criminal's voice. Through this process of developing a rhetorical persona, female criminals are not passive or completely marginalized, but rather manipulate their position in the world to influence the cultural system and the developing American consciousness.

Labeling women as criminals is a way to minimize and control what is considered marginal and dangerous for the cultural situation and context of the time period. This does not mean just obvious crimes but, especially for women, could be just the crime of not fitting in with the firmly held image of what a woman should be or speaking at the incorrect times. As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell points out, "a central element in women's oppression was the denial of her right to speak" (9). Cheryl Glenn, in *Rhetoric Retold*, emphasizes the manner in which "as enclosed bodies, the female sex has been both excluded from and appropriated by the patriarchal territory of rhetorical practices and displays" (1). Women could be punished literally just for speaking and her entrance into public displays of rhetoric were often prohibited or controlled. Hutchinson illustrates this when she is punished for inappropriate speech acts in a manner that, oddly enough, allows her a platform to commit more inappropriate speech acts. The rhetorical acts[1] by

[1] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell defines a rhetorical act, in *The Rhetorical Act,* as "an intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the obstacles in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end. A rhetorical act creates a message whose shape and form, beginning and end, are stamped on it by a human author with a goal for an audience" (7). This definition is useful as a guiding point for thinking about criminal literature and the relationship between author, audience, and intent. However, an analysis of female criminals in non-traditional texts posits some problems as well as the need to explore different avenues of gendered analysis as outlined by my introduction.

female criminals did create meaning in a variety of ways within an early American cultural system. Analyzing these moments of cultural production is integral to recovering all the voices of a culture and not just the accepted dominant form. Suzanne Clark declares that "the theme of strangeness marks the way woman unsettles language…Rather than reclaiming a place for women within a tradition of rhetoric that has excluded so many, the figure of Rhetorica gives rhetoric itself a new life, changing it from within to accommodate women and other strangers" (305). Women's status within their culture in a variety of ways gives them the unique ability to disrupt and inform. This marginalization can actually become a tool used against dominant culture in order to disrupt its system of meaning.

Particularly useful to my project is a combined framework developing the idea of using performance in order to enter public discourse and manipulate meaning and power. Performance, and especially performance through speech, is necessarily different from written texts. There is a liminality and ambiguity that can be manipulated in speech. A different set of tactics need to be employed in order to analyze speech versus a written text. Complicating the process is the fact that all we have is transcribed speech acts and texts. However, it is important to note the performative nature of these confessions and stories and how the power of speech combines with the power of performance in order to create meaning. The application of performance theory to female criminals helps reveal how female criminals utilized performance in order to engage with a world that was not often receptive to their message. When entering a liminal position, the female criminal engages with the creation of culture and does so with a perceived audience in mind. This liminal position opens up possibility, creativity, and potential for greater control over voice. Whether actively controlling the narrative or (supposedly) being controlled, the

performance of female criminality destroys rigid social constraints and manipulates systems of power.

Part of my theoretical lens is inspired by Susan Gubar's "The Blank Page and the Issues of Female Creativity," which analyzes the various ways in which female voices are ignored and erased, but also can be recovered as active even in non-traditional forms. Female voices can be, in her words, the "subversive voice of silence" while utilizing and becoming the means to communicate including the body, crafts, and decorations (260). The image guiding her theory is the story of "The Blank Page" where beautiful white linens are taken from bridal suites in royal households and hung up in for viewing by an order of nuns. Most are stained red from the loss of virginity; however, one has no stain at all. Behind every sheet, or page, is a story. While one cannot perhaps identify the exact "facts" behind the image, these images offer us possibility and fluidity for the female to become a participant in her own existence rather than mere symbol to be used for the society. The blank page itself, or the blank sheet, offers possibilities that should not be ignored just because the precise, recorded details are unknown.

The idea of the blank page also engages with the concept of the rhetoric of silence. Cheryl Glenn, in *Unspoken*, details the possibilities for examining silences or gaps as rhetoric. She acknowledges that "often silencing is an imposition of weakness upon a normally speaking body; whereas silence can function as a strategic position of strength" (xix). This emphasizes the manner in which silence can be something imposed on others, but also that silence can be read as a strategy instead of just a silencing. Glenn also notes a particularly frustrating limitation when doing historical work when she notes that "much of the past is, of course, irrevocably silenced: gestures, conversations, and original manuscripts can never be recaptured. Silence and silencing still greet us in every library, every archive, every text, every newscast" (1). It is this silence that

faces a project of examining historical situations of rhetoric. We do not have physical bodies, facial expressions, or other mannerisms and details that would be useful in examining the type of texts and historical situations that make the basis of my project. We have texts that are rife with issues of credibility and filled with silences and gaps of their own. This type of project requires active scholarly analysis that acknowledges these limitations and yet still works within that framework to seek several facets of a cultural narrative. Andrea Lunsford, in *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, explains the type of audience necessary by stating that we can listen to women's voices of the past "by becoming, as Cheryl Glenn suggests, the audience who can at last give voice to women lost to us; by examining in close detail their speech and writing; and by acknowledging and exploring the ways in which they have been too often dismissed and silenced" (6).

One of the ways to become this audience requires work with the types of texts that often raise more questions than answers. These texts are complicated because we only have transcribed records of what were speech acts. So, for example, we cannot access Hutchinson's actual court case, but instead a transcription of it and other people writing about her. Many female criminals and the various non-traditional texts often attached to their stories such as execution narratives or trial transcripts are problematic because we cannot know for certain how much is agenda-driven, how much of the woman's voice survives in it, or even who is writing which parts. This moves us past the comfort of facts and into a world of speculation. With speculation, there come issues of potentially reading into texts what we so desperately want to find. One approach to discuss this issue is a historical focus or a focus on what we do know over what we might know. In many ways, this makes sense—in the remaining texts we do not have bodies, but rather perceptions of bodies. We do not have women, but perceptions or depictions of them. Sometimes we do not

even have any direct texts or words from them. We have a fragmented narrative and reconstructing this narrative takes us into problematic areas of ambiguity. However, this does not mean that we should not try to fit the pieces together. Searching for the woman's voice and acknowledging the physical body that has such a presence in the society is, in effect, trying to reach for a more complete narrative that reveals all sides of a cultural moment including the one of the woman who is arguably at the center of it all. It would be more problematic to ignore them and pretend like the pieces do not exist. The perception of the female body and female performance reveals much about the cultural situation of the individuals doing the perceiving which, in turn, also illuminates the life of the woman being perceived. Furthermore, it is important to let go of an idea of completeness or reconstructing a perfect image of these past historical events. Once the idea of being able to know everything is relinquished one can begin to see through the cracks and reconstruct a cultural narrative that acknowledges that which we do not know as much as what we do. Even when we have to depend on what does survive time, texts and the rhetoric in them become a way to patch together what may never be a complete narrative, but also may be more accurate in its incompleteness.

Expanding Theoretical Lens

Joseph Roach establishes a definition of performance in *Cities of the Dead* that helps structure and guide my analysis of these Early American texts:

> The social processes of memory and forgetting, familiarly known as culture, may be carried out by a variety of performance events, from stage plays to sacred rites, from carnivals to the invisible performance rituals of everyday life. To perform in this sense

> means to bring forth, to make manifest, and to transmit. To perform also means, though often more secretly, to reinvent. (Xi)

This definition of performance emphasizes the fluid nature of performance where performance can be the most overt definition meaning a play or theatrical performance to mundane everyday life filled with supposedly invisible performances of self and culture. In his words, to perform means to "transmit" or "bring forth." It can also aim itself either knowingly or not toward reinvention. These possibilities for performance emphasize the idea that performance is a mode or way that culture can be redefined, explored, or even changed. There is a subversive power lurking even for those that are the focus of my own study—the supposedly "disposable" elements of society in female criminals.

Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is a necessary text for structuring the thought process guiding my discussion of performance and female criminals. Their texts, and the rhetoric surrounding their cases, focus on confession and the public nature of criminality and punishment. He, in his foundational text, examines the shift from a focus on the body and spectacle as punishment to punishment becoming the more hidden aspect of a crime through the beginning of the nineteenth century. He contextualizes punishment in earlier history as a spectacle and a public event in which an entire community would participate. Foucault outlines the importance of the body in public punishment:

> The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations. (25)

In this manner, the body becomes a symbol that can be used in various ways to enforce or clarify power relations in the society. Criminal bodies become central to the spectacle of public punishment. Foucault continues his discussion of punishment by stating that "the function of the public torture and execution was to reveal the truth…A successful public execution justified justice, in that it published the truth of the crime in the very body of the man to be executed" (44). The body is used as a symbol in order to reveal the truth, or at least the truth that the state wants the audience to believe. This closely mirrors the function of early American crime literature and, in particular, female criminals whose bodies become the focus of public punishment and confession. The justice brought against female criminals is not one that can just be decreed by a court, but rather must be something that the community, as audience, sees with their own eyes. This marks that it is not only important that these power relations play out in public where all can see it, but also that the important component is the audience watching what is happening. In this manner, they become a part of what is happening and the mark is left all the more strongly.

However, even with this process in place, Foucault acknowledges the possibilities for the audience or criminal to disrupt the power system in place. He describes a situation where "it was evident that the great spectacle of punishment ran the risk of being rejected by the very people to whom it was addressed. In fact, the terror of the public execution created centres of illegality" (63). Furthermore, written texts were another way where the crime and punishment could reach a certain level of ambiguity. Foucault notes that certain publications of execution speeches were accurate, but could have also been created or altered to help shape the narrative that the audience would consume after an execution. He also claims that "there is a whole aesthetic rewriting of crime, which is also the appropriation of criminality in acceptable forms" (68). This

appropriation could be used by the state to control the narrative on its own terms. However, publications could also lead to texts that made the criminal a bit too heroic leading to the state attempting to control publications about criminals such as broadsheets (68). In this manner, punishment is focused on being public which affords it an uneasy power shifting between control by the state and lack of control due to the uncontrollable aspects of both audience and prisoner.

Another way I enhance this idea about the performative space that opens with trials and surrounding rituals and rhetoric is to draw upon Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnival outlined in *Rabelais and His World*. To Bakhtin, carnivals were often "borderline between art and life…shaped according to a certain pattern of play" (7). An important concept central to this idea is the fact that the carnival eliminates "any distinction between actors and spectators…Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people…It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part" (7). If we transfer this idea to spaces of female criminality such as executions and trials, they become a communal event that every member would participate in to a certain extent. In this manner, the spectacle of a trial or execution becomes a moment, or a space, where cultural anxieties are raised, explored, and supposedly exorcised. Bakhtin also explores the idea that "carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchal rank privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (10). This develops "a special type of communication impossible in everyday life" (10). This space is also one in which normal boundaries break down. For example, a female servant would have very limited ways to interact with others in the community who were in a higher class. However, during a trial or execution, that same female servant would be able to communicate and interact

with the community in a different manner. Female criminals were frequently treated like a type of celebrity where they may have dinner or converse with members of the community who would have ignored them otherwise.

The idea of communication and fluidity of language in general is also important to understanding this space of interaction. Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia and the dialogic help structure concepts of language in a manner that emphasizes their relational and fluid nature.[2] His theory of the dialogic states that pieces of literature, but also language in general are constantly in context with other pieces of literature or language. Every response is informed by responses that came before it and also to expectations of responses in the future. In this manner, language is changing constantly and always in relation to other responses and speech acts. His concept of heteroglossia takes this idea further by saying that there are always many different types of speech even within the same overarching language. The conflict and slippage between those different types of speech intermingling is what creates the power of a novel, according to Bakhtin. This idea can be used to relate to language and rhetorical acts in general. The established hierarchy, momentarily, in a paradoxical attempt to maintain order, suspends that same order. This creates a special type of discourse, a different rhetoric, and a different type of interaction between members of the community and developed ideas within the literal and textual space.

Keeping these concepts in mind, Joseph Roach helps frame specifically Early American performance. He develops the idea of surrogation, an important concept to performance theory, which happens when "actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that

[2] For more see Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination.* Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981. Print.

constitutes the social fabric" and substitutes attempt to fulfill these vacancies (2). This process of "trying out various candidates in different situations" informs Roach's definition of performance (3). His focus on the circum-Atlantic world defines how they have "invented themselves by performing their pasts in the presence of others" (5). This performance of parades and funeral rites not only recognize and carry the memories of the past, but also invent or imagine a future. This same idea can be translated to help analyze the figure of the female criminal. The process of performance and making cultural meaning is one that necessarily looks to the past and present even as the future is being transformed. Female criminals were aware of their position in a historical context and utilized known symbols and meanings in order to invent both a current self and a desired future. They used this particular niche in order to transmit.

Laura L. Mielke furthers this concept of performance in her introduction to the collection *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603-1832* edited by Mielke and Joshua David Bellin. She explores the difficulty in trying to understand or even reconstruct Native Performance. Her example of Pocahontas' performance in front of her people and John Smith emphasizes the manner in which we cannot truly know what she "intended by her actions and what she accomplished in reality" (2). She continues to refine the concept of performance:

> To perform, of course, means to present something (like dance, drama, or music) on stage or to an audience. It also means, in a transitive sense, to carry out something promised or commanded or, more broadly, to carry out a particular action or function. Finally, it can denote the formal or solemn execution of a public function, ceremony, or ritual. (2)

The Pocahontas story as represented by John Smith or various other historians signifies these definitions of performance. Ritual, presentation to an audience, and carrying out a particular

function all combine to provide "perhaps indistinguishable interaction of diverse performances: by Pocahontas, by her father and people, by Smith himself, and by his transatlantic readers" (3). Mielke's focus is specifically on Native Performance, but the general tenets are applicable to the field in general. Performance can mean a wide array of activities and even specific cultural moments can have multiple performances coming together from multiple individuals in order to form a liminal and sometimes confusing historical moment of negotiation.

Sandra M. Gustafson crafts a definition for Early American performance that emphasizes the potential and power of this situation. *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* elaborates these ideas. The oratory is set forth as an act that needs further analysis for its artistic and powerfully potential many different forms. In her terms, "oratory proved so vital to the dynamic of the colonies and early republic because it permitted the staging of a variety of social and cultural relations" (xv). The oratory form is one that helps these tenuous early negotiations of culture, where power ebbed and flowed, and where the very nature of the developing society began to express itself. Gustafson says that "Viewing speech and text as symbolic and performative forms of language rather than as discrete and hierarchical entities opens understand of the ways that the bodies of language figure constructions of the social body in oratorical performance" (xvi). A focus on speech helps emphasize the manner in which many of these cases revolved, at least originally, around speech in the form of trials, sermons, accusations and confessions. It is in this space that control over the cultural meaning of a situation is either won or lost and that negotiations can occur.

This focus on negotiation and fluidity is important to reorganizing how we discuss texts whether it be in the form of speech, text, or speech-driven text. Rather than static or firmly in the hands of the ruling class, we can analyze each text as a shifting, fluid source capable of

functioning in multiple ways. This performance semiotic of speech, as developed by Gustafson, helps develop a world where forms of speech considered in power only exist in relation to speech given in return by the other sides of developing American culture including women, African Americans, and Native Americans. The traditions of oratory practice and the eventual move from oratory into print culture is anything but simple or easy to comprehend and within these fissures is the possibility for subversion or a great understanding of complexity. The power of the oratory is always one that is being negotiated and revised—for example, the Salem witch trials (noted by Gustafson and others) and other cases (such as Anne Hutchinson's trial) portray the ways in which the authority of the clergy could be imitated by those outside of that position of power. This creates a situation where rigid, formal borders become fluid and the potential for a powerful cultural moment possible.

In this way, an understanding of the performative nature of speech can be a powerful tool capable of manipulating power and altering the very nature of the culture. Gustafson offers the Salem witch trials as an example of the way that oratorical power can be manipulated "as a set of performances in which accusers and accused staged a parodic reversal of the social order" (40). Using the voice of the clergy and manipulating a unique position of access to power in the form of accusing someone in court led to a surprisingly rich cultural moment and also the moment where the very cultural fabric holding the society together is being manipulated and torn. In this manner, though a position in society has been assigned to them the women are still able to use performance and stage a moment where the rules are challenged and voices are heard that are typically sanctioned as silent within the culture. It is here that I am most interested in connecting my own work to Gustafson's. I analyze the moment of slippage that performance can afford a woman as she negotiates a cultural situation that often forces her to maintain her silence. In a

world where identity is often tied to the speech and written texts, the idea of women's influence on this situation cannot be minimalized even if it is not technically their names signed at the end or their hand writing the words. Destabilizing how we consider power, speech, and text helps allow us to see the clashing tensions in a culture and negotiation of the flow of power as not something monolithic, but rather slippery and always going back and forth between those technically in power and those not. Shifting the focus from those technically in power and supposedly controlling these narratives allows us to gaze into the supposed margins of the society that had just as much of a voice in the creation of culture and society as those technically in control.

These theorists help define how performance and rhetorical acts have a purpose of negotiation and transmission. However, this process is not always easy or accepted within the cultural moment. Gay Gibson Cima helps clarify the role that performance has in protecting women in their speech acts that could be perceived as subversive. Cima, in *Early American Women Critics: Performance, Religion, and Race* helps define useful theoretical tactics when trying to understand women's influence in the public world in Early America. She explains how criticism, typically thought of as a male privilege, was expressed by women in a variety of ways cloaked under performance, spontaneous public performances, and fiction. Performance protected these women from the backlash of patriarchal society limiting the acceptable forms of communication from women. She explains that there are "sites of access" that allow women to engage in cultural structures of power in ways that would not have been acceptable otherwise. Through performance, women are able to create so-called host bodies that allowed them a voice in the culture at the same time as protecting that voice from absolute censure or destruction. The host body is an imagined, performative self that more safely allows women to enter public

discourse. For example, spontaneous religious effusions in the streets often allowed women to speak in ways they were not allowed normally, but at the same time they are protected by the seemingly forced or inevitable nature of the occurrence. By entering Cima's host bodies, they are able to stage and perform criticism or, at the very least, maintain voice and agency. In some ways, the female criminal afforded a position of power by giving "criminals" easy access to a liminal position which can be associated with a loss of power, but can also be empowering. They perform surrogation as mentioned by Roach before by imagining and embracing a particular role to allow their physical bodies the freedom to perform powerful rhetorical acts.

There is a fluidity between the physical body, speech, and text in which they all bleed into one another and, at times, become interwoven into a complicated tapestry. Performance, and the rhetoric surrounding it, operate in a type of fluid borderland of meaning and understanding. Gloria Anzaldúa speaks of the literal United States-Mexican Border, but also a cultural border as areas "set up to define places to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition" (25). This border can be partially what separates accepted culture against those who have been designated as outside dominant culture. This border is meant to keep "true" culture safeguarded against "malignant" Others who may taint the safety of the dominant culture. However, the necessarily vague and transitive state of this borderland leads to the possibility of power even for those who reside within it. Like Cima's ambiguous host bodies, the borderlands are a place that are not just acted upon, but also react against dominant culture. This ambiguous area allows for a break from dominant norms that can be marginalizing, but also allows freedoms beyond what total entrenchment in dominant culture may afford.

Culture is a transmission of beliefs and concepts and women often spread beliefs throughout a culture. Or as Anzaldúa states, "Culture is made by those in power—men. Males make the rules and laws; women transmit them" (38). For this reason, the female criminal holds a powerful position in society. She who will act against dominant culture must be marginalized, effaced, and neutralized for the good of the culture. However, in doing so the power of control is relinquished as the female criminal can become bigger than the label given to her. Who can read Esther Rodgers' execution narrative or Mary Prince's *History* and not feel the very real power emanating from them? Even in their respective marginalized, labeled positions the transitive, ambiguity of their existence between dominant culture and nothingness affords a type of freedom to challenge or change the world around them. Performance and this ambiguous position in society form the basis for my discussion of this tenuous form of identity and power.

Caroline F. Sloat continues this discourse in her introduction to an edited edition with Sandra M. Gustafson titled *Cultural Narratives: Textuality and Performance in American Culture before 1900*. The introduction begins the idea that personal memoir is a particularly effective form and one that can reach many different cultures and walks of life. Personal accounts in a multitude of ways should be, as Sloat affirms, a "historical category" on their own (2). The use of personal account helps deconstruct the idea of a rigid public and private arena of life and rather shows how the personal is political and can also be powerful, subversive, or help cut through categories often thought as barrier such as race, class, and gender. Ultimately, I hope to further the discussion about those deemed female criminals in a way that shows how each text is personal, but also public and also political. The performance aspect of these texts helps straddle this line between personal account and public power in a way that defies easy analysis and resists just seeing the female criminal as a labeled and disempowered individual.

General Overview of Chapters

My dissertation has three main sections that examine different aspects of performance, rhetoric, and the body. The three sections establish the following categories of my argument: the female body and rhetoric in Early America, the maternal body and the rhetoric of religion, and the growing fictionalization of the body. My first section examines the physical body as a site of criminality during the Salem witch trials in 1692. The female body (both witch and accuser) becomes a text with shifting meanings. The body can be criminalized or criminalize others. Perceptions of the body are also central to the trials and interfere with and influence testimony and eyewitness accounts. A closer examination of the process by which the physical body performs these functions clarifies how a body can become a symbolic text of power and knowledge. The body can be criminalized by those in power, but, in return, women can utilize this criminalization as a means to achieve agency and power within the system.

Tituba, one of the first women accused of witchcraft in Salem, uses various rhetorical acts during her examinations in a manner that both helps her case and influences the trials as a whole. Her trial transcript reads like an improvisational spectacle where she is the one in control of the situation. She has control with her words but also the belief in her power gives her control over people's bodies. Her crimes are ones that manipulate people's bodies against them. The body here becomes the site of crime both literally and symbolically with Tituba in the center of the madness. This is one way that the body can be read as a text of symbolic power. From this starting point, I will analyze the ways in which a body or bodies become this site of criminality, meaning, and performance. By examining other accused females put on trial like Tituba, the body is a text intertwining with her specific performative use of language that is vulnerable,

potent, and malleable to be used to convey a meaning. Body, text, and voice intertwine to perform identity.

The second section continues the analysis of the female body, speech, and performance with a shift to focus on the maternal body and religious rhetoric. Execution narratives typically included women who were found guilty of fornication and infanticide. Reproduction, female sexuality, and ideas of morality and sin are at the center of these texts. Ministers here frequently utilize the lens of religious rhetoric with the goal of controlling and creating these female bodies for a larger cultural narrative. In the eighteenth century, these texts were extremely popular and often seen as means of both entertainment and didacticism. Depending on the text, those in power (government officials, preachers) use the language of criminality in order to marginalize a criminalized or compromised female body, but that language can also deconstruct this same process. These narratives exist as carefully crafted bundles that usually included very long sermons with briefer narratives of the event and usually a personal touch with a confession from the criminal. There were frequently several people credited with influencing or writing this bundle. This fact suggests these narratives have not only multiple voices in them, but also the chance for multiple motives or manipulation. While it may be easy to lose the voice of the woman at the center of the narrative, I want to analyze the way that otherwise "invisible" criminalized or marginalized women were able to gain agency and protect their voices even in this murky system of control.

For example, "The Declaration and Narrative of Esther Rodgers" has multiple voices that come together to create the entire text. There is an attached sermon, ministers helping her write the narrative, and a gentlewoman of the village speaking on her behalf at various portions of the text. Obviously, this creates a convoluted whole where multiple voices are merging together.

However, these voices do not merge into a single cohesive discourse, but rather all carry their own motives, ambiguities, and fluidity. Esther Rodgers herself is the nexus of this cultural moment. She utilizes her power as a female criminal to perform a part and gain access and a voice in her culture. She becomes a type of celebrity who causes a scene at her execution that is subversive. Her actual walk to the gallows is theatrical and undermines the didacticism that others may seek to implement into her story. Rodgers and the other women I discuss in this section find a powerful way to access public discourse through this liminal position as a female criminal.

My previous chapters develop clear connections between the performative power of criminality, rhetoric, and how these factors help shape an early American world, using the fragmentary narratives and related documents through which several criminal women's various stories are shaped. My third section examines this process through one woman and the plethora of stories that emerge from her life. Elizabeth Wilson is a real life "criminal" who sparks a cultural fervor. Her much publicized execution after the murder of her two babies became a site of cultural upheaval concerning sexuality and morality. At least five major texts emerge within two decades of her execution that attempt to give order and meaning to her life for an audience. In this manner, each author utilizes Wilson as a symbol. The fictionalized Wilson in these tales becomes the manner in which various aspects of the dominant cultural discourse are either reinforced or challenged. These repeated retellings subtly utilize a popular female criminal figure in order to rewrite the story and effectively enter a public discourse of gender, sexuality, and cultural expectation. One woman whose story is retold repeatedly in many different genres portrays the manipulative ability that the performance and rhetoric can have over creating subversive spaces in cultural discourse. It is here that a focus on the physical body disappears

and gets translated into a more fictionalized body. This is the process that leads to a different type of tradition going into the nineteenth century with a focus on sentimental fiction with a literary formula as opposed to trials and execution narratives.

Exploring these texts helps communicate several ideological concerns. Female criminals, or at least their stories, are often the site of a paradox. On one hand, they are often seen as powerless or at least thoroughly punished individuals before a legal system that does not necessarily take kindly to women behaving badly. On the other hand, it is dismissive to ignore how the performance of criminality gains women entrance into public discourse or, at the very least, enables the narrating of their own story. This relationship between criminality, gender, and performance helps negotiate power and control over one's body and voice. A fuller understanding of the process behind this specifically gendered performance and the subversions of power between those in control and those legally not gives us a better understanding of gendered power and social relations in early America.

Daniel K. Richter writes in *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* that we must "shift our perspective" to view history from the other direction than dominant culture. Though he is referring specifically to Native American history and experiences, I propose the same of the texts I am considering for this project. Though Richter acknowledges the impossibility of this undertaking, he also encourages the act of imagining what the world might have been and how to "turn familiar tales inside out, to show how old documents might be read in fresh ways, to reorient our perspectives on the continent's past, to alternate between the general and personal" (9). In short, the same guiding thought processes that help Richter successfully begin to reconsider Native American experience can inform how one might consider the history of female criminals. Krista Ratcliffe explores the idea of rhetorical

listening to be "a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture" (17). This concept of active openness and actively trying to understand tropes and language even with all of its paradoxes is vital. Rather than focusing on the hands supposedly guiding cultural fate, one should attempt to look closer at divergent voices trying to reach us from hundreds of years ago. These voices are ones that were heard, whether welcomed or not, in the culture and can be heard once again in ours either from gaining a new perspective into Early American texts and understanding the rhetorical acts that expose the reasons for our historical and continued fixation on women's bodies and criminality.

Section 1

The Body, Rhetoric, and Hysterical Puritans in Salem

Early 1692 Salem saw three women standing accused of witchcraft. The initial court order to bring Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn, and Tituba into custody stated "much Injury done to the Bodys of Elizabeth parris Abigail Williams Anna putnam and Elizabeth Hubert all of Salem Village aforesaid, according to theire Complaint" as the reason for the arrest (609). During the initial examination, the children are brought to face the accused women. In this face-to-face meeting, the girls were "all hurt, afflicted and tortured very much" (609). Notably, this face-to-face encounter does not result in an actual physical torture. Instead, it is a glance that strikes the girls into tortured bodily pain. Only physical distance helps ease the girls' torture. This is the scene that sets the stage for a hysteria that would grip Essex County for nearly a year. In this beginning, the young girls ranging in age from 9 to 13 and a 17-year-old maidservant, communicated through their bodies. The focus here is physical harm done to their bodies through psychic means. Their twisting contortions and fits baffle physicians and eventually lead to spiraling accusations and legal proceedings. During the examination, their bodies become texts that are read as evidence. Their bodies give the accusing girls power and threaten the very lives of the accused.

In turn, the accused women's bodies also become evidence creating a situation where each body is trapped in a battle of cultural anxieties. The crimes committed are ones that manipulate people's bodies against them at the same time as words attach meaning to their own physical bodies. The Salem witch trials reveal how physical bodies of women become a

site of cultural negotiation. However, this is not just a story of physical bodies, but the language and perceptions that surround them. Physical bodies become symbolic of anxieties in ways that allow for a unique connection to be made between language and bodies. The trials focus on bodies, of the accusers and accused, yet this tension is debated through words. Through words, accusers and the powerful men presiding over the trials attach meaning to bodies. The accused also gain a voice through performative speech in the courtroom. Their words perform anxiety while simultaneously shaping its meaning through language. There are various levels of control coming from all sides which all vie to determine how bodies are perceived. In this way, a body becomes a site of criminality, anxiety, and power.

For the purpose of this section, I will examine the body as symbol through the bodies of both the accused and accusers. Examining these different bodies together illuminates a set of patterns and reveals a racialized and gendered rhetoric emerging through language. The Salem witch trials represent a moment that demonstrates both a culture's anxiety over the female body and the potential power that can be derived from utilizing that anxiety against that same culture through spoken word. The body here becomes the site of crime both literally and symbolically with the accusers and accused fixated in the center of madness. The body becomes a text intertwining with a specific performative use of language that is paradoxically vulnerable, potent, and malleable. The body becomes text, voice, and performance of identity. The cultural background aggravates an already standing perception of the body as a metaphor for community and also as a place of potential vulnerability to attack. This interaction between perceptions of body and cultural background results in a certain type of rhetoric emerging that attaches meanings onto actual bodies on trial forming a cultural narrative of violence deployed through and against women's bodies.

Literal and Metaphorical Bodies

Perceptions of the female body in this cultural moment are centrally important to understanding the witch trials. Of course, we do not have actual bodies to examine in this case. We do not even have objective images to examine. What we do have are perceptions. A reading of the trial transcripts reveals cultural perception of a body and, likewise, how that perception is used or reflected by the women being accused. In this manner, the criminal body becomes a fluid text open to interpretation rather than just flesh and blood. In the words of Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter, "bodies are always in a process of becoming; as open-ended categories they are amendable to codes that restrict, contain, open, or expand them and the cultural and contextual interpretations of their corporeality…the social construction of bodies reflects the need to create order from chaos" (2). The female body becomes a text with shifting meanings. The body can be criminalized or criminalize others. It can also be a center of mystery and anxiety that provokes a need or desire to control or neutralize it. It is no surprise that the body or bodies of others often become the source of evidence even in a trial based on spectral evidence.[1] The body is the site of meaning and provides evidence into the soul of the owner. For example, the accusers and accused all have

[1] Spectral evidence is evidence based on dreams, visions, and/or eyewitness testimony that tends to focus on the idea of the spirit, or soul, being able to leave the body. It is important to note that the inclusion of spectral evidence was not accepted entirely by all. Several prominent people spoke against the use of it including William Milborne, a Baptist minister, Robert Pike, one of the leading men in Salisbury, Thomas Brattle, a prominent and extremely educated Boston merchant as well as many other individuals from various positions of power, intellectual and otherwise, from within the community and outside. For more information on spectral evidence, please see Geis, Gilbert and Ivan Bunn. *A Trial of Witches: A Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Prosecution*. New York: Routledge, 1997. 65-70 88-94. Print. Hoffer, Peter Charles. *The Salem Witchcraft Trials: A Legal History*. Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 1997. 67-93, 100-131. Print. Norton, Mary Beth. *In The Devil's Snare*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. 36-38, 213-217. Print. Starkey, Marion L. *The Devil in Massachusetts*. New York: Doubleday, 1949. 54, 156-158, 225-266. Print. Weisman, Richard. *Witchcraft, Magic, and Religion in 17th-Century Massachusetts*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1984. 150-152, 166-177. Print.

moments in their trials where their bodies come under examination. Likewise, testimony tends to focus on bodily control and bodily fears. Meaning is inscribed on bodies and with the performance of criminality these women attempt to mold meaning for their own purposes.

This performance of criminality gains additional potency due to the fact that, in early New England, the body was commonly the unit of measurement for all else. For example, John Winthrop, in 1630, describes an ideal Christian community in the following terms in *A Modell of Christian Charity*:

> The definition which the Scripture gives us of love is this: Love is the bond of perfection. First it is a bond or ligament. Secondly, it makes the work perfect. There is no body but consists of parts and that which knits these parts together, gives the body its perfection, because it makes each part so contiguous to others as thereby they do mutually participate with each other, both in strength and infirmity, in pleasure and pain. To instance in the most perfect of all bodies: Christ and his Church make one body. (171)

In this description, the body comes to describe a spiritual state of perfection for a community, in this case the Massachusetts Bay Colony in which the witchcraft trials were eventually to take place. This scripturally backed Puritan sentiment explores the idea of a perfect body being one where all the parts that are held together by ligaments. Each part participates in the movement and actions. Each part can have a positive or negative effect on the whole. This perception of body is powerful in its influence and creates an image that emphasizes both the power of this unity, but also the vulnerability of being a part of a whole.

This idea does not stop at the community level. This idea of a community as a body translates to more intimate spaces as well. Robert Blair St. George explores in his article "Witchcraft, Bodily Affliction, and Domestic Space in Early New England" that "witches attacked houses because these structures of wood, brick, and stone were material metaphors of the human body; because of the extended meanings of the body, the house references malefic assaults against the family unit" (14). He details this process further as he portrays the manner in which the idea of body is closely tied to biblical verses that "established God's temple or tabernacle as a body that is a living house, a house the elect will one day exchange for a perfect eternal dwelling" (119). He continues to state that "New England Puritans the body of the faithful appeared in the shape of the meetinghouse, with its seating arrangement that places men on one side and women on the other, or members of leading families near the front and children, servants, and Native Americans at the rear" (119). The head is where the male prominent families would reside and look out over the hierarchy of societal classes. In other words, there is a close scriptural connection between body, buildings, and community. The house is closely equated to the body, which becomes a temporary holy dwelling before it is destroyed and salvation reached. [2] The community itself and each unit within the community including the citizens, buildings, family, and each individual is represented by this body as metaphor trope. A healthy body works as a unit and each individual unit supports the whole. A breakdown of any part of the body leads to a breakdown in how the entire body works.

[2] For many collected examples of this phenomenon, see St. George, Robert Blair. *Conversing by Signs: Poetics of Implication in Colonial New England Culture.* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1998. Print.

For this reason, the physical body becomes threatening when not controlled and this threat, in turn, weakens the very building blocks of society from houses to entire communities. The home is an intimate and normally safe place. Attacking a home was like attacking the person and both threatened the unity of the community at large. The idea that Satan, through witches, could attack this body garnered great anxiety not just of losing a house, but of losing an identity and a unity as a cohesive community. Demos explains this tension through anxiety and households:

> Among the more fantastic powers attributed to Satan by the New Englanders were those which enabled him to disrupt the physical arrangements of ordinary households. Stones, sticks, and boards might "by his means" rise from the ground to crash loudly on outside walls…Falling, shaking, hurtling about, these objects became missiles of destruction. (132)

Perceptions of physical bodies and their capabilities clarify how a body can become both a symbolic text of power and community, but also a vulnerable embodiment of the potential weaknesses of a community. There is a clear anxiety over the body and what the body represents. It is no surprise that much of the evidence and testimony in the trials reflects this same anxiety. There is a fear of evil or weakness entering the body either as an individual or a community of people.

Perceptions of Body and Evidence

The prominent minister Cotton Mather is one of the men who helps fuel a perception of witchcraft that focuses on anxieties over the body in such texts as *Invisible Wonders and Memorable Providences.* Several years before the events in Salem, he writes about a pious

family named the Goodwins who come under the affliction of witchcraft in 1689. The four Goodwin children experience increasing ailments that include fits like epilepsy and other lapses in health. This progresses to severe medical problems that are described in increasingly disturbing terms:

> Sometimes they would be deaf, sometimes dumb, and sometimes blind, and often all at once. One while their tongues would be drawn down their throats, another while they would be pulled out upon their chins to a prodigious length. They would have their mouths opened unto such a wideness that their jaws went out of joint, and anon they would clap together again with a force like that of a strong spring lock….They would make most piteous outcries that they were cut with knives and struck with blows that they could not bear. Their necks would be broken so that their neckbone would seem dissolved unto them that felt after it, and yet on the sudden, it would become again so stiff that there was no stirring of their heads, yea, their heads would be twisted almost round. (Hill 19)

This focuses on the piety of the family immediately juxtaposed with grotesque descriptions of what happens to the bodies of the innocent children. The strange fits are described as blows and knife cuts that could not always be seen by anyone, but rather just felt. Their heads can supposedly twist almost around and their jaws flap open so wide that they should be broken. This disturbing description emphasizes the piety of the family compared to the horrible distortions that happen to the physical body. The juxtaposition between supposed goodness and the horror and violence of actions committed against them leads to an unsettling combination. The rhetoric Mather utilizes emphasizes not only attacks on the physical body, but also connects these attacks with violence against the soul or spirit as well. These two

forms of violence create the unique tone, set through Mather and others writing similar texts that pervades the focus of the witch trials in Salem.

Even earlier, Increase Mather (father of Cotton Mather), in "An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences" details how "divers houses have been woefully haunted by [evil spirits]" (Hill 12), reinforcing the idea of the home as a center of vulnerability. He details the haunting of the house of William Morse, his wife, and son in 1679 that begins with sticks and stones being thrown at the house before evolving into attacks on the family's actual bodies. One night, upon going to bed the family "presently felt themselves pricked, and upon search found in the bed a bodkin, a knitting needle, and two sticks picked [pointed] at both ends (Hill 14). Then blows came that caused blood to be drawn. Finally, it results in at least the possession of the boy who "made for a long time together a noise like a dog, and like a hen with her chickens, and could not speak rationally" (Hill 15). The initial attack on the house quickly conflates into an attack on the body and eventual possession of the body and spirit resulting in a lack of agency and ability to communicate. In this example, the family is attacked in many different ways. The actual house, as connected to the family and body, is attacked. Then, their actual physical bodies are attacked as well. In the concept of body where everything is a body (building, family, community) the individual units of each body are attacked. This attack on smaller units making up a metaphorical whole reveals how easily the whole can be weakened through smaller attacks. This idea of fear and paranoia tied to witchcraft and attacks on the building blocks of society becomes central to a perception of witchcraft that catches fire during the Salem trials.

Contributing Sociohistorical Factors

Early America certainly felt like it had much to fear. These perceptions of body, house, and unity of community are influenced by circumstances that lead to a boiling over of these anxieties in Salem. Such perceptions reveal a culture in tumultuous change, oscillating between tradition and progress.[3] As Frances Hill declares, "with the coming of cultural change during the seventeenth century [Salem] no longer embodied the values of the wider society. Its self-respect was destroyed as it was gradually stripped of social identity and moral authority" (217). Furthermore, a perceived drifting of religious devotion had to be troubling. Peter Charles Hoffer points out that "attendance at services were falling away, as was some Puritans' desire to seek full membership in their churches" (2). What was once seen as a stabilizing element of community was starting to crack as time passed and the citizens gradually moved away from the strict Puritan ideals of the past. These fractures signified a body that was broken and a loss of control over that spiritual body. This places the spiritual community in a seeming position of vulnerability to real or perceived attack[4].

[3] The historical research conducted over the Salem witch trials is extensive. Though I have provided a brief history in order to contextualize my work, for more comprehensive reading see the following: Geis, Gilbert and Ivan Bunn. *A Trial of Witches: A Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Prosecution*. New York: Routledge, 1997. Print. Hill, Frances. *A Delusion of Satan*. New York: Doubleday, 1995. Print. Hoffer, Peter Charles. *The Salem Witchcraft Trials: A Legal History*. Lawrence: UP of Kansas, 1997. Print. Norton, Mary Beth. *In The Devil's Snare*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. Print. Roach, Marilynne K. *The Salem Witch Trials.* New York: Cooper Square P, 2002. Print. Rosenthal, Bernard. *Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt.* New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print. Starkey, Marion L. *The Devil in Massachusetts*. New York: DoubleDay, 1989. Print.

[4] The fevered pitch that the Salem Witch Trials achieve versus other earlier occurrences of witch trials can be explained, according to Norton, by the intimate and ever present threat of the Indian War. The War and preceding wars to it brought accounts of horrific death that affected the psyche of the New Englanders as well as a growing amount of gossip that "disclosed an exceptional level of distrust of the colony's leadership" (97). Norton states that "That worldview taught them that they were a chosen people, charged with bringing God's message to a heathen land previously ruled by the devil. And in that adopted homeland God spoke to them repeatedly through his providences…New England's Puritans, even in the third generation, believed themselves to be surrounded by an invisible world of spirits as well as by a natural world of palpable objects (295).

In addition to these religious struggles, there were also social and economic struggles within the village. During this time period Salem was considered "prosperous, busy, and confident, but the wealth of the few was built on the poverty of many" (16). A place that had tended to focus on fishing and farming had given way to progress in the form of increasing commerce and business. A powerful set of elite townspeople appeared who made money and did not necessarily share the same feeling of community that seemed to characterize earlier, seemingly simpler Salem. The Putnams and the Porters embody this strife as both fought for control of the finances and community in Salem. Factions grew who supported either side of the family while the community naturally looked to them for political leadership. In some ways, the trials became a way for these different factions to gain power and make or break alliances. The Putnams, specifically, were extremely involved in the trials for reasons other than fear of witches.

The political struggles, financial changes, growing factions, and continuous wars also happened as a backdrop to the 1684 revocation of the Massachusetts charter which left legal rights over land in question.[5] This uncertainty with the charter helped exacerbate a situation that was quickly escalating with perceived threats from many different directions. To the Puritans, these happenings were "judgments from God on the colony's moral decline. On the all-important New England battleground in the cosmic war between good and evil, evil seemed to be winning" (Hill 16). On this hotbed came a bitter set of winters where sickness

[5] Due to conflict and reluctance to admit English control over the colony, the colonial charter was vacated officially in 1684 leading to uncertainty about leadership and change in perception of the colony.

and smallpox spread and, with it, also the seeds of hysteria.[6] The trials became a battleground where these tensions and fears from every direction came to a deadly and terrifying climax. The community body was in tumult and, with these contributing factors, began to turn inward with suspicion and aggression.

Statistics and Subversion

The backdrop of these social and political issues and these perceptions about the body both lead to a criminal situation that is focused on women's bodies being accused of sins by other women. Women are the central focus of this moment. In Carol Karlsen's terms, "the story of witchcraft is primarily the story of women…witchcraft confronts us with ideas about women, with the place of women in society, and with women themselves" (xii). In Salem, "we see witchcraft, finally, as a deeply ambivalent but violent struggle within women as well as an equally ambivalent but violent struggle against women" (Karlsen xv). Statistically, this point is supported by the numbers. Karlsen notes that "of the 185 witches identifiable by name, more than three-fourths were female. Nearly half the males were husbands, sons, or other male relatives of accused women" (Karlsen 40). The accused women vary in age from 4

[6] These were not the backwards people who are sometimes portrayed in popular culture. A great deal of skepticism was typically held against charges of witchcraft even in the seventeenth century. There were written laws against witchcraft in Massachusetts during this time; however, even at this early time "Massachusetts judges did not allow popular credulity or unsubstantiated rumor and innuendo to dictate the outcome of cases" (Hoffer 42). In other words, there was a standard for evidence and, furthermore, measures set in place to stop slander or gossip from ruining lives or the community. However, Hoffer asserts that "Salem Village was so distraught over local turmoil and the colony was so disordered by war and political uncertainty that everyone believed the Devil was close at hand. Without these informal controls on superstition and bad feeling, the formal system of law had to way to sort fact from overheated fiction" (61). All the elements mentioned before come together to create a perfect storm of anxiety, fear, and conflict that feeds into the atmosphere which creates the Salem witch trials. The progress made in fair trials could not withstand, at least momentarily, the storm of hysteria which brought widespread fear and led to a temporary decision to allow hearsay and spectral evidence.

to 71. Though many were poor, some were not. The initial women accused were Tituba and Good who were poor or enslaved while Osborne was neither. Furthermore, 22 women and five men were convicted and 14 women and five men executed. Five women and two men, at least, died while in prison. The majority of the people accused are women and, if men, accused because of their known attachment to an accused woman.

This statistic is fairly in line with other witchcraft cases in early America which tended to be focused on women. In New England leading up to the trials, 342 identifiable people were accused between 1620 and 1725. 267 (78%) of these people were women. 36 of the 75 men accused were closely associated to the accused women (Karlsen 47). However, a curious fact emerges when examining those accusing women of witchcraft. Mary Beth Norton notes that "key accusers in previous witchcraft cases had most often been adult men; at Salem, the key accusers were women and girls under the age of twenty-five" (8). Norton also clarifies that, by far, the most active accusers were the young women involved. Karlsen expands on this idea to state how most of the possessed accusers were young, single females while most of the accused were poor or women who had inherited or would inherit land. The "number of confessions staggering…The decision of the authorities not to execute confessing women" (Karlsen 39).The Salem hysteria is notably more female than any other cluster of witchcraft cases in early America.

A closer look at the trials reveals that problematic women tended to be focused on which included being too poor or begging, having too much property, and otherwise exhibiting problematic behaviors. Hoffer explores how this concept works with Puritan ideology and way-of-life:

> Although Puritan theology and social ideas did not portray women as inherently sinful, the range of their public behavior was more limited than men's… The law merged a married women's property with her husband's and gave him control over it. Poverty in a woman was thus both more common and more suspect than poverty in men. At the same time, property was a greater burden for women than men. (83)

Though women had certain freedoms not always enjoyed before, they still had a limited set of acceptable behaviors. Poverty in women was considered suspect, but a woman who owned property without a husband was also suspect for other reasons including jealousy. Many accused were independent women (though not necessarily rich) who had autonomy that was considered "unusual, and those who enjoyed it may have seemed especially dangerous to the established social order" (Hill 32). The focus on women as both accused and accuser is significant. The hysteria that started and was finished was largely driven by women on both sides of the legal standpoint. Many accused were poor or slaves/servants who would have been, in many ways, considered invisible to the society as a whole. However, on the other side of the spectrum, there are women who would or had inherited land, disturbing the natural order of male heirs inheriting property. In both cases, women accused tended to be ones who did not fulfill a perfected image of femininity and motherhood either by being too poor or too independent.

An important factor to reiterate is the fact that it is not just dissatisfaction and fear of women from the society that caused the hysteria, but rather women themselves fueling parts of it. The fact that more women were involved in the accusations than before is a clearly important statistic. There are several contributing factors that can explain this curious shift.

Karlsen clarifies that "the possessed themselves or other colonists alluded to female dissatisfactions…minister John Hale noted that in 1692 several young possessed females in Salem were unhappy with their marriage prospects" (241). Likewise, "Nearly all of the possessed registered their discontent with their religious training" (242). Karlsen notes that out of the 24 most active accusers over the age of 16, 17 of them were servants who had lost parents. These statistics are significant because they signify a trend of female accusers possibly influenced by dissatisfaction with life including the situation of female servants at the time, a loss of life, stability, and guidance, or, conversely, the desire for independence or achievement of independence.

This idea of a disturbed natural order is consistent with fearful perceptions about the vulnerability of family and body especially as related to the proper place for women in society. Karlsen discusses the importance of a certain family structure where the man becomes "godlike" to his family. This system of authority mimics the role between ministers and their people and God and humanity. This leads to a need for women to fulfill a very specific role. In other words, "Godly men needed helpmeets, not hindrances; companions, not competitors; alter egos, not autonomous mates" (165). St. George also notes that "The central place of women in the household's body gains support in New England from the metaphoric correspondence of the chimney, hearth, and fire to the breast, heart, womb, and soul of the house" (174).There is a certain urgency, especially in hard times, with keeping women firmly in a role of virtuous wives. Women who stepped outside of this unbending boundary in any direction tended to bear the brunt of the hysteria. This rigidly enforced system of authority led to an increased suspicion surrounding women who were sexually promiscuous or committed

adultery as well as suspicion against women who were too financially independent or dependent upon the community.

Times of cultural conflict and change offer certain opportunities, however. In this liminal moment, there is the potential for subversion and for those often invisible to become visible. For moments of conflict and uncertainty in a culture as evidenced in 1692 in Salem lead to a momentary break in cultural norms and the possibility for subversion and agency that would not be apparent in more stable time periods in a culture. It is during times of conflict that change can occur, or at least begin, and many of the women involved actively took part in the circumstances that were thrust upon them during the trials. Norton believes in a tidy denouement to the events that occur by saying that at the end of the trials "the strange reversal that had placed women on top was then righted, and young women were relegated once again to what contemporaries saw as their proper roles: servers, not served, followers, not leaders; governed, not governors; the silent, not the speakers" (304). While it would be a mistake to become overzealous and imbue too much power into those accused in the Salem Witch Trials, I disagree with this neat summary of the proceedings. I believe the subtle cracks can be connected to a changing worldview about women in the culture of the time and our continued fascination with the Salem Witch Trials indicates that these women were not so easily silenced. In Hoffer's terms, "Defendants were given their "day" wherein they could speak for themselves" and speak they did (85). The accused and accusers frequently saw within their numbers girls and women who would otherwise be considered silent members of the community, yet in this moment their bodies and words become the heart of the trials and recorded history that still exists.

This historical moment in Salem is an example where the future of the culture seemed tantalizingly open to influence. Frances Hill states that "The historical significance of the Salem witch trials cannot be overestimated. They were a turning point in the transition from Puritanism, with its values of community, simplicity, and piety, to the new Yankee world of individualism, urbanity, and freedom of conscience" (xvii). This cultural moment of transition allows one to examine the dark underbelly of fear and persecution that Hill claims is comparable (though not identical for historical reasons) to any occasion of persecution. In a murky situation including "theocracy threatened by change, in a population terrified not only of eternal damnation but of the earthly dangers of Indian massacres, recurrent smallpox epidemics, and the loss of the charter from England" several women's voices and bodies became front and center (xviii). It is not a reach to consider the importance of these voices in this time of transition that left this specific culture indelibly altered.

Communication of Bodily Perception

It is inevitable that the actual trials would focus on the bodies of the accused and accusers as the battlefield of societal tumult and anxious perfection of vulnerability. Body, gender, and conceptions of both become the center of the rhetoric surrounding the trials and the types of evidence that would ultimately decide the fate of the accused women. Guilt was decided in a number of ways. Two of those ways included confessions, of which there were many and reciting the Lord's Prayer. Reciting the Lord's Prayer was commonly believed to be impossible for a witch. However, there is also spectral evidence that played a central role and often focused on vulnerability of bodies and accuser's accusations and testimony. Spectral evidence was based on the way witches supposedly hurt their victims was through

supernatural harm done to bodies and property. This could constitute evidence in addition to the bodies of suspects being used as proof. For example, “a witch’s seemingly innocuous movements injuring the afflicted, or wounds appearing on the body of a suspect after an apparition had been struck with a weapon” (Norton 204). There are prominent people who, from the beginning, attempt to stop spectral evidence from being used. However, the unreliability of spectral evidence is overtaken by a hysteria that closely relates to the body.

This underlying fear of the vulnerability of the body to attack takes its most heightened form in the suggestion that even innocent people can become possessed by the devil, meaning that the boundaries of the human body were entirely permeable. There was a fear that witches could and would bring down an entire community. There was a clear and distinct “apprehension that they would seduce their neighbors—that their disease would spread like a plague to the innocent people around them—[that] was so palpable that their lies had to be exposed and the danger they embodied cast out” (Karlsen 152). Even the eventual piece of evidence that helps end the trials exposes this fear. Increase and Cotton persuade others that devil can take form of an innocent person (Norton 291). There is not only a fear of being possessed or being wounded by the possessed, but also a lack of trust in the reliability of a physical body because of its vulnerability to being manipulated and copied. St. George writes that “God afflicted houses as He did bodies, attacking their vulnerable points to test the frailty and transience of earthly vessels” (181).Witchcraft was a special type of attack. It attacked the pious in places where they should feel safe. “The most clearly sexual was the sin of seduction” where the devil sought to “entice people away from their worship of God” (Karlsen 134-135). There was also a focus on “attack[ing] men while they sleep” (Karlsen 136). Distortion of the body included “the hand of the Devil [which] fell directly on particular

human victims, causing "fits" and other torment of an unmistakable kind…Human behavior, indeed the core of human personality, was shockingly distorted; a daughter, or a neighbor, appeared as one "transformed" (Demos 97). The body is vulnerable to seduction away from God and his teachings. This belief causes many of the attacks to happen when the body is physically vulnerable, such as sleeping in bed. The body, the building, and the community are all seen as individual parts of a whole that all could collapse under the infection of witchcraft. All were vulnerable to the violence and lure of witchcraft and this attack targeted them at their most vulnerable.

Furthermore, the accused women's own bodies could be used as evidence. The body and its vulnerability are at the center of this discussion. Physical examinations were frequently made even during trials. Norton writes that "witch marks, "poppets, if located, constituted more proof" (204). Their bodies were under examination as much as anything else. In Hill's terms, "A callous spot was a mark of the devil…the phenomena of somnambulism" (222). Various marks were read as teats, or areas where animal familiars suckled. Karlsen notes that teats were most frequently found near the breasts or vagina in cases dealing with women. Even though some men were examined in similar ways, the focus was on women and particularly specific female body parts. The physical bodies are being read and interpreted closely as a text here. The fact that many of the marks are called "teats" and found near the specific female parts of the body indicates a focus on gender as tied to the evidence.

The aforementioned animal familiars also become important evidence in the trials. These animal familiars operated in multiple ways as physical, bodily evidence. Frequently,

these familiars were seen sucking on the women's bodies. This sucking action can be read in a maternal manner where the familiars are literally suckling from and on the women. Several of the trials show not only contact with animal familiars, but also evidence that witches were also accused of becoming the animal familiar leading to their physical bodies literally becoming an animal that is capable of bringing harm to the community around them. This unnatural tie to nature says much about the perceptions of bodies and particularly disordered bodies at this time. The unnatural closeness between animal and human continues to other areas of bodily manipulation where, at times, the woman literally morphs into an animal. The body becomes something that can transform where animals operate as extensions of an unnatural body or sometimes even become the unnatural body.

There are many instances of various body blemishes being used as evidence against women illustrating the extent to which the body is under examination during this moment. For example, noted as part of Bridget Bishops' physical examination, Elizabeth Proctor had a "Excresence like a tett red & fresh, not any thing appears, but only a proper [pro-cedeulia Ani,]" which is a type of rectal problem (108). Susanna Martin is noted to have "breast in the Morn-ing search appeared to us very full; the Nibbs fresh & starting, nowat this searching all lancke & pendant" so her breasts are being examined to the point of looking at their fullness and how they change (108). Finally, Rebecca Nurse has a "piece of flesh of Goodwife Nursess' formerly seen is gone & only a dry skin near-er to the anus in another place" (108). So they are examining extremely private parts of these women including genitalia and breasts for any slightly possibilities of blemishes or other medical problems that can be interpreted as evil. These three women are all said to be found to have "a preternathurall Excresence of flesh between the pudendum and Anus much like to Tetts & not usuall in women" (107). They all

supposedly have some sort of flesh between the anus and genitalia that is being read as unusual. The unique quality of the marks is noted as being not usual in women, specifically. Their very bodies especially as women are being targeted and examined and read as a text. However, the text is malleable. Various medical conditions or skin blemishes can be read how people want to read them. Even within the trials, marks sometimes appear and disappear or are read differently by different individuals. However, at the heart of this examination is a close, gendered interrogation of a body that has become the text and evidence.

Furthermore, other examples portray the manner in which the supposed witch attacks were often very physical and especially related to the female body. A few of the trials indicate that the female witch has grabbed the breasts of the accuser. In another case, Sarah Wildes, a woman who was previously charged with fornication and punished with whipping, was executed for witchcraft. The testimony from Elizabeth Symonds against Wildes focuses on physical contact:

> then I did feele it Come apon my feete as if it had bin a cat and Crope up to my breast and Lay apon mee and then I Could not move nether hand nor foot nether Could I speeake a word I did strive to cale#(d) to my husban "I thinke she has ride mee all this night. (813)

This description emphasizes the physicality of what is happening. Wildes is being pinned down unable to move or speak and losing agency over her physical body during this. There is a focus on the breast and being laid upon for the entire night. There is a focus on the cat-like body of the attacker and the physical, vulnerable body of the person being attacked. The attack is one that threatens the very agency and physical body of Symonds while Wildes

exerts power and control over the situation. The rhetoric used to describe this situation is one that illuminates the paranoia surrounding the body and loss of control over the body.

This extreme inspection and focus on bodies continues in other ways in other trials. For example, Deodat Lawson details in his account[7] that many observe Goodwife Corey's body acting in bizarre ways during her trial:

> That if she did but bite her under lip in time of examination the persons afflicted were bitten on their arms and wrists and produced marks before the magistrates, ministers, and others…if she did but lean her breast against the seat…they were afflicted. Particularly Mrs. Pope complained of grievous torment in her bowels as if they were torn out. (Boyer 113)

All of these physical actions on Corey's part including biting a lip, leaning, and grasping one hand in another are given meaning beyond their normal interpretation as nervous quirks. Furthermore, the meaning attached gives Corey the power to cause severe pain to others including apparently torturing one woman's bowels. In the case of both the accused and accusers, bodies are simultaneously ascribed meaning and creating meaning.

This focus on the body can also be seen very clearly in the existence of touch tests as a way of providing evidence. A touch test when an accused witch touches a victim while that victim is currently experiencing a fit or other supposed tortures caused by a witch. If the fit or tortured behavior stops, then it was thought that it was a proof of guilt on the part of the witch. The idea was that the evildoing by the witch would be sucked back into her body if touching

[7] A minister in Salem Village who wrote his account of the trials and courtroom observations that was later published and is popularly believed to give a different side of the trials.

the person she distributed it into in the first place. One such exam occurs in Andover[8] where a mass touch test is held to determine the guilt of many witches at once. According to records, "they were all blindfolded, and their hands placed on the tormented accusers" (Norton 262). Like the physical body that becomes the center of attention in other parts of the trial, here it is the touching of physical bodies that can transmit either pain or relief. It is through a physical touch that the mysterious ailments are said to begin and end. In this manner, these individuals are performing a cultural ritual. There are certain ways that accusers and accused were meant to act and this performance emphasizes the fear surrounding the body, particularly the female body, and the uncertainty over the soul in this matter.

These concerns are reflected in the rhetoric chosen to describe the "performances" put on by accusers in relation to the accused. Robert Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World* includes a letter from Nathaniel Cary, a man who was a skeptic of the existence of witches and whose wife had been accused. He refers to the accusers who accused his wife as "two girls of about 10 years old, and about two or three others, of about eighteen" (Hill 68). The process through which prisoners faced the accused operated in the following manner:

> The prisoners were called in one by one…the prisoner was placed about 7 or 8 foot from the justices, and the accusers between the justices and them; the prisoner was ordered to stand to the right before the justices, with an officer appointed to hold each hand, lest they should therewith afflict them, and the prisoner's eyes must be

[8] This touch test in Andover is actually the beginning of the end for touch tests as it drew considerable criticism and the practice of touch tests is called off within two weeks.

> constantly on the justices; for if they looked on the afflicted, they would either fall into their fits or cry out of being hurt by them. (68-69)

After the Lord's Prayer test, they would then ask one of the accusers to touch the prisoner where "the most courageous would adventure but before they had made three steps would ordinarily fall down in fit (69). Then, the girl would be carried to touch the prisoner where the justices would immediately deem them better where Cary would say "before I could discern any alteration" (69). Cary was allowed to talk to Abigail Williams, one of the accusers, but instead of one he is forced to meet with several of them who "began to tumble down like swine" (Hill 69). There is power derived from multiple bodies acting in strange ways together. While in jail, Mrs. Cary also has eight pound irons fastened on her legs. While the accuser bodies acted out of control, there was a need to try to gain control through controlling bodies and rhetoric surrounding bodies. This is symbolic of the desire to gain control through physically restraining the threat that stood before them and to gain control of the out of control bodies described in such terms as "swine" tumbling crazily down stairs. Again, there is a certain expectation for behavior even in the accused that reflects cultural concerns of the time. The accused perform their roles as bodies out of control and the rhetoric emphasizes a focus on this type of disordered, animalistic body that has fallen out of the proper expectations for a normal citizen.

Body as Text and Text as Body

These various interconnected themes of the body, language, and the vulnerability of the body and society can be read through the rhetoric used in various trial transcripts and records. An examination of several cases helps clarify the exact dynamics at play. Abigail

Somes exemplifies the type of bodily evidence that is used during the trials. Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne are two of the original women accused of witchcraft and portray two sides of the spectrum for femininity under attack during this time. Mary Black and Candy are two black slaves accused which enhances the discussion of how race and socioeconomic status mattered in this case. Finally, Tituba will serve as the pivotal case which ultimately brings together all of the different points I have developed at the same time as complicating those same points. All of these cases together help to illuminate the complexities behind the accused, accusers, and rhetorical negotiations happening in a time of gendered panic.

The trial of Abigail Somes demonstrates the manner in which the female body became a type of evidence in this historical moment. In May 1692, three months after the initial accusations and when the trials had gained momentum, she is accused by Mary Warren, one of the older and most active accusers in the witch trials. The trial begins with a standard "Upon the glance of her Eye she struck Mary Warren into a dreadful fit at her first appearance" (733). There is a physical reaction to Somes' gaze. The first set of physical evidence was "att her first Examining there was found in her Apron a great Crotching Needle about the midle of it near her Belly, which was plucked out by one of the Standers by" (734). This is a sharp, aggressive item found near her belly that needs to be "plucked" and represents disorder that is specifically tied to her being female. Then, we have one of the commonly used touch tests. While Warren is having a fit, Somes is asked to put her hands on Warren and Warren immediately recovers after this happens. Then, when Warren is commanded to touch Somes "she Assayed severall times to do it with great Earnestness she was not able, But fell down into a dreadful fit" (735). At this point, Somes' touch becomes a peculiarly powerful object. She has the power to touch and bring or take away pain with that touch. However, her

victim does not have the power to touch her, maintaining a system of disparate power between the two individuals. Warren, as an accuser, makes the following statements about what happens when this touching is happening:

> Warren affirming she felt something soft in her hand (her Eyes then being first shut) which revived her very heart. Warren being asked what the Reason was she could not Come to touch Soams affirmed she saw the apparition of Somes come from her Body, and would meet her, and thrust her with Vialunce back again, not suffring her to Come near her. (735)

The touch is initially described as a positive one. She is unseeing at this moment, but there is language of softness and revival. The explanation for this happening was embedded in touch tests in general. It was thought that the evil was being sucked back into the witch's body leaving the afflicted's body healthy again. Then, she claims that she cannot touch Somes because she sees an apparition that supposedly only she could see. This apparition comes to her and thrusts her back violently not allowing it to be touched. Most of this happens through Warren's own bodily performance. She sees and does not see at convenient times. She has fits and does not have fits at convenient times. She claims a lack of ability to touch because of a violent assault on her body from an apparition that is significantly stronger than her. In short, it speaks to the cultural fears of the time with the fear of the vulnerability of the body to various types of poison. This manifests through bodily affliction and bodily weakness to a negative influence. It is through perceptions and manipulation of her body that Warren provides evidence of spiritual disorder. Somes and Warren both wear the marks of a cultural anxiety over the nature of female bodies.

However, not every trial is like Somes.' Sarah Good is an example of a trial that is still about the body, but becomes nuanced in a slightly different direction given her reputation in the community. Good, born in 1653, was one of the first three women accused. She was poor and in debt due to several life circumstances. Though her father, John Solart, is wealthy, the inheritance never reaches her due to a quick remarriage by her mother. Good then marries a former indentured servant who dies in 1682 leaving her very poor and in debt. Her situation progressively gets worse with her second husband, William Good. Soon, all of their land is sold or taken by creditors and Sarah is forced to beg for food. They are technically homeless by the time the trials start. She is consistently identified by her anger by the community members who surround her. She is accused of refusing to be polite to those unwilling to help her. She is repeatedly characterized by angry muttering or cursing if someone did not give her money, food, or a place to stay. She is very clearly a woman standing outside properly accepted social norms. Her poverty allows her to become a target. However, it is her poverty in addition to her anger and lack of gratitude that seems to be the real problem for her. Her anger could also be read as a sign of her striking back at a society that she feels has failed her. Her famous, supposed last words of "You are a liar. I am no more a witch than you are a wizard If you take my life away, God will give you blood to drink!" show defiance and an unwillingness to play into the narrative that the villagers are creating for her (Hill 74). The community helps develop an image of Good that is supported even when there are mitigating factors that could have made her more sympathetic. For example, Good is a mother. However, her four-year-old daughter is used against her during the trials. The daughter provides testimony against her mother, but is also imprisoned, at four, for witchcraft. She is also pregnant during proceedings though her femininity and image as a mother are downplayed.

She is also often described as being much older than she was and haggard. While it is possible that her hard life did make her old and haggard, it is also significant that the emphasis is not her pregnant self, but rather images that more closely align themselves with a stereotypical image of witches who are not innocent, including being old, haggard, and physically unattractive. This is different from Somes. Good's problematic language and temper becomes central to the judgments used against her which results in very specific uses of rhetoric that describe a stereotypical body of a witch.

The first examination of Good in March 1692 helps set up these basic perceptions of her by the community. Good denies being familiar with an evil spirit repeatedly and also denies making a contract with the devil. She uses very direct, firm answers usually consisting of a plain "no" rather than the more cringing statements that can be seen in other testimony. When asked **"**why doe you hurt these children" she answers with a firm "I doe not hurt them. I scorn it" (356). Not only does she deny her involvement in hurting the children accusing her, but she also scorns the hurting of those children. She makes it very clear that she is, in her words, "falsely accused" (356). She has a clear voice that rejects any involvement with the devil and clearly details that she believes she is being falsely accused.

One of the major problems the community seems to have with her is her speech patterns that are consistently read as contentious and, eventually, suspicious by those around her. Many refer to the fact that she tends to mutter at people or outwardly address them in hostile ways. She is not performing her expected societal role very well being both poor and a woman. This type of speech goes against norms of both femininity and the idea of the gracious poor. She is asked why she "go away muttering from mr Parris

his house" to which she answers "I did not mutter but I thanked him for what he gave my child" (356). While the exact nature of the interaction is unknown, her response is one that takes negative or undesired forms of speech and makes it into something very feminine and acceptable. She is not muttering in an angry or conspiratorial way, but rather thanking him and highlighting her role as a mother. This rhetorical strategy is repeated when she is questioned again about her muttering later in the examination. When asked what she is muttering, she answers that "if I must tell I will tell, it is the commandments I may say my commandments I hope" and that "it is a psalm" (357). When repeatedly questioned about her unacceptable and abnormal speech patterns with other individuals, she focuses on not only motherhood, but also responses that highlight her Christianity. Both answers portray her in a more positive light and align her with a more acceptable portrayal of femininity than the villagers feel that she achieved otherwise.

However, almost immediately after this declaration, John Hathorne,[9] one of the men presiding over the trial, switches to using spectral evidence in a move that shifts away from merely questioning. He makes the children accusing her look at her and then immediately "they were all tormented" (358). Her assertion about her role as a grateful mother is immediately countered with the type of evidence that uses the performance of the accusers' bodies and their words instead of hers. After repeatedly denying, again, any involvement with the devil, Good latches onto another tactic when she mentions that "I doe not know but it was some you brought into the meeting house with you" (357). Here is the first moment that Good

[9] John Hathorne is a prominent merchant and magistrate. He is known for being one of the more vocal and active judges in the Salem Trials. He is also the ancestor of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

uses uncertain language which also highlights a common trope of accusing others in order to help stop accusations levied at that individual. She directly names Sarah Osborne as the one who has been tormenting the children. She also returns to structuring herself as a Christian when she repeatedly declares that "I serve god" rather than admitting any guilt in terms of witchcraft (357). Her speech patterns are cited as evidence against her, but when confronted with testimony where she tries to explain herself, the examiner immediately switches to reading the accusers' bodies as evidence instead. Good's repeated attempts to redefine her own body in a more sympathetic maternal manner rather than a suspicious one are thwarted.

Her responses that highlight her role as a mother and Christian seem to anger the men residing over the examination even more than people who admitted to guilt or did not explicitly mention God. The condemning response to her words included saying that "shee was not willing to mention the word God her answers were in a very wicked, spitfull manner reflecting and retorting aganst the authority with base and abusive words and many lies shee was taken in" (357). This response appears to be very in line with what seemed to bother people about Good. The focus is that she was both not talking about God in the correct way and also possibly being offensive just supposedly pretending to be pious. The focus is on her lies and how her lies lead her to go against authority. This concept of authority is very important and, in part, Good's refusal to bow before authority or what authority thought she should be doing is partially what turns into her downfall. Her husband joins this narrative and testifies that even though he had never seen her practice any type of witchcraft that her "bad carriage to him" made her "an enimy to all good" (357). Though in some ways, her husband is in the same position as her, he also has the privilege of not being accused or having the same bad perception that his wife has. His words read more like that she was a nagging wife rather

than actually being a witch, but his words against her no doubt helped reaffirm the authority's decision against Good.

More testimony from Good that also includes Sarah Osborne and Tituba portrays how Good attempts to focus on other ways to redefine her position in a more sympathetic manner. She claims that she is bewitched rather than an actual witch placing herself into a victim role and also a more passive, feminine role as well. However, even when claiming to be more likely bewitched, she remains staunchly dedicated to the idea of not confessing to meeting or ever even interacting with the devil. The evidence creates a narrative that is very telling about Sarah Good. One witness claims that Good comes to her and refuses to allow her to hear prayers. The evidence used against her is one that focuses on her stopping the relationship between God, the individual, and therefore the spiritual community from happening. She becomes an agent of interrupting other people's piety. She is also accused of striking people blind and dumb. This is another way that she interrupts their ability to see in a way that attacks a vulnerable body. In this manner, the community perceives her as a threat which is reflected in the rhetoric that surrounds her body and behavior. There is also a focus on the animal familiars she supposedly has under her control. Tituba and the child accusers also claim that they see a "yellow bird….suck Good between the forefinger & long finger" (362). She also has the animal familiar though only certain people have seen it. Another witness named Hubbard sees Good appear like a wolf and also control a wolf. She becomes a wolf, controls a wolf, has many birds some yellow and black, and also becomes or controls a big white dog and grey cat. Interestingly enough, the wolf is not always the type of animal seen and there is an aggression and boldness that seems inherent to representations of Good's

personality from multiple villagers. The wolf is an aggressive, visually intimidating animal that Good can supposedly control and become in order to craft attacks on the community.

Furthermore, there is a very intimate, personal focus on her body and the vulnerability of bodies in general in the evidence cited against her. Several neighbors testify that she muttered at them and one claims that "she app'rd to him when abed" (371). This is continued with William Allen, who claims that "on the 2'd day of march the s'd Sarah Good vissabley appeared to him in his chamber s'd allen beeing in bed and brought an unuseuall light in w'th her" (372). Her bizarre speech patterns and behavior are connected to fears of witchcraft where she mutters and accosts an innocent man in his bedroom, a private and vulnerable position. She penetrates his house and attacks when one would be the least prepared to ward off an attack.

Her own body also becomes evidence where she is claimed to have a skin abnormality that is only seen by certain individuals. In testimony, William Good, her own husband, says that "the night before his s'd wife was Examined he saw a wart or tett a little belowe her Right shoulder which he never saw before and asked Goodwife Engersol whether she did not see it when shee searched her (372). Her husband has a more intimate view of her body and becomes part of the testimony that condemns her. In another instance, the Herricks claim that she leaves her house at night with an emphasis on the fact that she is barefoot and bare-legged. There is an emphasis on exposed skin and the strangeness of her being bare while leaving the household. Good's body here becomes perceived as disordered just like her speech patterns. She goes outside in a lack of proper clothing covering proper spots. The next day, Herrick claims that "hir armes

was Blooddy from a little below the Elbow to the wrist" (370). This bodily disorder manifests itself into a perception of her actual body and comes together to present evidence against her. Her body and bodily blemishes combined with her supposedly attacks on other people's vulnerable bodies become central to her characterization as a witch by those accusing her.

Some of the evidence appears to be neighbors complaining about her taking advantage of hospitality. Good's actions seem so questionable that they get embedded in a narrative about witchcraft. Samuel and Mary Abbey claim that they allow her to live with them for some time three years before the start of the trials. This arrangement does not last because "the said Sarah Good was #[of] so Turbulant a Spirritt, [Spirritt,] Spitefull and so Mallitiously bent, that these Deponents could not suffer her to Live in their howse any Longer; and was forced for Quiettness sake to turne she the said Sarah , with her husband, out of their howse" (368). This action is significant because Good has supposedly taken advantage of a charitable situation set up for her. She is not only spiteful, but also too loud and disagreeable, all qualities that go against the idea of a passive, grateful female. She disrupts the household much like she disrupts societal expectations for behavior. So, even years after this occurs, she is blamed for the fact that the Abbey's "began to Loose Cattle, and Lost severall after an unusall Manner, in drupeing Condition and yett they would Eate: and your Deponents have Lost after that manner 17 head of Cattle within two years, besides Sheep, and Hoggs" (368). However, her bigger sin may have been a response to these tragedies. When told about the Abbeys losing cows, Good supposedly responds that "she did not care if he the said Abbey had Lost all the Cattle he had" in addition to "calling their Children vile Names and hath-

threetened them often" (368-369). Good, in short, is not behaving as she should as a destitute individual relying on others' kindness. Instead of showing sympathy or empathy for the lost cows, she states that she does not care about their misfortunes. She also apparently calls children names and threatens the adults who tried to help her. These speech patterns and behaviors take her far outside gendered norms of behavior and actions. She appears openly antagonistic of the home and livelihoods of the people who attempt to help her. The punishment and way to silence her seems to be to accuse her of witchcraft.

She also has other markers of rejecting common gendered expectation and hospitality. When not allowed to stay in another house "went away Grumbling & my father bid us follow her & see that shee went away clear, lest she should lie in the barn: & by smoking of her pipe should fire the barn; & s'd deponent with Jonathan Batchelor seing her make a stop near the barne, bid her be gone; or he would set her father of; to which she replied that then it should cost his father Zachariah Herick one; or two of the best Cowes which he had" (375). Then, the testimony continues to state that "Master Catle were removed from their places: & other younger Catle put in their rooms & since that severall of their Catle have bene set Loose in a strange maner" (375). This continued testimony emphasizes her stepping outside of gendered expectations and continuously not acting in a manner becoming of someone relying on others for charity. She is smoking in a barn in a way that might set fire to the barn. She is also belligerent when she is told not to do so. This grumbling and not feminine behavior is directly tied to attack on people's livelihoods. She is hitting out at people, supposedly, where they may financially feel it the most through cows that may provide a family's ability to support themselves. Throughout Good's testimony, we can read a narrative that is characterized by the community perceiving her as an element of disorder that is not performing gender well while,

at the same time, Good trying to alter this perception by emphasizing feminine traits such as motherhood and gratitude.

Sarah Osborne represents a different side of the spectrum of female experience from Good when it comes to those accused of witchcraft. Osborne, born in 1643, was another woman accused of witchcraft. She married a prominent man named Robert Prince who had connections to the Putnam family. Though not an outcast quite like Sarah Good and Tituba, she became a suspect for a few reasons. She had not been attending Church due to an illness. This detaches her from the main community's desire for spiritual unity. She also had legal problems with the Putnam family which, detailed before, had power and influence in Salem and with the trials especially through one of the accusers being part of the family (Ann Putnam). Her legal issues with the Putnam family revolve around a dispute over land where Osborne attempts to maintain possession of land with a new Irish husband (Alexander Osborne) rather than allowing a carry-over to her sons. In this way, she is disturbing the way of life by challenging a land/possession law that would benefit her instead of just accepting the land to be given to her sons. She is challenging societal norms also by marrying an indentured, Irish immigrant. She also refuses to accuse others or ever confess to guilt herself. In this manner, she becomes a body that is rebelling against social norms and a presence who refuses to play by the norms during her trial.

Osborne's examination, taking place in March 1692, tells us much about how she tries to establish her own identity and defense against the charges brought against her. Interestingly enough, she is the one who first brings up the eventual idea that will help end the witch trials in Salem. She repeatedly, like the others, denies hurting the children in any manner. However, she also mentions that "she did not know that the divell goes

aboute in her likeness to doe any hurt" (610). Doing so allows us to read her testimony in multiple ways. She is educated enough in spiritual matters to realize that this is possible. She also understands that this could be a way to help her avoid being seen as guilty. It is an ambiguous answer meant to create doubt that it is her own fault that these actions are happening with her likeness. There is also an intelligent observation into the fear over identity. In this case, her body and likeness can be used against her by the devil imitating her. The sacred nature of the body becomes vulnerable to outside attack.

Soon after this proclamation, similar to Good, Hathorne requests that the children visually identify her, switching momentum to their corner again. Then, he finally returns to her earlier statements and asks for her to explain the comment that she was more likely to be bewitched than an actual witch. She responds with the fact that "shee was frighted one time in her sleep and either saw or dreamed that shee saw a thing like an indian all black which did pinch her in her neck and pulled her by the back part of her head to the dore of the house" (611). Her own testimony emphasizes, again, her lack of fault in the matter. This portion of the trial illuminates the socio-historical and cultural aspects that come together to create the specific rhetoric used in the trials. She is at home and vulnerable in bed when attacked. Her body is physically hurt and this leads to a possible spiritual hurt by her becoming bewitched. It is not insignificant that the "thing" attacking her is supposedly an "all black" and "Indian." The idea of blackness and association with evil and "Indian" brings together a Puritan notion of evil. This also gestures back to the idea of The Indian Wars influencing the trials. The idea of a black "Indian" causing these issues is a way to shift blame to a more reasonable villain that the Puritan society would have recognized over someone like Osborne necessarily.

In the question and answer format, she begins to open up more about her supposed supernatural experiences. Though she repeatedly says no to their questions about knowing the devil, when asked about the "lying spirit" she supposedly mentions outside of the meeting house, she answers that "it was a voice that I thought I heard" that tells her to "goe no more to meeting but I said I would and did goe the next Sabbath day" (611). Now, her assailant is a disembodied voice who has no form. This disembodied voice tries to disrupt her connection to the spiritual unity of the community, but she firmly denies listening to this voice. This ends up being a bit of a mistaken tactic as Osborne had not been to Church for quite some time. When asked about this, she claims that "I have been sike and not able to goe her housband and others said that shee had not been at Meeting this yeare and two months (611). Her attendance to church becomes a part of her examination where her not going aligns her with the accusations made against her even as she tries to distance herself through typical Puritan villain imagery and disembodied voices. Her sickness could be read in any number of ways, but ultimately her not going to Church leaves her vulnerable against the accusations. In a world where the body is metaphor for all units of the society, her not going to church can be read as a part of the spiritual body being disrupted. She has disengaged with the unity of the body and, because of this, is suspected of possible evil very easily.

Patterns of Bodily Rhetoric

Examples such as Somes, Osborne and Good help set the overall tone for the types of testimony given at the trials and the rhetoric developed. Each portrays the varying relationships between body and language that occurs during the trials. Frequently, when language fails in some manner, the body, or at least perceptions of the body, becomes the

evidence that is used to speak for the women. The emphasis on either body or language changes depending on the exact circumstances surrounding each woman and case. For this reason, it is important to recognize the differences in trials depending on race and class status of the individual as well. Looking at a broad spectrum of examples allows us to trace patterns and perceptions across the many different types of women involved in the trials. Mary Black is a slave who is accused of witchcraft in April 1692. Some time has passed since the initial accusations and, by this time, momentum had gained its deadly course. Black is a slave to 70-year-old Nathaniel Putnam. The Putnams were a powerful family and many of the younger members, particularly Ann Putnam, were active accusers. Black is a slave in a well-respected family home and accusations against her were both convenient due to her status in the society, but also significant because of the family name who owns her, similar to Tituba. The examination veers in a very different manner very quickly due to Black's manner of handling the situation and the differing perceptions of Black compared to Tituba, Good, or Osborne.

Mary Black has her examination which is filled with more gaps and silences than answers. The nature of her questions is different from questions asked of other more educated women in the trials. She is asked "Mary, you are accused of sundry acts of witchcraft: Tell me be you a witch?" ("Mary Black" 113). Black is silent in response. They ask again "How long have you been a witch?" (113). She says that she "cannot tell" (113). This exchange is very different from other women's utilization and manipulation of the questions asked of her. Black avoids elaboration of any type and blankly denies ever being a witch. After a few denials they quickly move to speaking to other members that are present at the time. The transcript reads that "Her Master saith a man sat down upon the farm with her about a twelve month agoe" in which they question Black again. Her response is a predictable "He said

nothing" (113). The prosecutors ask several members of the community attending the trial "doth this Negroe hurt you?" (113) but Black denies the allegations again. When she does not offer anything other than denials, they not only move to participation from the villagers, but also began examining her body and body language.

She is, apparently, holding her arm in a peculiar way, or perhaps they are desperate to find evidence. They ask her if she "prick sticks" which she denies and says she "pin my Neck cloth" (113). When she is asked to pin again many of the audience members begin screaming in response. There is also the claim that one of the girls, Mary Walcott, actually begins to bleed. When Black will not give them the desired dialogue and details like other accused women, they immediately turn to the body. Many others accused, like Tituba and Good, also have their bodies become the center of the trial. However, their bodies do not dominate in quite the way that Black's does. Black's refusal or inability to speak like Tituba or Good and Osborne may be the reason for this difference. With Black, the perception of her body becomes central to making the case. The perception is that she is holding her clothing and arm in a strange manner and, under the current situation, this becomes the story over her words. The screaming girls and apparent blood also become evidence.[10] The words in her trial and the perception of her body reveal, again, the emphasis on body and fear, but also the way that performance while on trial made a difference. Black's short and extremely body-centered trial is in stark contrast to the women who are able to communicate more of their own story.

[10] Though Mary Black is imprisoned for some time, she is never brought to trial and never found guilty. This may seem somewhat odd under the supposed strength of the evidence dealt against her. Her owner, however, never presses charges and very few community members petition against her. With no clear political, economic, or spiritual gain to be had from prosecuting Black, she avoids charges. Putnam himself helps bring her home by paying her jail fees and bringing her back into his house.

Candy is another slave who is accused and her trial continues to illuminate the role race, class, and education also played in these trials. She is accused in July 1692, later than Good, Osborne, Mary Black, and Tituba. She is a black slave like Mary Black and clearly titled as such in the trial transcripts. She is accused with her mistress Margaret Hawkes. Hawkes spent some time in Barbados and this is where Candy also lives before coming to Salem. Candy, during her trial, actually admits guilt. However, her speech still differs greatly from Tituba's admission of guilt or from the other women accused. There is a clear difference in both perception of Candy and Candy's own handling of this perception and examination of her.

The questions begin even more simplified than with any other case examined thus far. They ask her "Candy ! are you a witch?" ("Candy" 179). She answers that "Candy no witch in her country" (179). The full sentences and proper grammatical usage in other cases are not apparent here. She answers with stilted language about her guilt in her own country. She continues to say that "Candy's mother no witch. Candy no witch, Barbados. This country, mistress give Candy witch" (179). Essentially, this story is similar to Tituba's. She is denying being a witch back in Barbados and denying a lineage of witchcraft. Then, she claims that what she did learn from witchcraft really comes from a white mistress and not her own ancestry. She responds with a peculiar phraseology and claims that her mistress "give Candy witch" which obscures the meaning just a bit. In grammatical construction, it almost obscures the meaning which seems to be that Candy learns how to be a witch from her mistress. They clarify and ask "Did your mistress make you a witch in this country?" and she parrots back the same answer except with the stilted "give Candy witch" again (179). They briefly touch upon the same book where we get descriptions of colors and writing and blood on the page.

Candy's description is a much more succinct and straight-forward "She took a pen and ink and upon a book or paper made a mark" (179).

Again, as with Black, the details of the story do not seem to suffice so they move quickly into spectral evidence and bodily injury in the actual room. They ask her about puppets that she has supposedly made to hurt others. At this point, Candy's exact words are not used again and it is a summary of what happens in the room. The transcript claims that "She asked to go out of the room and she would shew or tell; upon which she had liberty, one going with her, and she presently brought in two clouts, one with two knots tied in it, the other one; which being seen by Mary Warren, Deliverance Hobbs and Abigail Hobbs, they were greatly affrighted and fell into violent fits" (179). At this point, it is the perception of Candy's body, her body's actions, and the puppets that begin to tell the story. The sight of the knotted "puppets" causes a great uproar amongst the accusers. These accusers again take center stage as with Mary Black. The puppets are believed to have power over the accusers in the room. When one is set on fire, they claim that they are burning and shriek horribly. When one is submerged in water, they claim that they are choking or try to drown themselves. Candy also brings in a piece of grass that she is forced to consume and it later allegedly burns her flesh. It is not surprise that most of her evidence is focused on these types of actions. There is less of a focus on her voice and rather on physical objects manipulated to fit certain meanings and the bodies of the accusers being tortured by these items.

The trial ends on this note instead of Candy's own words or testimony. There are very few actual lines of dialogue that come from Candy's mouth even though essentially her story is very similar to Tituba's. She is also not given as much time to tell a story as the examiners

badger her much less than they do with Tituba, Good, and Osborne. This could be, in part, because these women have the ability to weave together stories in English that surpasses Candy. It also reveals much about the cultural perception of these women. While Tituba, an Indian slave trained to be a proper house servant, is given surprisingly quite a bit of time to weave together her story, Black and Candy quickly become secondary to the accusers' actions in court against them.

Tituba: The Eye of the Storm

Tituba is the center of a paramount case that portrays not only all these tensions with the body, but also the possibilities when rhetoric is utilized not just against Tituba, but by Tituba during her trials. The aforementioned examples establish all the different strands of body, performance, and rhetoric that emerge during the trials. Tituba, however, is the most complete example of all of these strands of meaning coming together in one narrative. However, once those narratives come together what emerges is a fragmented and complex cultural moment of negotiation. We can read Tituba as a site of not only cultural and racial tension, but also bodily anxiety and rhetorical potential through bodily performance. In her, we can see every cultural narrative blending into rhetorical performance through trial transcripts. Tituba is a slave brought from Barbados with Parris who became a very central figure in the creation of hysteria in the trials. Tituba was an easy early target. Her existence as an Amerindian woman and her position as a slave made her an outsider in ways that many others were not. Furthermore, Tituba was raised in a very different world where her customs

and folk tales were decidedly different from the predominantly English customs of the people she served.[11]

Her words, her customs, and her body all situate her place in Salem society and it was one that was quickly suspected in a time of hysterics over witches. When the young group of girls led by Samuel Parris' own daughter Betty, her cousin Abigail, and Ann Putnam began their first playful and then deadly exploits, it is no surprise that Tituba is one of the first accused. In Frances Hill's terms, "Their fear of and contempt for her as a Caribbean Indian, instilled all their lives by Puritan demonology as well as by the universal prejudice against what is alien, would have sharpened and deepened" (25).

However, in order to fully understand Tituba's situation and testimony, we must clarify the background which defines her experiences and the perception of her by the villagers. Elaine G. Breslaw's *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem* details what we know about Tituba's actual life circumstances and also helps clarify some of the misconceptions that have been perpetuated about Tituba. For example, various sources have called Tituba an African slave rather than Amerindian.[12] This is a shift from reality as Breslaw clarifies that "Nowhere in the seventeenth-century records is there so much as a hint that she was of even partial

[11] The stories she reportedly told the children must have seemed strange and otherworldly compared to their world which, in Puritan fashion, did not necessarily encourage imagination. This world was one where "the New Englanders expected as much of the young as of the adults. After earliest childhood there was little play or amusement…At seven or younger, children were expected to share fully in the chores of the household" (Hill 6).

[12] Every record we have of Tituba indicates that all who recorded any scrap of information about Tituba saw her as an Indian woman and not of African descent. This shows a clear shift in perception and re-writing Tituba depending on the cultural context of the time period. Brewslaw claims that Tituba's mistaken transformation from Indian to African is, in part, because of our search for a way to "fill in blanks left by the absence of more substantive information" (Xxi). Without this filling in, we have a few details and records that help us trace the life of Tituba before arriving at court for the Salem witch trials.

African descent" (Xxi). Breslaw effectively proves through a careful analysis of both records and historical events that Tituba was likely born in South America near present-day Venezuela and Guyana before being shipped to Barbados as a slave child. She was likely not born in Barbados since their numbers were low enough that they were not capable of "sustaining an independent American Indian society" with a high death-rate and often significantly more women slaves compared to male slaves (7). While in Barbados, according to Breslaw, Tituba likely worked on a plantation owned by Samuel Thompson. As an Indian slave, her experiences would have been very different from the African slaves who would have likely surrounded her at the time. Indian work tended to be "routines [that] were less demanding physically" and, at least for a while, they were not "subject to the same demeaning repudiation of their cultures by planters" (39).

Tituba most likely would have worked inside the plantation house rather than in the fields and learned English household ways from her mistress. She would have been taught the basics of European society and her mistress, Elizabeth Reid Thompson Lane Pearsehouse, may have taught Tituba about European ideas about witches, something that is indicated in Tituba's testimony (56). After the witch cake incident, Tituba claims that it is her white mistress in Barbados who showed her how to do it. This may very well have been true or it could have been a way for Tituba to claim knowledge coming from a safer white choice than a more mistrusted African or Indian background (Breslaw 99). Tituba likely would have been "educated…on the intricacies of English styles and standards of decoration, food, drink, and clothing" and "forced to wear European-style clothes" (58). She would be expected to pass as a proper English servant with customs far different from her own. By 1680, Tituba had been sold to and arrived in Boston as a properly trained servant well-versed in household chores.

Though King Philip's War was just a few years earlier and bred much hatred and fear of Indians, Tituba's own appearance would not have caused immediate fear or hatred due to the fact that she was not a part of any local tribe and she was already an enslaved woman.

It is important to note that "Indians as a group were often treated differently by the legal system" even though they supposedly had equality and similar punishments as white individuals (72). Indians often received harsher punishments and "few whites would rely on the word of an Indian who, they assumed, did not have the same degree of Puritan self-control" (72). In short, Indians were given some rights and protection under the letter of the law, yet in practice were not treated with equality. Tituba's words, as an Indian woman, would not have held the same weight in court as a white individual's under normal circumstances except perhaps if she were testifying against another Indian individual. However, these were not normal circumstances that met Tituba in Salem. This complex set of feelings about Indians bubble over in the Tituba's case. Her training as an English servant would help give power to her words as "her credibility as a witness may have been due to her successful absorption of English behavior patterns, aided by her knowledge and understanding of Puritan religious beliefs and shrewd insight into Puritan psychology" (72). She was trained in English habits and spiritual beliefs to the point that, along with the other aforementioned cultural circumstances, led to a greater belief in the validity of her words.

Many influences blend together to create the unique testimony that Tituba gives during her trial. She would have had early Arawak influences from her childhood that formed at least a foundation for a spiritual system of beliefs. She likely would have believed in a world where "a large number of spirits of the bush and of the dead" affected everyday life

(Brewslaw 17). Evil spirits would have existed in the world, but also Kenaimas, real people with supernatural powers used for evil, were the most feared source of calamity. Birds are often thought to be omens, messengers, and protectors of kenaimas. Dreams and storytelling had particular power in most Arawak societies. She also would have been influenced by the African community of slaves who likely surrounded her in Barbados. No doubt the customs would have influenced a young Tituba. She likely would have been influenced by "the African association of music and dance with religious ceremonies, the use of drums and other beating instruments, the nighttime occurrence of these rituals with many engaging in social interaction" (50).

She may have also been influenced by African slave religion, healing practices, and beliefs about witchcraft. However, even as she would have been influenced by her tribe's Indian beliefs and African beliefs, as mentioned before, she would have also been trained in the ways of English society including European beliefs about witchcraft, Christianity, and societal practices. It is important to note that there is no evidence that she practiced witchcraft of any type and more evidence to support that she likely did not (Breslaw 97). In other words, "her new world was numerically dominated by African slaves, but shaped by the interests and concerns of Europeans who held political and economic power" (44). Tituba was a part of a "syncretic culture that included elements of English, American Indian, and multicultural African lifestyles" all of which influenced her life and most likely her eventual testimony (Brewslaw xxiii). This complex background helps explain who Tituba is and her place as a central figure in the aforementioned cultural context of Salem in 1692.

When brought to trial, it is hard to imagine that Tituba did not understand her position. She knew how easy it would be for her to become the main target for the accusations and the ills of the village in general. Her line of defense for herself was to confess and this confession led to her being one of the central figures of the entire trials who helped dark the historical event gain a dark momentum. Her confessions were believable enough to count as proof for some that the Devil was in Salem working his evil magic upon the good people. This is similar to what Good and Osborne attempt to do with creating their own stories and defenses. However, Tituba's story is particularly potent. Part of the power of her words comes from her ability to marry "African with European Witchcraft lore to give flesh to her fantasy" (Hoffer 64). Frances Hill states that one performing hysterics "understands to some degree the phenomenon of finding something inside oneself "taking over". Sometimes that "something" seems astonishingly at odds with the normal personality" (Hill 45). It is debatable how much this occurred with Tituba. Her speech certainly indicates "something" taking over, but Tituba could also be that "something" playing into what the accusers and community wanted to hear. She uses the dreams, lore, and powerful language and storytelling abilities in order to illustrate a story and create a persona in her story that would shield her from execution. She also plays upon fear of body and vulnerability in a manner that engages people in her testimony.

Tituba's testimony is important because it reveals Tituba creating a persona for herself in her story that protects her even in a legally precarious situation. She manipulates perceptions of her and understands these perceptions in a way that allows her to create an image of herself that possibly saves her life. Her words create a text that can be read in order to reveal much about this performance process of self-creation and the relationship between

Tituba and the community reading her. The hearing begins on March 1, 1692 at Ingersoll's Tavern. So many people show up that the hearing has to be moved in order to accommodate everyone.

From the start, Tituba's testimony takes a very different turn from those accused with her, Good and Osborne. She initially denies guilt and then admits involvement and describes her supposed crimes. She slowly begins pointing fingers as well as setting the visual tone for the entire course of the witch trials. In previous historical witchcraft cases those who "demonstrated penitence by humbly confessing to their sins were treated sympathetically" (Brewslaw 115). It is very possible that Tituba's admission of guilt was influenced by these cases where denying guilt was sometimes worse than admitting it. Though it is impossible to know exactly what Tituba was thinking, it is also important to try to recreate not only her role but the process that went into creating that moment for Tituba. Three versions of Tituba's testimony from these two days of hearings exist and must be considered when trying to piece together Tituba's story. The first to be discussed is recorded by Ezekiell Chevers. The second is a version by Jonathan Corwin who records two different examinations of Tituba over the course of two days.

Tituba, during her testimony recorded by Chevers, at first denies the charges against her. She answers that she has no familiarity with any evil spirits and states clearly that she does "not hurt them" when questioned about the children making the accusations against her ("Tituba" 747). However, Tituba is able to read the situation well and begins to take a course of action that both protects herself from being a scapegoat and reads the answers asked of her to feel out the type of response the men would want her to say. In Breslaw's terms, "Tituba's

questioners provided her with clues as to what her answers should be" (117). If the answer was not the correct one, then they would repeat the question until it was. This is not to say that Tituba was merely parroting their rhetoric though. Her testimony, as will be proved, shows an adept knowledge of fears and prejudices that Tituba utilizes in order to create a sympathetic character in her own story. Within the span of three questions, she goes from denying any involvement or knowledge of evil spirits to saying that the devil is involved in hurting the children. The next question probes that "did you never see the devil" to which she mirrors her response with "The devil came to me and bid me serve him" (747). This answer marks the beginning of the accusations that would come and the story that she begins to weave together for the examiners. The construction of the sentence is significant. For Tituba, the devil came to her instead of her seeking him out. He bids her or attempts to get her to agree to serve him. Tituba develops a persona of her part in this story where she is not to blame and not active in her involvement with the devil or other witches. With legalistic precision, Tituba attempts to save her life through this persona.

Tituba then continues to indicate that four women and then four women and one man were involved in the hurting of the children which seems to be the central concern to the examiners at this moment. This exchange is significant for two reasons. Firstly, Tituba is reading the examiner's questions as much as they are hers or perhaps even more. At this point, she has been asked about hurting the children three times and has seen that each answer was not quite satisfactory. The devil hurts them at first and then it is four women including Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne, and then it is four women and a "tale man of Boston" (747). Each answer becomes more specific and more powerful in its effect. The vague answer of the devil becomes more concrete to the concerns of the time when it is women of the community

who take part in the devil's work. She names the two other women accused who are likely a safe target at least at this point in time since they have already been accused. Then, she revises again to include a man with the four women.

These revisions to their repeated questions about hurting the children eventually lead to Tituba giving them an answer she probably assumes they want. She finally admits that she did hurt the children, but only after the man and women "lay all upon me and they tell me if I will not hurt the children they will hurt me" (747). She yields under their continued questions and does admit to hurting the children at this point, but only after literally a pack of people are hurting her and threatening her. Tituba then promises that she "will hurt them no more" and that she is sorry that she hurt them in the first place (747). She follows their repeated questions and comes up with an answer that combines the actions that she believes they want her to admit to while still maintaining an air of innocence and being forced into the situation rather than just admitting complete guilt. She utilizes fears of the body to make herself seem more sympathetic and also passive in her involvement in the witchcraft. Her rhetoric focuses on physical harm done to her body or the threat of it. Her answers in this section also show the combination of Puritan and Indian belief systems that inform her answers. The vague answers of the devil and then a man from Boston emphasize Indian ideas that evil forces come from outside the community. However, the naming of actual community members plays on the fears of rotting from the inside and evil infesting the actual community. The idea of the community as a body and particularly a sacred, spiritual body comes into play here. She is not accusing an outside attack which is frightening enough, but rather pointing to actual parts of the spiritual body as being the source of attack.

They continue to press her on the subject of hurting the children so she expands her response to say that the man would do worse to her if she did not agree to hurt the children. This begins her section of describing the various types of animals that characterize her visits from the devil. At first, it is a hog that she sees which turns into a black dog. Several scholars note that the dog may be significant for its representations of obedience that Tituba is turning on its head. However, it is also significant that a large black dog can be intimidating and, in many cultures, a typical sign of death or bad omens. The black dog speaks to her and then changes into a man who presents to her a yellow bird that he gives to her or tries to give to her. The bird is significant. In general and in the Arawak culture that likely could have influenced Tituba, birds were messengers and had the freedom of flight and escape. Birds also had evil connotations though. They were often associated with the aforementioned Kenaimas according to Breslaw (18). Animal familiars are common in witchcraft lore fairly uniformly across different cultures, but the bird seems specifically attached to an evil spirit or force in the Arawak society. The bird may have been an easy choice for Tituba when creating her story which combines the lore and cultures of many different origins. Two rats, one red and one black also come to supposedly serve Tituba as well as a wolf and a cat. In this manner, Tituba plays the part of witch very well. She weaves together multiple cultural strands into a very compelling story that touches upon the body in connection with animal familiars.

Tituba continues her testimony with this combination of weaving lore together and passivity. When asked if she pinched Elizabeth Hubbard, Tituba says yes, but only because "the man brought her to me and made me pinch her" (748). She confesses, but in a way that invites the least amount of blame or culpability down upon her. When the examiner asks her how they traveled, she states that "we ride upon sticks and are there presently" to which they

respond “doe you goe through the trees or over them” (749). Tituba, at this moment, falls upon blindness or dumbness in order to avoid answering the question. She answers that “we see no thing but are there presently” (749). When she gets a question that she does not feel comfortable improvising an answer she claims to be blind which would fit into witchcraft lore and also her development of a certain kind of persona in the trials. The continued questions occasionally bring her outside of her comfort zone. Toward the end of this original testimony, she begins describing the appearance of other creatures that are either present or the other forms of Good and Osborne. One is a “thing with a head like a woman with two leggs and wings” with the other is “hairy it goes upright like a man it hath only two leggs” (749). Both creatures seem like normal humans except for the presence of something other-worldly or abnormal. She continues this trope and at the end in the face of rapid-fire questioning of which some she could not answer she claims that “I am blind noe I cannot see” (749). At this point, Tituba is rapid-fire describing many different people, familiars, and creatures. It is possible that the story is getting away from her a bit and, at this moment, she protects herself by claiming blindness in order to stop the questioning. She is performing here in order to protect herself utilizing popularly believed superstitions about witches.

A second version of the examination recorded by Corwin instead of Chevers includes some significant nuances compared to the original testimony. The first version, which is recorded by Chevers, is inherently different due to the summarizing of her words at points. The process by which Tituba reads what is expected of her and attempts to imagine an answer and persona that will work for her during this examination becomes even more apparent in the second version. Both versions reveal the perceptions the community has of her, but also her appropriation of rhetoric that she uses in order to manipulate perceptions of her. In this

manner, she becomes a text who is being read, but also an active participant in developing that text.

Corwin's version begins with six questions with Tituba denying involvement before mentioning the devil over the three with Chevers' version. This version brings in more detail with longer, fuller answers. The same experience before where Tituba initially mentions Good, Osborne, and the man is now described as "like a man I think yesterday I being in the Lentoe Chamber I saw a thing like a man, that tould me Searve him and I tould him noe I would nott doe Such thing" (750). There are more specifics in this quote compared to the earlier "A man come to me and say serve me" in the equivalent line from the first version (748). This reveals possible transcription issues, but also illuminates bodily fears in different ways. One is a bit less descriptive, but the other clarifies that it is something that appears "like a man" rather than just being a man. This description plays into cultural concerns about evil masquerading in the shape of sympathetic forms.

These moments of slippage between versions continues with an interesting moment in the second examination that differs from the first examination. The line starts with "she charges Goody Osburne & Sarah Good as those that hurt the Children, and would have had hir done itt, she sayth she Seen foure two of w'ch she knew nott she saw them last night as she was washing the Roome" (750). Technically, this line is folded under Tituba's answer, but the shift in pronoun usage from Tituba's "I" and "me" to "she" indicates that this is a summary of her words written by the transcriber. In the first version of this examination in the same section Tituba states that "4 women sometimes hurt the children….goode Osburn and Sarah good and I doe not know who the other were" (747). There are a few differences between

these statements of the same basic idea. The summary includes what she was doing at the time that this happened (washing the room) while the first-hand description does not. The first version is more concise, but also comes from her own words. Were details left out of the first examination even as it attempts to capture exact words? Trying to piece together the transcriptions allows one to imagine a truth in-between the two versions where perhaps one has more accuracy to her exact language while another adds more details that she gives that are left out of the first version. Just focusing on one or the other eliminates the possibility of having this fuller picture where every detail counts.

The account continues with the pressure that was levied at Tituba in order to get her to hurt the children by the appearance/man. She states that "one like a man Just as I was goeing to sleep Came to me this was when the Children was first hurt he sayd he would kill the Children & she would never be well, and he Sayd if I would nott Serve him he would do soe to mee" (750). There are a few slight changes here between the testimonies of the first version and second. The first does not mention the "she would never be well" and the last line is stated as "they would do worse to me" (748). This slight shift in language indicates two different sentiments and either a mis-recording or recording of two different moments. The "do soe to mee" version implies that she would be killed or worse. The "do worse to me" perhaps implies something more insidious than death in the form of torture or harming her soul. This, of course, would have resonated with a religious audience who feared bodily harm, but also feared spiritual damage or being sent to hell. In this manner, Tituba utilizes rhetoric to play a sympathetic role very well.

There are other portions of the text where one is summarized while the other is supposedly direct language. For example, her original response to the black dog trying to get her to serve him is "I will serve you no longer than he said he would hurt me and then he looks like a man and threatens to hurt me shee said that this man had a yellow bird that keept with him and he told me he had more pretty things that he would give me if I would serve him" (748). The second version, in contrast, spends more time giving details into this process:

> A. I answer I will Serve you noe Longer he tould me he would doe me hurt then. Q. w't other Creatures have you seene A. a bird Q. w't bird?A. a little yellow Bird.Q. where doth itt keep? A. w'th the man whoe hath pretty things there besides. Q. what other pretty things? A. he hath nott showed them [yet] unto me, butt he s'd he would show them me tomorrow, and he tould me if I would Serve him I should have the Bird. (751)

In the second version, the reader can see a more in-depth portrayal of the process by which the bird information is received. The initial denials are fairly straight-forward with denials to serve. However, in the first version all of the information about the bird is basically folded into one response that Tituba seems to give without coaxing. The longer, several complete sentence answer seems to be uninterrupted and a complete answer to the question of what she said to the black dog. The second version reveals a bit more into the process by which the bird information is revealed. She is prompted to discuss more creatures rather than offering up the bird alone. Then, she is prompted to describe the bird in more detail and state who keeps the bird. In the first version, the man promises to give her "more pretty things" (748) while in the

second version he promises to give her the bird. Some of these changes are explainable by the process of having the same general meaning with slight changes in the transcription process.

The details about the familiars are also changed slightly. In the first version, Tituba sees “two rats, a red rat and a black rat” (748). The second version claims that she sees “I saw 2 Catts, one Red, another black as bigge as a little dogge” (751). The second examination conducted a day later claims that she sees “two Catts a black and Red” and now a bird that is “green and white” instead of yellow (754). This is a fairly major difference. The difference between a rat and a cat is a major one. In the second version as well, Tituba clarifies that one of them is as big as a dog so it is not just a cat or rat, but a large one. Cats and dogs seemed like animals more readily accused of being witches or accomplices. Cats have a medieval history of being associated with witches which includes their nocturnal habits. Though beneficial house pets on one side, they were also easy targets to be accused of being familiars during the trials. Tituba readily points out multiple cats and dogs that are supposedly familiars or evil taking the appearance of one of these animals. However, the version that states rats is an intriguing one. Rats do not have the same loaded history which might make one more likely to state that the rat may have been a transcription error especially considering Tituba’s calling upon lore from many countries to create this image of witchcraft for the examiners. This detail could be Tituba’s own invention or come from one of the many influences that may have helped her create her testimony. Both transcripts utilized together tell slightly different sides of the story and reveal the multiple possibilities for her testimony. Either option demonstrates a slightly different perception of the actual story that she gives us.

The second version recorded by Corwin again gives more details about what actually happens during this part of the testimony. Where the first moves quickly to Elizabeth Hubbard and Thomas Putnam's portions of the testimony, the second version gives more details about the cat/rat familiar section. The second version clarifies that "after prayer; and scratched mee, because I would not serve them and when they went away I could nott see but thay stood before the fire" (751). Here, she clarifies that specifically after praying the cats attack her and scratch her to try to get her to serve them. It is in the midst of prayer that she is attacked which emphasizes her attempt at purity and innocence. She claims blindness again during this moment after she rebukes the animals. In this moment, she utilizes the connection between rhetoric and body where the hysteria surrounding the body manifests itself physically in the cats instead of her own body. When asked to describe how she pinches the children, Tituba answers with "the other pull mee & hall me to the pinch the Childr, & I am very sorry for itt" (751). This is an avoidance technique that puts the onus on others forcing her to hurt the children. It emphasizes how sorry she is and how she is basically physically forced into it. This, again, repeatedly focuses on vulnerabilities of the body—both her own and the innocent children involved. It also helps her avoid potentially admitting to pinching in a location or manner that the girls would refute. She emphasizes her innocence at the same time as protects the story from being refuted easily.

The testimony continues with the question of "what made you hould yo'r arme when you were Searched? w't had you there?" (751). This is an intriguing question and one of the few comments we get about Tituba's physical body. It acknowledges a search and portrays a Tituba who may have been holding her arm at one point. There are many explanations for why she may have grabbed her arm. This could have been fear, an unknown injury, a

protective or reflexive stance, or simply the imagination of the examiners. However, this reference to her body is important for it shows how the examiners are examining her body in addition to her words. However, it is also important to note that much less time is spent recording the examination of Tituba's body compared to other women. Her transcripts focus almost exclusively on her words. Tituba claims that "I had nothing" and, to the follow-up question of if the cats sucked her, that "noe never yett I would nott lett them but they had almost thrust me into the fire" (751). She claims that she refuses to let them suckle on her and that they almost threw her in a fire because of this. This defends her body as evidence and emphasizes again her innocence in the matter. She denies them access to her body even under the threat of horrific fiery death. They continue to examine the point and ask "how doe you hurt those that you pinch? doe you gett those Catts? or other thing to doe it for you? tell us, how is it done" (751). She responds with the evasive "the man sends the Catts to me & bids me pinch them, & I think I went over to mr Grigg's & have pinched hir this day in the morning. the man brought mr Grigg's mayd to me & made me pinch hir" (751). Again, Tituba emphasizes the passivity of her experience doing the pinching. It is the man and cats who attempt to force her to do it. At one point, the man even brings Grigg's maid to Tituba in order to force her to pinch her. Tituba refuses to participate, emphasizing her attempt to separate herself from actively admitting guilt.

There are other differences between the two versions that give slightly varying details. For example, the first examination says that "we ride upon stickes and are there presently" and "we see nothing but are there presently" for how they travelled to the Putnams (751). In the second version, she clarifies that "I Rid upon a stick or poale & Good & Osburne behind me we Ride takeing hold of one another don't know how we goe for I Saw noe trees nor path,

but was presently there. when wee were up" (751). This seemingly insignificant change seems to be more detailed. The "we" shifts to "I" followed by a deliberate mention of Good and Osborne. The second is more specific and more detailed to the actual situation where the first feels like a generalization. The second also vividly portrays an image of the three women holding each other while they are flying on the sticks. This image is far more striking and touches upon the idea of a physical, common union between the three women that is lacking in the first. In this one, they physically hold each other while doing this confusing type of travel which Tituba claims ignorance of in other testimony. Part of Tituba's power is the ability to depict visual images so powerful that it put fear in the hearts of the people examining here. She does just that here when in this dream-like image of not seeing, yet moving forward in the arms of her fellow witches toward their victim.

The visual images that Tituba does depict for those listening also change depending on what currently suits the question. She shifts between varying degrees of denial and defense of her own situation. Though she fights against the cats earlier, she also, at other times, allows a relationship with animal familiars as expected of a stereotypical witch. In the first version, Tituba claims that the yellow bird makes another appearance and "suck her between her fingers" (749). In the second version, this is changed into "give itt to the Children. w'ch yellow bird hath bin severall tymes Seen by the Children I saw Sarah Good have itt on hir hand when she Came to hir when mr parris was att prayr: I saw the bird suck Good betwene the fore finger & Long finger upon the Right hand" (752). Here, again, we have a more captivating visual and story. In this side, she claims that the bird will be given to the children who had seen it several times. She also claims that the bird is on Good's hand and specifically mentions the exact place that the bird apparently suckles on Good. Rather than just fingers,

she describes the exact fingers and the exact arm. The details in the second version help illustrate a story that goes beyond just the brief questions and answers of a trial transcript. Tituba weaves together a tapestry of complex images that captive those surrounding her. Both versions help us to imagine what it might have been like to sit and hear her. Though the trial transcripts are most likely not word-for-word, the slippage between the different versions helps construct a different, more complete narrative.

Tituba is also careful to maintain a stance that would make it difficult to make her a scapegoat. One question missing from Chevers' version that is in Corwin's is the question of "did you never practise witch-craft in your owne Country?" (752). She answers with a very firm "Noe Never before now" (752). This seemingly unimportant detail that is not even mentioned in some of the documents is important for several reasons. Tituba was first and foremost likely telling the truth that she was not an active witchcraft participant in her own country. However, she is also trying to deny any practice of witchcraft versus the physical and psychological force used to make her practice in Salem, supposedly. A perhaps unforeseen consequence of this response is the concept that the evil is coming from within the community and not outside. The witch cake that Tituba helps create with her husband John Indian supposedly came from her white mistress while in Barbados. The current witchcraft terrors, to Tituba, comes in the form of geographical proximity and community members. It is Good and Osborne who help force her into witchcraft and not the African or Indian slaves in Barbados. The devil in the form of a man may be wearing black, but he is not described necessarily as black himself and also has white hair. His clothing and these other descriptions seem to indicate a white man over a black or Indian one. This is very different from Good's testimony which marks a "black indian" as the culprit. When pressed over and over again for a

description of the figures who lead her into witchcraft (in the second version she is asked five times in a row for a clothing description before she claims that she is blinded), Tituba claims that the man is wearing "black Cloaths Some times, Some times Searge Coat of other Couler, a Tall man w'th white hayr, I think" (752). The woman is wearing a "black Silk hood w'th a White Silk hood under itt, w'th top knotts, w'ch woeman I know not but have Seen hir in boston when I lived there" and "Searge Coat w'th a White Cap as I think" (752-753). Breslaw asserts that this description indicates that those involved are clearly upper-class and most likely white. For Tituba, witchcraft was not going to be blamed on those from her background. On the contrary, Tituba subtlety implicates upper-class white men as being the ringleaders and lower-class white women as being the helpers.

It would be fairly typical for Native Americans to be equated with evil or darkness as well as black individuals. In some ways, it may logically follow that they would be the primary scapegoats during the trials. However, with Tituba, who would also be perceived through her race, we see a shift in blame and consequences. The vast majority of people accused in the Salem witch trials are white. The sheer hysteria, of course, has some political implications. No one benefits politically, economically, or socially from Tituba, Candy, or Mary Black being executed. However, there is also the idea that the horror or danger from within is what really forces this hysteria. Rather than executing Tituba as an evil Indian witch, most of the community members executed are white and some are even not outsiders in the ways we typically tend to think about the Salem witch victims. This could be due to their status as slaves putting them in a slightly different position compared to Osborne and Good. This fact also supports the idea of the idea that the community body is the one being attacked

where the actual units that create the health of the body becoming the bigger fear and the more vulnerable target to attack by supposed witches or for other societal reasons.

Both transcripts end with a return to her performance of blindness. She is asked "doe you see who it is that torments these children now" (749). She claims it is Good and then claims she is blind to end the first version. The second version gives more details as it summarizes that "Hubbard being taken in an extreame fit after she was asked whoe hurt hir & she Sayd she Could nott tell, but sayd they blinded hir, & would nott lett hir see and after that was once or twice taken dumb hirself" (755). Hubbard, one of the original girls, has some sort of fit and they are asking Tituba to explain why she is having this fit and who is hurting her. Though the girls back her up when she originally mentions Good, Tituba takes the safer route here and claims that she has been blinded and made dumb. This point of the examination must have been pretty frustrating for the examiners and potentially an out for Tituba. The children insert a chaotic, unpredictable moment into the examination. Tituba uses this moment of physical reaction to claim herself blind and dumb and, therefore, unable to answer the examiners many badgering questions any longer. She takes control of the proceedings here while taking advantage of the role she is allowed to play and the bodily reactions of the children.

Tituba's second examination takes place the next day on March 2, 1692 and very explicitly emphasizes her obedience to authority and vulnerability as a human being to the threats against her. Given the examination the day before, Tituba and the examiners had time in order to review the story and regroup for the coming testimony. When asked what the man told her, Tituba answers that "he Tell me he god, & I must beleive him" (753). She

emphasizes that he is posing as God in a manner that deflects her culpability in the situation. When pushed about this subject, she responds that "I then sayd this I tould him I Could nott believe him God, I tould him I ask my maister & would have gone up but he stopt mee & would nott lett me" (753). In this slightly refined version of the story, she clarifies that she knew that God would not come to her like this and wants to be obedient to her master. However, she is forced to stay away and not allowed to be obedient. This idea of physical forced used against Tituba is expanded upon when she says that "& thatt night I saw them all stand in the Corner, all four of them, & the man stand behind mee & take hold of mee to make mee stand still in the hall" (753). She is grabbed from behind at this point and physically forced to stay where she is and unable to cry for help or get her master. This physical force on her body emphasizes her own inability to stop what is happening to her.

This focus on her own vulnerability in the process is something that is consistent throughout her testimony. Tituba again and again reaffirms the idea that she is not actively to blame for her fall into witchcraft. She cultivates an idea of obedience and fear where she is too scared to admit what is happening over willfully rebelling against her Master. This actually reinforces a desired image of her as an obedient slave following orders. She claims in all versions that the man and/or Osborne and Goode will decapitate her if she tells her Master. She is also physically forced at various times to act a certain way. She claims that she is blinded as well as, during Prayer Time, "prayer tyme she stoped my eares & would nott lett me hear" (752). She is physically and psychologically forced into this situation instead of being a willing participant. Here, she is emphasizing the vulnerability of her own body in a way that matches the fear of other community members over the vulnerability of bodies,

buildings, or communities in general. While others also bring up this general fear, Tituba smoothly captures the rhetoric and uses it in a manner that is potent.

To explain her actions against the children, she acknowledges that "he Say goe & doe hurt to them and pinch them & then I went in, & would nott hurt them a good while, I would nott hurt Betty, I loved Betty, but they hall me & make me pinch Betty" (753). Here, he commands her to hurt the children and she enters the room, but refuses to hurt Betty. She claims that she loves her which emphasizes her nature as a dutiful servant who enjoys serving the children and would not harm them except in this moment of physical and psychological terror. She is again held and made to pinch Betty rather than complying with the demands of the man readily or with eagerness. She loses control over her body at a similar time to Parris (her master) losing control of his physical abilities to see or comprehend. They ask her if she "goe into that Room in your own person & all the rest?" (754). She answers that "yes, and my master did nott See us, for they would nott lett my Master See" (754). This is convenient for Tituba, obviously. However, it also plays upon this fear of bodily loss of control and deception that is thought possible of witches. Not only could they change their appearance, but also make you see or not see whatever they wanted. In weaving her story, Tituba uses this technique in a manner that protects her when asked about that which she cannot answer and, likewise, allows her to manipulate what she wants the examiners to see and not see.

The book where witches would write their names is also an important part of witchcraft lore that emphasizes fears over body, identity, and control. The questioners bring the book to her and they ask her if she wrote her name. She claims that she did not because her mistress called her away. They ask her again if she has written in the book and she

answers that “yes once I made a marke in the Booke & made itt with red Bloud” (754). This also would have been a common idea. Witchcraft meant literally signing your body and blood over to Satan and it is consecrated in this very literal manner. Tituba avoids completely owning up to signing the book potentially to deflect any type of guilt. Though she claims she made a mark in blood when they ask if it came from her body she answers “he Said he must gett itt out the Next time he Come againe, he give me a pin tyed in a stick to doe itt w'th, butt he noe Lett me bloud w'th itt as yett butt Intended another time when he Come againe” (754). She admits to seeing the book and even making a mark in it, but hedges like a true politician when it comes to admitting that she did complete the transaction as intended. This keeps one thin layer of protection between her and admitting full guilt of signing over her soul to Satan. When asked more about the book she claims that she did see nine other marks with names. Again, conveniently, she did not see the actual names beyond Good and Osborne who have already been accused. She mentions seeing or hearing about other strangers participating at multiple points. This choice may have been to deflect guilt again from herself. However, this statement stokes the fear that everyone may be a witch and not just the three originally accused.

Tituba repeats a policy of denial in this transcript. When asked how many times she went to Boston, she responds with “I was never att Boston” (755). When asked who came back with her, she claims “I was nott willing to goe” (755). When asked how far she went, she claims “I never went to any Towne I see noe trees, noe Towne” (755). Finally, when asked where the other people live, she claims they live in Boston, Salem, but ultimately that “he would nott tell mee wher thay were” (755). Here ends the examination of Tituba on a vague ending of denials. Her claims of ignorance fit into the concept of witchcraft at the time,

however, and help her seem more credible than if she really did try to come up with random details or names that may not exist. She keeps her story simple and, when caught in a position where she cannot answer, she denies her ability to answer. She chooses passiveness and ignorance at moments that will help her veer on the side of innocence or at least sympathy. She manipulates rhetoric and perceptions of the body in a way that takes advantage of their ambiguity of meaning at the same time as revealing the ever shifting link between language and bodily perception.

Body, Rhetoric, and Hysteria

The chaotic nature of the Salem witch trials reveals a culture in turmoil. In a very real situation where they could be executed at any moment, Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, Tituba, Mary Black, and Candy all utilize various forms of rhetorical performance to attempt to save their lives and deflect suspicion. Good and Osborne both deny active participation and attempt to structure themselves as more socially acceptable forms of femininity before the community. Tituba has a voice and an imagination that guide the entire course of this major historical event. Candy readily performs the part of a witch when she willingly uses the puppets against her accusers in court. Mary Black seems to try to avoid performing for the court and denies all allegations. However, in this steady denial she is still performing the role of an innocent before the eyes of God. These cases help to explore cultural perceptions of them at the time. Tituba, as one of the first confessions, lays the groundwork for all the assumptions that follow about the body, language, and evidence. Every case that follows reveals various nuances on the tone that she set with varying degrees of shifting meaning between language and body.

Examining the records that still exist from the trials helps construct a narrative of the Salem witch trials that goes beyond historical fact. Examining the trials transcripts as perceptions of these women offers glimpses of personality, emotions, the performance of roles, and, occasionally, the subversion of expectation. It is here that we can begin to create a narrative that can never be completely coherent, but can offer us brief moments of a partially complete story told in spurts of performance and creativity. Perceptions of bodies, including the idea of body being a metaphor for the basic units of culture converges with the idea of the body as vulnerable to attack in a manner that creates hysteria. In this moment of crisis, one can read the combination of body and fear through rhetoric in a very striking manner that reveals the connection between fear, body, and gender. It is in this connection that patterns of cultural narratives and, likewise, disruptions in those cultural narratives can be read. The trials can be read as a moment in which perceptions of body and vulnerability of the body become the central fear of a culture in flux. In attempting to gain control, certain rhetorical patterns emerge that tie together gender, violence, and fear in a manner that reveals shifting gendered expectation and allows for challenges to be made against that same culture.

Section 2

Aberrant Mothers: The Religious Rhetoric of Infanticide

The milieu of body, violence, and vulnerability in Salem transfers to a larger movement of crime literature that emerges in the late 17th century and becomes extremely popular through the eighteenth century. The witch trials feared corruption within and this fear redirects to infanticide cases. Many execution narratives focused on the crime of infanticide with a special interest in maternal bodies and monstrous motherhood. Similar to those accused in the witch trials, those accused of infanticide reveal a cultural anxiety over bodies and a desire to control the meanings attached to those bodies. Different from Salem, however, is the fact that this site exists through various published texts typically bundled with sermons and religious rhetoric. The physical bodies of the women are interpreted through these published bundles of documents, serving to create a cultural site of anxiety over sin, concealment, and the shifting nature of gendered expectation. In the words of Thomas Foxcroft's sermon delivered for Rebekah Chamblit, "they may have hid their Wickednefs heretofore; yet now, when they come to die, they are detected, or confefs; The mask is pull'd or thrown off, and it appears they were but whited Sepulchres, fair without, but foul within" (7). This quote does much to reveal the inner workings of a society concerned with the hidden nature of corrupting sin and its relation to motherhood. This rhetoric reveals a focus on the idea of performance as concealment. Infanticide narratives exemplify a moment where religion and ministerial control focus very clearly on a female body that causes anxiety, but these texts also allow for a performative space that, in the process of trying to control, also challenges. These are texts that take speech acts and translate them into bundled, printed texts including lengthy sermons, prayers, and eyewitness accounts. In this printed text, we have a codifying of community

values and what happens when one does not properly embrace those values. In some ways, these texts bury the women through ministerial rhetoric that dominates in both theme and length. However, in these convoluted bundles and mixture of voices, there emerge other possibilities for analysis. The breadth of these texts creates fissures where meaning is deconstructed as much as it is controlled. Acknowledging this ambiguity leads to the ability to view these texts like a prism rather than a flat piece of paper where, through different angles, one can view different cultural voices including religious rhetoric and concealment, community involvement, and, even if obscured, the woman at the center of it all.

The four cases I have chosen, Esther Rodgers, Rebekah Chamblit, Katherine Garret, and Alice Clifton, illustrate the manner in which a multitude of voices and cultural anxieties come together to create a fragmented cultural narrative of race and gender. Esther Rodgers, the earliest case I will discuss, is a white 21-year old servant executed in 1701 for infanticide. Her bundle of documents and case, in some ways, portray the exact way that infanticide narratives are meant to work with a very traditional formula and Rodgers herself seemingly embracing her role as a condemned mother. She serves as an establishing baseline example. Garret, a Pequot servant executed for infanticide in 1738, also has a very traditional bundle of documents. However, her status as a Native American and interactions with the legal process portray a different type of cultural narrative guided by racial assumptions. Rebekah Chamblit lives in Boston and, in 1733, is executed for infanticide. Her case, perhaps, shows the greatest amount of anxiety over concealment as portrayed by the sermon attached to her narrative. At the same time, her broadside, stripped of the normal ministerial bundle, allows for more of Chamblit's own voice to emerge. Alice Clifton is convicted, but never executed of infanticide in 1787. Her case is a strikingly different one coming later in the century and reveals a

different narrative due to her status as a slave. Instead of a bundled set of documents, Clifton only exists through a muddled trial transcript. Each case represents a different aspect of the cultural, spiritual, and legal process of controlling female bodies through rhetoric and published texts.

Through these texts featuring various women committing similar crimes in similar places and time, one can begin to piece together a fragmented cultural narrative. In the texts connected to their trials and eventual executions, ministers and publishers seek to transform their maternal bodies into symbols through rhetoric, and those symbols are clearly differentiated depending on race and legal and cultural responses. Every moment, no matter how fragmented or ambiguous, can become a moment of potential for both transmission and creation of meaning and understanding. Our rituals involving female criminals, including trials and the texts associated with them, become illuminating and fluid moments of cultural exchange. These infanticide cases reveal a spectrum of possibility where, even as ultimate control seems to be exerted by ministers, publishers, and other authors, there are still gaps that reveal ruptures and possibilities for understanding both the woman and the culture more completely. The performance of criminality in these texts produces a borderland of meaning where control is sought, but never fully gained. In the gaps left between the attempts for but ultimate failure to obtain control is where we can more accurately hear the multiple voices vying for control and expression in these texts.

Rhetoric, Religion, and the Maternal Body

In these cases, the maternal body bundled with the innocent body of the baby becomes a powerful symbol connected to the very spiritual health of the community. It is no surprise

that these infanticide narratives are very frequently bundled with sermons meant to clarify the spiritual lesson one should be receiving from reading that text. Inextricably linked to reading each text or attempting to read a woman's experiences is the role of the sermon in the community. Meredith Neuman, in *Jeremiah's Scribes*, describes how the sermon was a central part of spiritual life in this time period. Everyone in the community would have heard sermons on a weekly basis and it is one of the defining ways that belief systems are understood. The sermons tended to be "plain-style preaching" that focus on explication. To Neuman, it is important to consider that books are the "physical acts of creating meaning" (28). The originally spoken sermons get transcribed into books and, therefore, make permanent meaning created through these sermons. The sermons tended to be read by a wide range of people due to the "literary scarcity" of other texts and information about sales support a "extraordinarily popular products" that sometimes even reached "one for every two households" (Williams 6). For these reasons, the sermon must be considered an integral part of the experience when considering the cultural site that is an infanticide case. They were meant to be texts that instructed the community in moral matters, codifying acceptable behavior through the punishment of these maternal bodies gone awry.

Neuman also claims that to understand a sermon's place in the community is to think of it as a "discursive process that involves the entire community in the twined endeavors of scriptural explication" (X). Many threads come together to create meaning in this world. It is not only the scripture that is the center of this process, but also the community, minister, and dissemination through spoken word and printed texts that is necessary to understand in order to begin unpacking meaning. This is important to understanding and reading complex texts like cases of infanticide. In trying to read the woman's experience, one must also read the role

of community, sermon, minister, and print culture in order to fully understand the cultural narrative being projected.

To understand how meaning is created, we also need to "begin by conceding that the sermon is the controlling logic of all Puritan literature. Central to the lived experience of piety, sermon culture dictates not only habits of thought but habits of interpretation and expression as well" (Neuman 5). Important to understanding this lived experience is the idea that "the controlling logic of the sermon is...hybridity of print, oral, and manuscript practices" (Neuman 10). To the community, these sermons would have been the background for spiritual belief and something they would hear on a weekly basis. Then, beyond just hearing it, the sermons would then be printed and distributed. It is impossible to separate the strands of oral, print, and manuscript practices from the central control of the belief system and, ultimately, from the rhetoric used to create meaning from a female criminal's life. Understanding this hybridity helps to understand exactly the type of text that records these women's experience. There is an oral history that is transcribed creating a transmission of meaning that is not necessarily easily controlled. Furthermore, this process is one that would be community-wide with an emphasis on community involvement.

To think of reading an infanticide case is to acknowledge the active manner in which each component engaged with the other in order to interact with the cultural perceptions being molded:

> The relationship between auditor and sermon was far from passive. The experiential premises of the New England Way required scrupulous, active engagement with the explication and application of scripture. The lived religion of Puritan New England

> was anchored in a deeply textual sense of spirituality that crossed many generic boundaries and that left many material traces in print and manuscript. (Neuman 8)

Sermons were meant to be heard and used by community members. The rhetoric in sermons is meant to be understandable and relatable for this reason. To garner more widespread public interest, Puritan ministers even begin including other texts with the sermons including actual narratives, final prayers, final confessions, and other various bits. In this manner, understanding an infanticide case in all of its complexities includes not only understanding the maternal body fears at the center of the case, but also understanding the sermon as a guiding system meant to control the rhetoric surrounding that body. Like in Salem, here, the female body, and specifically the maternal body, become the center of symbolism for exerting control over a community.

At the center of all of these stories are bodies including the body of the woman and the body of the child.[1] In Kathleen M. Brown's terms, "the body of the female infanticide thus became an emblem of the colony's uncleanness and the means by which ministers could attempt to reclaim authority" (79). There is a focus on what the body means and what it could mean. As a catalyst for societal angst, these real bodies are manipulated by ministers into a symbolic body. Brown illustrates that "references to purity or filth…appear to free float from the anchor of "real" bodies" (81). Uncleanness and filth of "real" bodies that have engaged in premarital sex, childbirth, and infanticide operate on two levels. There is the physical reality

[1] Though I have narrowed my focus of motherhood, there are several texts that help guided and inform the framework for understanding motherhood. Julie Kipp in *Romanticism, Maternity, and the Body Politic* notes the process of "politicizing of maternal bodies and the maternalizing of political bodies" by analyzing fictional accounts of mothers and children (1). Jennifer Thorn's introduction to *Writing British Infanticide*, Eva Cherniavsky's chapter on "Charlotte Temple's Remains" in *That Pale Mother Rising*, Part I of Hoffer and Hull's *Murdering Mothers*, and Chapter 3, "Suffer the Little Children," in Marilyn Francus' *Monstrous Motherhood* also help shape my discussion.

of the body and the "spiritually afflicted" aspect of the crime (81). There is a rhetoric used to take these real bodies and attempt to fit them into a certain cultural narrative in an acceptable way. In some ways, in this moment of taking a real body and inscribing meaning on it, "the very bodies of the accused women belonged more to others than themselves" (Henigman 124). These women serve a certain function for the community. Having failed to perform their gendered expectations correctly, they enter a different type of role. In the form of a female criminal, the women are expected to perform penance. The rhetoric surrounding their bodies illustrates this desire by ministers to control and codify meaning attached to these women and their cases. However, there are slippages between rhetoric, reality, and the symbolic body that allow for glimpses into a cultural moment with women at the center of it.

It is no coincidence that infanticide committed by women became the central type of crime focused on by ministers and other leaders. The bodies of these women "became cultural capital" and "played in constructions of national identity" (Harris 27). Sharon Harris claims that "the threat inherent in mothers who killed their children went far beyond a concern over the act of murder itself" (27). She continues this line of thought by saying, "mothers (symbols of the Church and nation) who killed their "bastards" were a threat to the entire dissenting experiment of colonial America" (28). To Harris, there is a special fear that comes from the idea of a mother murdering her children in a way that threatens the very core of the society. These "finely drawn lines of proper roles for women" create punishments for actions like fornication and illegitimate births "increasingly severe…under the law and under social sanctions against women who stepped outside the boundaries of proscribed propriety" (32). The bodies of these women and their children would have remained largely ignored by the culture until the moment that the crime is discovered. At that moment, they become marked

bodies that require a cultural response. The texts that remain from this experience tell a story not only of the woman, but also of cultural perception and the desire to neutralize any threats to expected behavioral codes of conduct. Stories of infanticide reveal the specific gendered, racial, and class-based situations that each women experiences in her life and, in turn, how the community would have perceived the same factors.

Scholar Jodi Schorb emphasizes the importance of the fact that most infanticide cases involved young, unmarried females condemned for murdering children and, occasionally, fornication itself. She enhances Harris' idea of bodies by stating that "the crime marks the woman's body … as a site of sexual knowledge, a mark bolstered by the public nature of the ritual itself" (73). The body itself becomes a site, a mark, a symbol of deviance that must be controlled and reinterpreted for the audience who viewed the executions. In a public situation where "both her conversion and her death become communal events" (75), the execution narrative and attached documents often specifically focuses on shared guilt amongst everyone rather than just the woman's sins and openly encourages the audience to see the woman as a mirror of themselves. In some ways, this powerful idea involves a removal of the woman herself from this occasion. Instead, it becomes a communal event with shared guilt and, to the ministers, the possibility of communal conversion. At the center of this communal event are the women's body and many different people attempting to control or make meaning out of her body.

Furthermore, the communal nature of the event comes with certain implications. Daniel Williams declares that "public executions… were one of the most important colonial contact points between the elite and the non-elite" (11). This contact zone afforded a rare moment where there is recorded intermixing of races, genders, and classes. Servants were

having philosophical conversations with those in control and also exerting control over certain aspects of it. As Williams points out, this process meant to control often deconstructed itself and left the so-called non-elite or even the criminals with the ability to alter this narrative as much as the controlling ones in power. To Williams, there is also a slippage here between the goals of the ruling elite and the results. He says that "By presenting large numbers of people with spectacles that both titillated and inculcated, they empowered the people they were trying to control by indirectly promoting a popular demand of sensation" (11). Along with this being a cultural contact zone moment, there is also a struggle for power over the meaning of that moment through rhetoric and experience. The sermonic rhetoric used creates only a fragmented rather than fixed picture of the gendered, racialized, and class-based lived experiences and perceptions of early American female criminals.

Each text is shaped by multiple voices in power outside of the criminal who is the focus of the text. These voices include ministers most usually, but also a litany of other sources from other community members to judges. However, even with these overarching voices controlling and guiding the text, a common procedure in these narratives is the appeal to credibility made by claiming that the words of the criminal herself are contained within the text. Many of these bundled texts included a first-person narrative claiming to be the words of the soon to be executed criminal. There is always a tension between the woman and the strong shaping force of the men who would have most definitely been the ones crafting these texts for the community. Ministers provided ample amounts of control and influence over the texts. These influences complicate an already complex genre. There are multiple voices at play here, including the woman at the center of the trial. Even within the voices in power (like the ministers), there is not necessarily a cohesive message. There is an ambiguity in the

shades of voices that appear in the texts and would have also transferred to an audience. Infanticide narratives, as a genre, had certain characteristics that were expected for the genre. There is a certain formula that one is supposed to maintain to have a successful execution narrative. This includes a trajectory of falling into sin through some shared initial sin like breaking the Sabbath, the eventual conversion to God and seeing the error of her ways, and the brave, newly saint-like woman pleading for others to heed her example. These formulas are controlled through various means including ministers, publishers, and the audience expecting certain behaviors for a good story. In some ways, this marks a difference in understanding rhetoric surrounding the witch trials and these infanticide narratives. The witch trial narratives maintain an element of unruly ambiguity due to the nature of how they are created from live testimony and examining real women. These narratives, to the ministers, ideally form a more coherent site of control over women's bodies due to the strictly textual nature of their existence. However, there are moments in each text that cannot be said to follow any formula. These are subversive and ambiguous moments where a rupture occurs and the neat, tidy narrative being created wavers. These moments illustrate not only a unique quality about each text, but also provide compelling evidence of cultural fragmentation.

Legalities of the Body and Motherhood

Important to understanding the rhetoric of fear surrounding criminal and maternal bodies are the laws which influenced decisions. These laws portray the manner in which the society created a situation that encouraged "codifying crime enforced gender roles" (Rabin 96). The Statute of 1624 is one of the most influential of these laws:

> Whereas many Lewd Women, that have been Delivered of Bastard Children, to avoid their Shame, and to escape Punishment, do secretly Bury or Conceal the Death of their Children; and after, if the Child be found Dead, the said Women do allege that the said Child was born dead; whereas it falleth out sometimes (although hardly it is to be proved) that the said Child or Children were Murdered by the said Women their Lewd Mothers, or by their Assent or Procurement. Be it therefore Enacted...That if any Woman be Delivered of any Issue of her Body, Male or Female, which if it were born Alive, should by Law be a Bastard thereof, or any other way; either by herself, or the procuring of others so to conceal the Death thereof, that it may not come to light, whether it were Born Alive or not, but be concealed: In every such case the Mother so offending, shall suffer Death, as in case of Murder. Except such Mother can make proof by One Witness at the least, that the Child whose Death was by her so intended to be concealed, was born Dead. (Jones 72)

This act, originated in England, is formally adopted by Massachusetts Code in 1696 and similar codes are seen throughout the colonies. This statute is important for numerous reasons. Proving infanticide was difficult and faced with uncertain morality and evidence, the statue proves "a concern for the technical problems of evidence and a tone of moral censure" (Hoffer and Hull 20). Hoffer and Hull indicate that the language incorporates a Puritan rhetoric that indicates the control the Puritans had over English laws at this time. The moral censure stated is at the crux of the Puritan impulse. In short, they "feared the concealment of a 'hardened heart,' the sinfulness of women, and the immorality of the idle" (23). A strict statute with a tone of morality thrown in hits at the heart of these fears with a focus on the concealment of many issues—the concealment of sin, the concealment of a heart, the

concealment of a person who had fallen away from the body of Puritan faith.[2] It is the fear of rotting from within that drives this impulse and leads to a focus on concealment. This is not unlike the fear of that which is hidden during the Salem witch trials with secret pacts with Satan, sneaking into houses, and hidden bodily urges becoming the center of the trials. Here, the focus is on female bodies that have not performed motherhood correctly through not only hiding a baby, but also hiding the sins and urges that led to that baby.

In the same way, the body, both an individual body and its metaphorical translation to larger bodies including a community and Church, becomes vulnerable to this corruption and a possible liability to these larger bodies. There is no better way that this is illustrated than through a female body with the seemingly mysterious process of pregnancy. The baby is concealed and the process is still largely up to midwives to help facilitate. Laura Henigman notes that midwives were often considered the legal representative being the most common witness to a birth. During this time, "a body of law...provided midwives with an important role in the legal system, and midwives were often called upon to aid in the enforcement of sexual codes" (Henigman 95). This fact is important for numerous reasons. Midwives were often seen as a liason who helped connect the process of pregnancy to a male-dominated legal system. However, in this situation, midwives might not have been available to the type of women who tended to commit infanticide, namely lower-class, single servants. The process of monitoring the situation breaks down. These circumstances are extra frightening to Puritans when the pregnancy, and body of the baby, is concealed and dealt with in a way that is not condoned by societal, gendered expectation. There is a general fear of the "inability to police

[2] This fear of concealment is a historical one dating back to the "fear of concealment within the corrupt body of the English Church" which led to initial reforms of the Church and eventual immigration to other places (Hoffer and Hull 23).

unknown female activity" (Francus 101). For these reasons, the mother who has committed infanticide becomes a central figure of both curiosity and fear after Salem and moving through the eighteenth century. To many, a murdering mother becomes a "monster within, a constantly lurking threat to psychic security, the family, and social order" (Francus 102). Concealment laws are directly tied to this anxiety and codify in law the "forced disclosure of sexual relations" (Francus 96). The concern is not just sexuality, but also a body out of control that needs control and proper gendered expectations ascribed on them.

The idea of reading the maternal body and child birth through a political and religious lens of anxiety is one that is already established in America by the eighteenth century. For example, John Winthrop and John Cotton's treatment of Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dwyer's miscarriages reveals a tendency to politicize the female body with a focus on fear and inscribing that body with meaning. Through letters, sermons, and gossip, their "monstrous" births spread around New England as a signal of the women's moral failings and God's justice. Reverend and Doctor John Clarke writes to John Winthrop who records in his journal the details of the miscarriage:

> I beheld … several lumps, every one of them greatly confused … without form … not much unlike the swims of some fish…The lumps were twenty-six or twenty-seven, distinct and not joined together; there were no secundine after them; six of them were as great as his fist, and one as great as two fists, rest each less than the other, and the smallest about the bigness of the top of his thumb. The globes were round things, included in the lumps, about the bigness of a small Indian Bean, and like the pearl in a man's eye. The two lumps, which differed from the rest, were like liver or congealed blood, and had no small globes in them, as the rest had. (183)

This monstrous description through the lens of Hutchinson's own perceived sins against the community focuses on the absolute monstrosity of the baby. The description of the baby is one that is decidedly not human. Winthrop takes one of the most personal experiences a female body can go through and inscribes meaning for spiritual and personal reasons of his own. Mary Dwyer's baby shares the same fate with descriptions:

> It was of ordinary bigness; it had a face, but no head, and the ears stood upon the shoulders and were like an ape's; it had no forehead, but over the eyes four horns, hard and sharp; two of them were above one inch long, the other two shorter; the eyes standing out, and the mouth also; the nose hooked upward; all over the breast and back full of sharp pricks and scales, like a thornback* [i.e., a skate or ray], the navel and all the belly, with the distinction of the sex, were where the back should be, and the back and hips before, where the belly should have been; behind, between the shoulders, it had two mouths, and in each of them a piece of red flesh sticking out; it had arms and legs as other children; but, instead of toes, it had on each foot three claws, like a young fowl, with sharp talons. (Brekus 79)

The focus is again on a body that is so monstrous that it is not even human. There are several different types of animals that make the body that somehow has a face, but no head. The baby supposedly has claws, thorns, and horns on its body. In this manner, Winthrop makes public what would normally be a private event and attaches meaning onto the babies' and, therefore, mothers' bodies. These stillborn children become innocent victims who frame the women as messengers of disorder. The birth and body of the baby become the focus by which to ascribe meanings of fear, disorder, and proscription on the bodies of the offending mothers who have gone against gendered expectations. In the same manner, the women's bodies become

evidence of their own vulnerability to sin and the rotting spiritual state. In this case, the sins of the mother cause a deformed, monstrous baby to emerge. It is literally a physical representation of her sin. In many infanticide cases, the baby is not deformed however. The innocence of the baby as a victim serves to emphasize the monstrosity of the mother who has committed the sin. The body of the sinful mother juxtaposed with the innocence of the child victim read through the lens of religion is precisely the cultural situation that creates an interest in and need for infanticide narratives. There is a need to gain rhetorical control over these types of cases in order to ascribe meaning that serves the purposes of the spiritual leaders to control and inform the community.

Race and the Body

The last factor that needs to be considered in the process of untangling the rhetoric surrounding maternal bodies is the role that race plays in infanticide cases. Race is a dominating factor that could control who was charged, how harshly that charge would be carried out, and how their story would be told to the community audience. One cannot ignore the influence of race in determining experience with these cases. For example, Harris acknowledges that "black women were found guilty of the crime of infanticide at a rate one and one-half times that for white women, despite the fact that blacks (men and women combined) constituted only 3 to 4 percent of the New England population" (39). This gendered crime also holds a racial component due to culturally coded reactions to different races and ethnicities. There was a sense that "like the Irish, and to a lesser extent the Indians, blacks were portrayed as being naturally inclined to vice; lacking self-discipline and foresight, they required supervision and discipline, or else they could not refrain from falling into sinful self-indulgence" (Williams 52). These beliefs lead to very different experiences with trials

and what happens after the trials. Rodgers and Chamblit are read through their whiteness just as much as Garret for her Pequot background and Clifton for being black.

Joanna Brooks recognizes in *American Lazarus* that "in those crucial years of national formation, when whiteness assumed a positive legal value in the United States, blackness and Indianness were constructed in negative and oppositional terms" (45). Each woman is marked by cultural perceptions and legal realities according to their race. Just as Chamblit and Rodgers are marked by their whiteness, Clifton and Garret are viewed differently for not being white. Each woman's experience is filtered through cultural perceptions of their racial difference. Brooks also claims that "by adapting, politicizing, and indigenizing mainline religious discourses, African-Americans and Native Americans also established a platform for their critical interventions into early national formulations of race" (3). In other words, these types of texts not only allow a window of understanding into non-white experiences in Early America, but also become a way for women to have a platform that would not have existed in their everyday lives. Jodi Schorb, in "Seeing Other Wise" states that execution narratives are "some of the earliest ways Native Americans entered into American print culture" (149). Similarly, Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould acknowledge in *Genius in Bondage* that though many anthologies seem to state that African American literature starts in the 1830s and 40s, there is an earlier tradition that "is a literature of disasporic movement and cultural encounter" (1). However, Carretta and Gould explore the complexities inherent in this earlier tradition by admitting that "much of early black autobiography was spoken—rather than written –and transcribed by white editors who inevitably exerted a good deal of textual control…how then do we account for "voice" and "authorship" in a rhetorical process comprising black storytellers and white editors?" (3). This authorship problem includes execution narratives

that also have some early examples of recorded black experience through a filter of ministers, editors, and expectations. There is an issue of credibility and control in these cases that one must acknowledge when attempting to read them.

Another important factor to acknowledge is the history of missionary work and religion regarding race in Early America. Brooks discusses ideas of race and power by acknowledging how religion and race intertwine. She acknowledges that "It cannot be denied that Christian evangelization—as an adjunct or component of colonialism—disrupted traditional African and Indian systems of belief and worship. But it also must be recognized that many Native and African-Americans appropriated and reinvested Christian worship with their own distinctive spiritual and cultural values" (48). There is an evangelical background here that focuses on converting others with the intent of showing the power of God. It would be oversimplifying to ignore the influence of the pastors or just a religious influence over these texts. This Christian influence is, in many ways, a double-edged sword. It would be a mistake to dismiss these writings completely. For better or worse, the work of missionaries "provided a means by which Christian Indians could speak their experiences in ways that ensured their survival and continue to make those experiences available to modern readers" (Bross and Wyss 7). The depictions of the women is always filtered by views of race, class, and gender affecting how they are seen and how they may speak. In this case, we do have a script, but only a filtered one. However, "it is not enough to recover these texts from the archival tomb. We must also be willing to believe in and search out their meaningfulness, even if that search entails a reformulation of our assumptions about literature, history, race, and religion" (Brooks 11). These texts, even filtered through authorial confusion and uneven racial experiences, become a way to understand the experience of and perception of race.

In many ways, the experiences of these different women portray how much experience is dictated by racial perceptions within the culture. Paul Gilroy explores in *Black Atlantic* that there is "an inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas. The history of the black Atlantic yields a course of lessons as to the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade (xi). Though speaking of European and black identities, Gilroy proposes that trying to be both forms a type of double consciousness. There is a space between being in a culture and not at the same time. In some ways, that is the space that infanticide narratives portray. Marked by both race and transgression, the women in infanticide narratives are expected to defend a status quo that is simultaneously executing them. Through these narratives, we can read the experience of race, but also how each woman attempts to negotiate an identity living with the set of perceptions and realities associated with her race. Clearly, race was a significant factor that affected how each woman was viewed and how an audience would react to or perceive that individual. Their stories are shaped by the fact that race is a marker of cultural response where someone who is white will be viewed differently from other races. Like Tituba being viewed differently from Candy and Mary Black, the lived experience of various women accused of infanticide was guided by not only cultural views of women and bodies and religion, but also race.

Esther Rodgers: A Monument of Grace

The cases I have chosen show the various ways that ambiguity and rhetoric must be understood together in order to attempt to understand what the text is trying to tell us. Beyond this, the cases portray a spectrum of experience with every case providing a unique insight into the experience of the woman in the middle of an infanticide case. Like the so-called witches from chapter 1, there is a role to be played and a character to be developed and this

process lends us a glimpse into a cultural moment of negotiation. Within this negotiation, certain tropes emerge that help us to read these texts. Patterns of ministerial or judicial control, audience and context, racial tension, and ruptures from formula can be viewed in each text in a manner that reveals meaningful patterns at the same time as significant differences.

Esther Rodgers is the earliest popular infanticide case, becoming a prototype for the traditional formula for an execution narrative with her graceful acceptance of death. She was born in Kittery, Maine and later lived in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. She is kept in Newbury and Ipswitch jails, some of the same jails that housed the Salem witches. John Rogers bundles several types of documents together in order to create a book of materials covering her trial and execution that is published by B. Green and J. Allen and later preserved by Thomas Pringle in his library. The bundle includes input from William Hubbard, Joseph Gerrish, Nicholas Noyes, and Samuel Belcher in the form of introductions and notes to the reader. John Wise, a minister from a neighboring congregation, visits Rodgers and gives notes that are used for the bundle even though he is not credited for a specific section of the narrative. The single cover page bears the title “Death the Certain Wages of Sin” and does not mention Esther Rodgers by name. She is only referred to as a “young woman” who “was guilty of Murdering her Infant begotten in Whoredom.” It begins with a preface spanning three pages that introduces the general ideas of New England penitence and sin that will be the focus of the entire bundle that is signed by William Hubbard. A seven-page note titled “To the Chriftian reader” follows and is signed by Nicholas Noyes and Joseph Gerrish.

These introductory materials are followed by the bulk of the bundle in the form of three sermons. The first sermon is titled “"Death The Certain Wages of Sin to the Impenitent" spanning 38 pages, the second "Life The Sure Reward of Grace to the Penitent" spanning 43

pages, and the third titled “Holiness The Way To Bleffednefs” spanning 34 pages. These sermons were created during the duration of Rogers’ work with Rodgers during her time at the prison up until her execution. After the sermons, Samuel Belcher has a transitioning three-page introduction that more overtly incorporates the facts of Rodgers’ life. Rodgers’ actual narrative recounting her life spans 27 pages at this point with a four-page final prayer. The end includes a final page declaration emphasizing her courage and faith and, finally, a one page advertisement for Cotton Mather’s book titled *Christians Per Ignem*. Rodgers’ bundle of texts indicates a shift in form for execution narratives. Traditionally, the sermon would make up the entire text. Narratives, final confessions, and other texts became normal by the early 1700s. However, even with this inclusion of the narrative, prefaces, and introductions, the text was very much focused on the sermons which make the bulk of the bundle. Rodgers’ inclusion almost seems incidental when looking at the sheer breakdown of her first-person narrative versus pages dedicated to the sermons and other minister input. The introductory notes and prefaces created by other ministers also focus on Rogers’ work and the general ideas of sin and penitence rather than on Rodgers herself. However, despite this focus on Rogers and the sermons, there are still interpretive possibilities for Rodgers’ narrative especially when viewing the textual bundle as a whole. In this narrative, we see the process by which a minister attempts to create a symbol out of a real woman and, in this process, the rhetoric used and moments of rupture from this rhetoric create a space for interpretation and meaning.

The introductory sermons attached to Esther Rodgers’ case reveal a very traditional, biblical focus. In 1701, the focus was on these traditional areas rather than the growing

movement throughout the century toward more entertaining and personal forms.[3] The title page focuses on the concept of Youth with the idea that death is the result of sin as portrayed by "a Young Woman, who was guilty of Murdering her Infant begotten in Whoredom." The opening pieces by William Hubbard, Nicholas Noyes, and Joseph Gerrish focus on stating the importance of the sermons and the importance of reading and gaining their message. There is a special focus on the idea that Rodgers is an "unnatural Mother, and cruel Murtherer of two fpurious babes, the fruit of her own body." Here, she is an unnatural mother emphasizing how far her sin has taken her outside the expected norms of the community. This unnatural other is also guilty of murdering the "fruit" of her own body emphasizing how this is an unnatural moment to the point of needing three sermons over the subject matter.

The three sermons lay out, in a very general sense, traditional messages for a general Christian audience. The first one focuses on the idea of "Death" as the "Certain Wages of Sin" The sermon follows the traditional question and answer method used in traditional sermons using ample evidence from scripture to back up every point. There is not a focus on Rodgers in these sermons necessary or even a connection to a direct audience as we will see later in other sermons. Instead, the focus is on an analysis of scripture, laid out in fastidious detail. The language is very impersonal with statements directed toward general sinners who will enter "thofe Eternal Flames…without hopes of any Eafe or End" (38). The next sermon moves on from death and hellfire to Life as the reward of living a life with Grace. This sermon uses the same structure, but focuses on being penitent as the way to a better existence

[3] Sources discussing the trajectory of crime literature in America are numerous—see Black, Joel. "Murder: The State of the Art" *American Literary History* 4.12 (2000): 780-793. Print., Cohen, Daniel A. *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace.* Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2006. Print., Keetley, Dawn. "From Anger to Jealousy: Explaining Domestic Homicide in Antebellum America." *Journal of Social History* 42.2 (2008): 267-297. Print., and Williams, Daniel, ed. *Pillars of Salt*. Madison: Madison House, 1993. Print. for a beginning.

away from sin. This also extremely biblical sermon focuses on eternal life being gained through penitence. Though generally directed at the community, the only references to that community are statements such as "As it concerns all" instead of a direct or personal acknowledgement of the specific religious community. All examples used are scriptural examples rather than individuals of the community as commonly seen in future sermons. The last sermon finishes the journey through sin, life, and holiness by focusing on Holiness as the manner in which to earn a blessed life and afterlife. Using the same formula, this sermon focuses on a biblical explanation of how to reach a blessed state of being in holiness with God. There is the focus on the idea of "filthy souls" that need to stop "wallowing and feaking in your miry Filth" and the idea that death can come at any moment (97). There is a fear of death and also defilement through being filthy and dirty. The extensive sermons end with the entrance into Rodgers' actual narrative which opens with "This serves only to draw the Curtain, that thou mayft behold a Tragick Scene, frangely changed into a Theater of Mercy" (118). Performative, theatrical language combines with rhetoric to structure this as a theatrical moment focusing on the tragedy, but also the transformative properties that allow it to become about mercy emphasizing the possibility of holiness even for the worst sinners.

Samuel Belcher's introduction to the eventual first-person narrative from Rodgers utilizes rhetoric that is meant to frame how an audience receives this portion of the text. It is an introduction that frames Rodgers as a criminal who is performing her part properly. He begins by speaking of her conversion away from being "a poor Wretch, entring into Prison a Bloody Malefactor, her Conscience laden with Sins of a Scarlet Die" into being someone who is a "Candidate of Heaven" through "various workings" that are "Gracious and Powerful" (95). The rhetoric here is very clear. The focus is on her conversion through various workings.

She is not ever mentioned by name, but referred to as she or by various epithets as evidenced above. The title page for the execution narrative follows this pattern by only referring to her as a "Young Woman" while the biggest words on the page are Death, Life, and Youth. He never mentions her specific crimes—the focus is always on "the spiritual condition of the condemned criminal" (Halttunen 2). According to Halttunen, this shift in focus led to an emphasis on the importance of the beginning, early crimes of breaking the Sabbath and not praying or considering God enough in daily life. This shift indicates the focus on societal control. These facts help support the idea of the effacement of Esther Rodgers from an actual individual to a tool for ministerial social control. The choices in terminologies are colorful and poetic which matches the typical ministerial voice during this time period. Furthermore, this is an example of the type of terminology that is seen throughout the execution narrative including ones that supposed come directly from Rodgers.

Esther Rodgers, of all the cases I examine, has the most prolific inclusion of minsterial influence in her narrative. There is a preoccupation with controlling the message of the text. As Cohen states, "in all, the names of seven ministers appear in the little volume, each in one way or another involved in the proselytization and memorialization of Esther Rodgers" (61). Rodgers' text can be read as a reflection of historical and social changes where, instead of terrorizing their followers, ministers began focusing on conversion and fostering a stronger choice to be closer to God. In Williams' words, Rodgers died a "true saint" for the society (7). She is molded into this sainthood by the influence of many ministers who had a vested interest in her conversion and the selling of her as a symbol for the importance of communal piety. Knowing this background calls into question the first-person perspective utilized in the narrative recounting Rodgers' experiences and the call to credibility shaped by claiming these

words come from her own mouth. The narrative even ends with the ambiguous "some there present" claiming that they transcribed her final words (106). The bulk of the actual first-person narrative claims that it is from Esther Rodgers' mouth, yet certain parts slip into third person which disrupt the personal narrative confession. The rhetoric seems to indicate a voice that is far from 21 year old Esther Rodgers' with very little education. "And there I fell into the like horrible Pit (as before) viz. of Carnal Pollution" is extremely similar to the rhetoric that the minister Rogers and other ministers might have used to characterize sin (97). These similarities call into question how much Rodgers' own voice emerges in the midst of these other voices which, to some extent, had more control due to their ability to write and greater power in the social hierarchy.

Rodgers' narrative is a very clear example of a text being guided for a certain audience. The text explains that she becomes an apprentice at age 13 and "Had little or no thoughts of God or Religion, though Living in a Religious Family" (96). She then clarifies that, though given the opportunity, she was a "careless Observer of Sabbaths, and Hearer of Sermons; no Word that ever I heard or read making any Impression upon my Heart…Neither did I at all give my self to Secret Prayer, or any other Duty that concerned the Salvation of my Soul" (96). Though on trial for infanticide, this first part of the actual confession focuses on a very different subject than murder. Keeping holy days holy, opening the heart to Grace, praying in secret as well as public, and being concerned about her soul are the main subjects of import that seem to concern Rodgers here. Of course, an astute observer will acknowledge the fact that these were also central concerns that ministers of the time had for their communities. Emphasizing Rodgers' sins that could be shared by an entire community of followers serves a certain purpose over focusing on the more specific sin of infanticide. This

communal sin of not giving the soul, God, or grace enough respect or thought is established as the beginning for the sins that may erupt later as a result of her lack of care.

Furthermore, this imagined audience even becomes a type of character in the text. Belcher describes her prison stay as one where "Incessant Prayers to Heaven in her behalf" could be heard and individuals "Praying not only for her, but with her, in their own Houses, joining and turning their Private Meetings into whole days of Fasting and Prayer" (96). Ministers and the entire community came together to pray and help save Rodgers' soul. In the last portion, he utilizes one line to thank God before utilizing several to bless the tree in which Rodgers is hung. Here, amongst the obvious authors and voices, the community also becomes an important influence on the texts. This community becomes like a character in themselves which, in some ways, also influence Rodgers as much as the ministers. Of course, this community of peers would have included some people who would have never acknowledged Rodgers in any capacity before her arrest and performance as a lost and then saved criminal. In many ways, her arrest allows her to become visible and interact with various higher class individuals in the town. It is only after the arrest that, suddenly, their prayers and their meetings centering on Rodgers embrace the idea of Rodgers as a part of their community.

How did she feel knowing that so many private gatherings and days were spent praying for her? In some ways, Rodgers is given the power of recognition here with a following of religious individuals seeking a certain result from her. What choice may have existed for Rodgers other than conversion? How would she have been able to resist their pleadings and prayers? Her peers most certainly should be considered as playing an active part in this drama. It would be impossible to conceive this text without the community. Ignoring their possible influence would only simplify the situation even further. We cannot

know by facts what Rodgers truly felt in her situation, but this outpouring of support and calls for her soul in addition to the ministerial presence most certainly must have influenced her, her last moments of her life, and the manner in which this execution narrative was created and produced. The quick publication, for example, was in part to capitalize on this pouring forth of community support and interest.[4]

The narrative lets us know that, during Rodgers' 8-9 month imprisonment, she was very reserved when her ministers first visited her. This reservation is explained by stating that her "natural temper" was reserved as well as the fact that it was "judged" that the "power of Temptation" was still hanging over her (99). However, after some time she "obtained more freedom of spirit, and liberty of speech" (99). From this moment forth, she would delight in speaking of her sins and began having and attending many meetings in public and in private where citizens of the town would visit her. She begins to "delight in hearing the Word publick or private" (99). The community rallies for her and she emerges with a bit of a following.[5] She finds, apparently, much "sweetness in their society" speaking of the Christians who prayed for her and engaged with her during this time to the point of openly hoping that she would "be gathered with such at Death" (100). Here, she becomes an active participant in the community of followers who have embraced her. Williams states that she "displayed a sense of worth in death that they had lacked in life" (9). Though it seems somewhat dismissive to speak of her life before conversion in this manner, Rodgers does gain a certain power and

[4] See Chapter 1 of Cohen, Daniel A. *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace.* Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2006. Print.

[5] See an in-depth analysis of public sympathy and community in these types of texts and capital cases in the introduction and Chapter 4 in Boudreau, Kristin. *The Spectacle of Death*. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2006. Print.

position here that she may not have had before. With these words, the community becomes part of her conversion experience and Rodgers' experiences become a communal affair rather than a personal or private one. This description also codifies the proper way to behave as a criminal. Rodgers performs her role well by illustrating a true conversion, submitting to God and ministers, and accepting her own death.

All of the documents that create Rodgers' bundle of texts, preface, introductory statements, prayers, sermons, and narrative, all emphasize the idea that there is a possibility of salvation despite her sins. Though she is stated to be a "Dead Woman" the minister emphasizes the fact that she may "Live Again" (101). The documents, viewed together, illustrate the idea that this is about the community just as much as Rodgers. Rodgers becomes a vessel here for the transmission of spiritual meaning where Rogers "encourages his audiences to identify not only with Rodgers's sins, but also with her struggle for grace (Schorb 75). Her death, though intimate, also becomes that which reaches the community and is used to guide the community's spiritual health.

Interestingly enough, when creating Rodgers' story, one aspect that is not a central focal point is the fact that her children may have been from an interracial relationship with a black man. At the age of 17, she "was left to fall into that foul Sin of Uncleanness" which resulted in a baby with this man (97). The "Negro" man who impregnates her is, of course, not the focus of the execution narrative and seems mentioned only as a matter of fact. There is very little known about this man except for his skin color. In this manner, he is simplified down into just his skin color, but in a manner that seems to illustrate the lack of importance tied to the fathers in these narratives. Ultimately, it is Rodgers who matters in this narrative. Furthermore, the fact that she is impregnated by a black man is often glossed over or even

ignored when her narrative is analyzed. In this case, it could be an interracial relationship at play rather than her just being a loose woman described in the sermon. To the ministers, the focus is not on the father or his race. The focus is on the importance of delivering Rodgers as a symbolic message for the community. However, this inclusion allows us, as perhaps an unintended audience, to understand Rodgers' experiences in life. This one sentence allows a closer reader to, perhaps, view an interracial relationship between two individuals in Early America rather than just accepting the framework of meaning the ministers deliver to us as readers.

The focus, for ministers, is the creation of a sympathetic ideal; Esther Rodgers establishes the right way to accept death after sinning. Though offering a little resistance to God at first after being sentenced, Rodgers seems to embrace her role and fate in her story. However, like Garret, there she has a similar and very subtle moment of ambiguity. During the day of her execution, Rodgers chooses to walk to the gallows instead of riding in a cart. She walks as her followers and ministers' trail around her creating the perfect example of conversion making her way to her final resting place. Her peace only falters once. One of the individuals watching the procession and dictating the happenings observes that "she seem'd a little to flag and faulter in her pace; which, together with a sudden paleness of countenance occasioned, one of the Ministers observing it, to ask her, How did she now? Whether she felt any alteration?" (105). Rodgers explains that it was nothing but a momentary bit of fear and presses on. This moment of unrest is read as a momentary weakness of the flesh. We do not know what happened in this momentary pause or what crossed Rodgers' mind; her thoughts during this moment of weakness are private and lost forever. However, what we can do is acknowledge that even in this scene of being surrounded by ministers and other caring

Christians, Esther Rodgers' body and face indicate that she is not completely subsumed or erased by them. There is a moment where a silencing occurs, but in that omission the action seems amplified. In this moment, Rodgers' faltering implies a figurative stumbling away from a cohesive narrative that has her bravely and peacefully accepting death for her sins.

The terms of the conversion are clear here—she has been changed from a sinful wretch to a pious individual which assumes a certain amount seriousness and meekness in the face of her sins and the community. Her personality supposedly changes in order to match her new life as a serious convert. This portion is followed by her walk to her place of execution where she supposedly exuded a "Radiant Countenance" which also had an "old Roman Masculine bravery" (95). This comment is especially curious—Belcher characterizes this intimate moment of death with dual purposes. She is radiant, happy, and shining because she has received the grace of God. Likewise, she is as brave as Roman soldiers due to this same grace. The power of God is the main point here; however, his description of her death is one that imbues her power as an individual. She is on the same level as a male soldier with the same bravery and steadiness. The meekness and piety mentioned in earlier quotes seems to fade here a bit which introduces the idea of Rodgers as already having a plural, complex existence and identity beyond just a flat, cardboard character of ministerial social control. She is a woman who can be both meek and a soldier. The subtle shifts in her portrayal also indicate a ministerial control that is not a cohesive or simplistic one. Rodgers can be an ambiguous symbol guided and shaped by different impulses.

Katherine Garret: A Pequot Monument of Grace

Structurally, Katherine Garret's text is similar to Rodgers' with a focus on a sermon. However, there is a significant difference in the fact that she is a Native American woman who would have been, necessarily, viewed differently from Rodgers. Garret's 44-page text includes a sermon, narrative, and final warning. The opening execution sermon by Reverend Eliphalet Adams spans 37 pages, therefore the majority of the publication. Her narrative is a five-page third-person relation of the details surrounding her case. Finally, her first-person dying warning takes up a mere two pages. There is still a focus on the sermon that creates the majority of the text. Notably, the portion of the text that contains her words in first-person form is relegated to a final prayer that only spans the very end of the bundle. However, Garret's text, final prayer and narrative, is significant in that it portrays the experiences of a Native American woman. Garret's experiences would be different legally and culturally. She would be viewed differently by her community, by the legal system in place, and by the minister who attempts to create a symbol out of her. Her narrative exemplifies how these cases are not only about class and gender, but also how racialized bodies become symbols that require a different cultural response.

In many ways, Garret, in Katherine Grandjean's words, "must have seemed an awkward illustration of God's grace" (925). Being a Native American meant that her situation would have been perceived differently to the audience of the day compared to the white servants previously mentioned. There are quite a few criminal narratives printed about Native Americans and their executions could draw "staggering crowds" (Grandjean 936). Garret's own execution was said to draw a crowd that had never been seen before in New London. This popularity requires attention to the idea that these moments "provide a revealing glimpse into English colonists' attitudes toward the Indians among them" (Grandjean 926). While

execution narratives tended to remain under the same basic formula, there are "moments where the template is left behind, where fresh commentary bubbles up from beneath the restrictive structure of the execution sermon" (Grandjean 928). Each narrative is unique in its own way and, particularly, ones influenced by racial tensions necessarily have to be analyzed with this particular aspect in mind. By this time, a "bodily sense of "race" was clearly in place…Indian's skin color was firm evidence of his or her inborn inferiority" (Grandjean 942).

Jodi Schorb writes about Native American execution narratives noting that "to read these texts well, we need to consider them outside the genre of crime writings and within a longer cultural history of white fascination with the meaning of Indian death" (149). Quoting Laura Stevens, she notes that these types of texts have "'satisfaction and sorrow…inevitability and guilt'" as they simultaneously celebrate the conversion of heathen souls and mourn their passing" (149). Reading a Native American text at this time must be done in the context of a history of displacement, missionary attempts, and imperialism that occurred in America. With this history, the Native American at the center of it becomes a means to display certain ideological effects, but also "often used their role as vehicles of effect for different ideological ends, often to express persistent feelings of loss and displacement and to voice subtle protects against the effects of colonization" (150).

Part of the textual bundle that creates Garret's text is the sermon which reveals these tensions, but also a preoccupation with community and order even through the use of fear of what happens to Garret. The title page has the largest words being the typical "Sermon" and "Murder" The sentence focuses on this idea of her murder of her "spurious child" emphasizing the dramatic nature of the contents that will be inside the text. The initial proverb

that opens the sermon is emphasizes one clear fact being that there is mercy for absolutely no one who has "doth Violence to the blood of any perfon" (1). The immediate focus is not on general instruction in the ways of the Lord as with Rodgers, but rather a much more focused and spectacular setting about death, blood, murder, and the idea that there should not be mercy for those who do so. The sermon begins its focus on this idea of "Hatred and Enmity" that exists as a possibility within the "Nature of man" (1). This evil, however, is kept in check with Government and Laws that "Societies may be kept in tolerable peace and Order" (2). Without these laws, "there would be no Living in any *Safety*" (2).

This dramatic beginning establishes a very clear rhetoric for Garret's story. There is to be no mercy for sinners and the very existence of this evil threatens the safety of every individual. The law, which, in this case, can be considered to be the ministers and other men in leadership positions in each community, is the only safeguard against complete chaos in the form of evil corrupting the good. This rhetoric is similar to rhetoric utilized during the witch trials in that there is a real fear of vulnerable bodies and vulnerable spirits falling victim to this dark evil always swirling just beneath the surface. In this case, it is the bodies of Garret and her child that are inscribed with this cultural fear. One of the main points of the sermon is the idea that "Because thereby they Contribute to bring guilt upon the Land, to ripen it for & lay it open to divine Judgments" (15). The idea is that Garret's transgressions, and others like hers, are a pollution to the land and can rot the spiritual harmony of the land. The sermon continues to emphasize the idea that the only proper action in this matter is to execute Garret because "Life shall go for Life" as a way to maintain this peace and order (2). There is a desire for equilibrium that can only be gained through Garret's death. Adams's remark illustrates the obvious; it is he who has control over the presentation of Katherine Garret and

her words. However, control is always a fluid concept when it comes to creating a symbol out of a person publicly. In other words, "Garret's struggle to maintain her voice and demand full access to the benefits of the community that has assumed the right to condemn her pushes into Adams's narrative" (Thorn 104).

Though I will return to Garret's voice later, part of this order is sought through a concept of community being involved in the punishment and prayer for these sinners. Adams' sermon focuses on this idea of "Every one in their place…should contribute what is in their Power and lend an hand towards the bring of fuch offenders unto Juftice" (4). While this discussion might mostly mean those who are in the power to stay executions and such, there is a feel of general community coming together to root out the evil that the person has brought on the community. In this manner, the religious community becomes the body that is excising the rotten part and striving to continue a spiritual harmony that will hold the society together. Adams repeatedly speaks to the community as a whole in a person way speaking to every person or "Common Humanity" that "will bind us…againft the Odious crime" (5) and "bear their Teftimony againft the Violence that hath been done" (20). However, even though this idea of rising up against the crime, there is also a sense of communal prayer for the sinner. While the mercy may not save her life, there is a call to come together to "Infruct, Counfel, and Pray for them" with them being the sinner (6). The continual focus is on a spiritual community coming together in a personal way to help battle evil and pray for sinners through the use of fear tactics and rhetoric that is meant to inspire feelings of community. However, it is also clear that the focus on the crime and violence creates a narrative that isolates Garret instead of making her one of the community like Rodgers.

The sermon is much more specific mentioning "A poor Woman is to be Difpatched out of this world" and specifically addressing the spiritual community who has gathered for this specific occasion (26). He continues to talk of lesser sins against God that can add up to bigger sins, but affirms that his special emphasis is "*Lufts of Uncleannefs*, thofe *Sins againft our own bodies* and which are faid peculiarly to defile the *Temples of the Holy Ghoft*" (29-30). This particular sin is also said to be one that encourages murder through the urge to "*hide* their *Sin and Shame*" (30). In this manner, the special warning is against sins that have to do with the body and particularly lust. There is a focus, again, on the vulnerability of the body to outside sins. This body is one that is easily defiled and, in turn, defiles the religion as a whole. There is also a special preoccupation with the idea of hiding the sin through which the murder and, certainly, the hiding of the child fits into this category. Lust produces a defiled body which defiles the spiritual community and pollutes the land and also leads to this idea of hiding which only exacerbates the issue. This special warning chooses to situate this as the focus of the sermon with this message inscribed on the body of Garret. The rhetoric literally makes a spectacle of her defiled body for the community as a whole. Adams calls for people to "Come, not only to feed *your Eyes* with a strange and unufual Spectacle or gratifie *your Curiofity*, but to be afflicting as You may, to a perfon Juft upon the Borders of Eternity with Your good wifhes and prayers" (31). She becomes a sideshow, a message, and a benchmark for the community.

This anxiety and need to control a voice and symbol finds its way in other texts as well. The sermon, account, and dying warning that create Katherine Garret's story were penned by Reverend Eliphalet Adams, a white minister who guided Garret into being a proper execution story for an audience. Schorb notes that this tension in the text is what makes it so

difficult to read the voice of women like Katherine Garret. In her words, "the amount of formulaic content and the degree of editorial control that ministers maintained over Garret's texts create one of the most difficult interpretive challenges to reading both narratives and prompt us to question whether Garret's voice is in there at all" (151). The majority of the account is Adams' framing Garret before we ever receive Garret's own words. The sermon before Garret's narrative emphasizes the need for the laws leading to Garret's execution. He explains that "For this Reafon Government hath been Inftituted and Laws have been provided, that Injuries may Either be prevented or redreffed and Societies may be kept in tolerable peace and Order" (2). He continues to emphasize for many pages compared to Garret's actual words that "Doing Violence to the Blood of any perfon" is a crime that must be, necessarily, paid for with life" (10). However, there is ambiguity even in the ministerial voice that we see controlling Garret's text. Adams himself seems to question the idea of a credible voice as he gives an account of why witnesses are sometimes inaccurate in their accounts by saying that they "fometimes it hath been feen that Witneffes have ftifled and fuppreffed the truth in favour to them…there are falfe witnesses…Or they will fo foften their Teftimony that there fhall be no great force in it" (31). Adams himself seems to acknowledge the issues with validity of language, in which case he establishes himself as the authority to create meaning from Garret's life. It is him demanding that she and others "Beg of God to help you to Sorrow after a godly fort and give you that Repentance that is not to be repented of" (34). Even as Adams asserts dominance over the text, his own words deconstruct that control.

Adams' struggle to maintain control emerges in various ways in both the text and Garret's behavior. He asserts that "whatever Pride, haughtinefs or Self-conceit they may have Indulg'd in times paft, they muft lay it afide for the future and their high-looks will be brought

down" (22). He speaks for what they should feel at the same time as emphasizing the haughtiness and pride. While this is a typical lesson to not fall into pride, it is also significant due to Garret's own actions that are seemingly rebellious even beyond anything that Rodgers did. She is visibly shocked and angered by her own guilty sentence being read to her. She is also initially resistant to attempts to convert her to do penance. Her initial resistance is perceived as a weakness. This human weakness perceived through her body and behavior continues the day before her execution. She is "Exceedingly Overwhelmed and cast Down, It seemed to be the most *trying time* to her, during her whole Confinement" (42). Even more people visit her during this time in an effort to comfort her. Rather than being a stoic before her death, like Rodgers, she has a moment of hesitation. Immediately before her execution, she prays, though sometimes "the Expressions were more broken and Incoherent" (43). She is said to die "*in the posture of one praying*" with hands spread wide (43). We do not get to hear her broken words. These final words indicate possibilities for what Garret may have been trying to say. However, the creators of the written text, though including this detail, include another that should mollify reading this as a breakdown in her acceptance of her death. She dies like an angel. In some ways, this is the perfect way to die before the audience. Her body literally becomes the image of brave prayer in the face of Death and God's Justice. Her body is frozen into a symbolic position for all eternity in this narrative. The image of her moments before her execution portraying a downcast and incoherent woman deconstructs the symbolic power of her hanging body in this manner, however.

The last section of her narrative is a confession supposedly written by her own hand and spoken out loud before her actual execution. It begins like a series of acknowledgements thanking God and the Court for allowing her the time to "prepare for my Death" (44). There is

a focus on writing and books that is not as important in other narratives like Rodgers and Chamblit. This focus on writing and books does not just seem like tools for personal contemplation. As Schorb states, "Garret constructs reading as an opportunity for interpersonal exchange rather than private contemplation" (153). She "thank[s] God that I was learn'd to Read in my Childhood, which has been much my Exercise since I have been in Prison…The Bible has been a precious Book to me" (44). She also mentions the many books that have been lent to her while she is imprisoned and waiting for death. She deems these books as blessings that help her reach a place of peace before dying.

She has her own similar warning to young people as well. In what is marked as her own words, "I would warn all Young people against Sinning against their own Consciences; For there is a God that Knows all things. Oh! Beware of all Sin, Especially of fornication; for that has led me to Murder" (45). Though she later also warns against keeping the Sabbath, there are some significant differences here. The focus is on fornication as opposed to breaking Sabbaths or not praying privately. The sentences also seem more plainly written and straightforward compared to the many clauses and more Ministerial rhetoric in other execution narratives. In a warning to Little Children, she quotes the Proverb that illustrates that "the Ravens of the Valley shall pick it out, and the Young Eagles shall eat it. Little Children, Learn to Pray to God, Sit still on the Lord's Day, and Love your Books" (45). Though the focus is still biblical here, the violent imagery of eagles eating an undutiful eye contains quite graphic imagery compared to the suggestion to remain still. The message is not just to honor the Sabbath, but a call to remain passively still. Finally, she reiterates the love and possible benefits of books and being able to read them. The community here receives a

tale of learning rather than a tale of communal sin. Her narrative appears to give a different moral than the sermon that frames it.

With these factors in mind, Garret's transition from criminal into a symbol of grace and salvation is fundamentally different from Rodgers or Chamblit's. There appears to be more anxiety about how to manipulate public reception of Garret into one of sympathy instead of judgment. She is described as being part of the Pequot Tribe "Descended from one of the best families among them; in her Childhood she was put into the family of the Reverend Mr. WILLIAM WORTHINGTON, where she was taught to read well and to write &instructed in the principles of religion" (39). This statement reveals much about Garret. From this line alone, we can reconstruct a life for her that included not only race, but also class, gender, and her dire situation as a pregnant servant. We can better understand her resentment at being sentenced to execution in what seems like a hopeless situation due to her situation in life. This narrative, in a variety of ways, "[captures] the tense and often fragile world of white-Indian relations" (Schorb 156). Her situation as a servant and Pequot reveals greater historical tensions as well. Schorb explains that "she embodies an experience that is typical of eighteenth-century New England Natives: the process of loss and adjustment that accompanied large-scale population shifts from tribal lands into smaller enclaves in close proximity to English towns. During this time, the number of Indians who worked in the English towns and the number of Indian servants in white homes increased" (157). The intense focus on missionary work to convert Native Americans reveals that Garret actually held out longer than one might have suspected.

In many ways, Garret's text contains many of the same formulaic strategies apparent in Rodgers and Chamblit. There has to be an origin story that begins with a religious family

who did their best for these women. This rhetorical process helps gain more sympathy for them and illustrates the extent and ease to which sin can seep in and cause a fall from grace. However, in Garret's case, there is also the note that she is from the best of families from the Pequot tribe. There is a desire here to shape how Garret is perceived especially in a moment where Native American bodies are judged differently from white servants in similar situations. They portray her as having superior bloodlines that are further improved by a good education and household with a religious man. While Rodgers and even Chamblit have their moments initially rejecting the need for the ministers to save them, Garret's text shifts from outright rejection to how she "Lamented her neglecting to Improve the Advantages she Enjoyed, always speaking honourably of her Master, who was frequent in giving her good Instruction and Advice" (39). She desires to be baptized and fairly quickly settles into the ideal mold for a good conversion story. Grandjean argues that there is a complex racial negotiation happening within these narratives where racial prejudice sometimes works in contradicting ways with the idea of God's saving grace offering at least a conditional acceptance into "proper" society. Race is not "monolithic or inevitable" but rather "a product of a thousand choices, made silently by a quite ordinary public" (945). The racialized female body is one that must endure complex negotiations in a world of varying prejudices and a fractured cultural narrative. Garret must negotiate a situation where she has little power legally, politically, or against the perceptions about her racial background. Due to this, a reader sees her alternating between violent objections and eventual submission to the "right" way of life.

Garret also has her moment to warn others from following her down the path to sin and death. She warns servants "Whites or Blacks, to be Obedient to your Masters &

Mistresses. Be Faithful in your places and diligent" (45). This is a reiteration of the idea of a firm hierarchy and obedience to the role that you are born into. Knowing one's place and fulfilling your role within that place is the proper type of life to lead, no matter your race. Obedience to those who rank above you clearly develops a social hierarchy based on overall position in life. This is placed next to a statement that asks "Parents and Masters to set a good Example before their Children and Servants, for You also must give an Account to God how you carry it to them" (45). This is a curious addition to a fairly standard formula. The responsibility here is also placed on the so-called "winners" of the social hierarchy. Those in power are also held responsible for the type of example they give toward those not on power, namely children and servants. There is a sense that all must answer to God one day and that includes Garret, but also those surrounding Garret who played a part in her demise.

There are other more direct and active ways that the texts seem to stray from the standard formula. Part of what we receive from Garret's narrative and preceding documents is the perception of her behavior through others as witness. It is said that she expects to be cleared of guilt, but when her sentence is read against her she "was thrown into the utmost Confusion & Distress, Her Expressions were rash and unguarded and she scare forebore throwing blame on all sorts of persons" (40). This line admits that she expects a different result during her sentencing. This seems to coincide with the opening Sermon which, as established earlier, defends the harsh punishment against infanticide cases. The need for a rigorous defense indicates a certain level of sentiment growing against capital punishment. Garret's surprise at being given the punishment also indicates that it was not a guarantee that death would be forthcoming. In some ways, this type of detail seems to be focusing on Garret as not, at this moment, fulfilling what would be expected of her to be a model conversion. She

is shifting blame to others or wants to do so and does not bravely accept her fate for her crime. However, this moment also gains sympathy for her. Her immediate physical reaction is to lash out against her fate in a response that is very human instead of a sympathetic ideal.

Even with all of these moments of ministerial control, we have these brief moments where it seems clear that Garret attempts to communicate through the rhetoric of the ministers. For example, there are several moments throughout the text where her words are said to be "broken and incoherent" or the wind drowns them out. When she is found guilty, it is said that "Her Expreffions were fafh and unguarded and fte fcarce forebore throwing blame on all forts of perfons" (39). She is said to have "fpent in warm & Devout Addreffes to her Heavenly Father, till her breath was ftopt" (42). Jodi Schorb calls these moments "letters" that "miss their intended targets" (152). These are certainly ambiguous moments that Garret tries to communicate, but the message is not deemed cohesive enough to be included entirely in the narrative. However, just the mere mention of these lost words not recorded signal a break from a cohesive narrative or formula. Schorb, interpreting Krupat, proposes that these texts are "defined precisely *by* a process of limited collaboration and shaped *within* the nexus of colonial power dynamics" (153). As previously discussed, Garret's gaining of sympathy is necessarily tied to her existence as a Native American. The sermon and narrative, as controlled by the minister, must work to provide an image of a Garret who is sympathetic to an expectant audience. Garret's own words and actions, filtered into the text in brief moments of fracture, occasionally work against this sympathetic ideal, however.

Rebekah Chamblit: The Changing Law and Concealment

Rebekah Chamblit, out of the other cases examined, portrays the most anxiety over the subject of concealment that is at the center of cultural debates about infanticide at this moment. Though there are obvious patterns of similarity between all of the texts, Chamblit's story is shaped in a very different manner from other infanticide narratives in that there is a more overt, concerted focus on the dangers of the art of concealment and lying. This anxiety emerges as a result of the specific legal situation surrounding infanticide at this time period. She represents a transitional moment in the treatment of infanticide typically guided under the rule of the "Act to Prevent the Destroying and Murthering of Bastard Children" originally set in place in 1624 by a Parliament with strong Puritan leanings. In the midst of murdering mothers and devious witches, the aforementioned adopted Act is very simple and straightforward in its terms. In a time of confusion, brevity and simplicity must have seemed the best course of action. It is the only capital murder trial that did not require at least two witnesses to convict. Furthermore, it is an offense punishable by death whether the baby is born dead or alive. There is no need for action-based physical violence in this case to warrant death. The child almost becomes an afterthought compared to the greater sins of concealment and secrecy. A child being found dead is the same as the child being murdered. Execution was the punishment with very little ambiguity allowed. The covert nature of the act is the danger; in a community where women's bodies are symbols to be read, the act of hiding or denying eyewitness testimony is the sin. The rule left little to the way of leniency or ambiguity, which eventually leads to a growing lack of support for the Act. Chamblit, significantly, is the "last woman executed under its terms in Massachusetts" (Henigman 92). This signifies a shift in thinking that acknowledges a certain level of ambiguity in this law. The law is very strict and straight-forward in its terms with little ambiguity or space for different grey areas of

culpability. There is an increasing reluctance to enforce the rule across New England in contrast to the iron fist that once ruled through this Act and others.

Chamblit's texts also differ from Rodgers and Garret in that she has an additional text beside just the sermon narrative bundle. She does have the standard sermon bundle that includes a 4-page introduction to "Young Readers" by W. Cooper, a 60-page sermon by Thomas Foxcroft, and a 7-page question and answer session as Chamblit walked to her execution. However, the other text associated with Chamblit is a one-page broadside published by Samuel Kneeland and Benjamin Green, prominent Boston publishers specializing in legal and religious texts. Notably, the broadside format limits what we receive of her tale. Rather than the lengthy bundles of texts that included sermons, the reader receives a brief recounting of Chamblit's crime in first-person. We know little of Chamblit's life beyond what her final declaration tells us. She is a historical blank page with few clues as to the particulars of the end to her young life when she is only 27 years old. Traditional execution narratives, like Rodgers, Garret, and Chamblit, include a level of control exerted by lengthy sermons and ministerial rhetoric. In some ways, Chamblit's broadside frees the reader from that type of control. Though still religious in nature, the brevity of the text focuses what the meaning can be and emphasizes the gaps in knowledge that we have. In both a genre and legal sense, Chamblit's story portrays a shifting cultural landscape.

Chamblit's traditional text with sermon begins with several important choices made by Thomas Foxcroft. Rather than Murder, the focus of the title page is on the word "Death" of "An unhappy *Young Woman*" with an immediately sympathetic tone. This sermon is also more personalized with a focus on "Young Sinners" and helping them through the title of the bundle that is sold. The sermon is said to target a "distinct youth culture" (Henigman 100).

This sermon tract actually begins with Chamblit and a focus on this idea of concealing. The Statute of 1624 is actually copied and pasted into the tract with a focus on the idea that her "concealing the Birth" was the issue even though it states that it was just "afterwards found dead." This choice to begin with Chamblit and her sins of concealing that go against the law reveals the focus on concealment and the concern about the evidence surrounding infanticide cases. In this case, it is the concealment that damns her and not an actual murder having taken place. Nearly every sentence of this opening page focuses on this concept of concealment and defends the process used against Chamblit to convict her. It is the hiding that is the issue here. The sermon also focuses very much on these young sinners who may fall into similar deaths through concealment. It is focused on using Chamblit, called a "Dau'ter of Death," for this message and continuously refers to her instead of the Bible. She, supposedly, despite admittedly very short answers, asked the ministers to "caution Young People, not to have *their Life*, as hers had been, *among the Unclean*" (26). In this sense, the message is coming from Chamblit herself through the ministers as a rhetorical move for legitimacy of Chamblit's message. It is supposedly her message that is structuring this sermon for young people. Again, the focus is on the idea of uncleanliness that leads to lust and, therefore, the concealment of the product of those lusts. There is an earnest appeal for young people to both pray over the sermon and also embrace active involvement with their spiritual life.

The sermon also takes this personal tone referring back to Chamblit, but also immediately acknowledging the troubles of the text for young people. This beginning biblical quote emphasizes the idea that "They die in Youth, and their Life is among the Unclean" emphasizing a short life and a tragically early death just because they are living among the unclean (2). The general tone of the sermon emphasizes these points repeatedly—the tragedy

of dying young, which people can do at any point, while living in sin which no one wants to do. This is quite a different cultural message compared to Rodgers or Garret's. The general sense is that death can happen at any moment and that spirituality needs to be actively guarded against sin and corruption since "we are by Nature Children of Wrath, even as others; our Childhood and Youth has been Vanity, full of Sin and Folly" (6). This emphasizes a communal feel that emphasizes how everyone has a similar nature that leaves them vulnerable to sin and that only active battle against this nature can help save souls, of which can die at any moment. There is also a complete focus on this idea of hiding sins that repeats itself.

While focusing on the idea of uncleanliness, the emphasis is, again, the hiding of this sin that seems specially connected to lusts and uncleanliness of the body. This is particularly dangerous when it comes to sin and evil because it can hide the decaying soul until it is too late. The body can degrade as can the community through these hidden sins. It is only until it is too late that "the Mask is pull'd or thrown off, and it appears they were but whited Sepulchres, fair without, but foul within" (7). There is a focus on this idea of rotting within and paranoia of what can come from that which seems to manifest itself culturally through the female body and the mysterious process of childbirth. Among other common sins, there is also a focus on "lying lips" and deceit. Focus on the body and a focus on sins of "Uncleannefs" and particularly "Heat of Youth" that "Flefh is confumed, and your Soul deftroyed" (42). Focus on the body and sins of the body and "Bad Company" that can help drag otherwise pious people into sin. Secrecy, in particular, is deemed a "hellish Snare" that drags people into "groffer sins" (50). The section on secrecy is extensive. In general, the rhetoric indicates a fear of the weakness of the body leading to actions that weaken the soul.

This weakening of the soul and hiding of it produces negative consequences for the community as a whole.

After this extensive sermon, Chamblit's own voice is only heard in a very brief and not extensive answer and question session at the end of the text. While going to her execution, the minister asks her standard questions such as "Do you fee how juftly GOD may refufe…cry to Him now for mercy" to which Chamblit answers "Yes Sir, GOD might juftly refufe to hear me" (63). This brief question and answer session reveals Chamblit's desire to be saved by God, but hesitancy that it might happen to her. She admits that she is afraid and he tells her to hear his "good tidings…GOD is infinitely ready to pardon you" (64). She continues these moments of apprehension stating that "If I could but repent and believe in CHRIST" to which the minister pleas with her to give up the "obstinacy of your wicked heart" (65). The end result is Chamblit finally stating that she "know my own heart, I do…I feel the love of GOD flame in my Soul!" (67). This last minute revelation happens just as a side note mentions the gallows have appeared in view. Through Chamblit, a certain warning is given to the community and particularly other young people like herself. This message is gained through a sermon and this carefully set question and answer session that dramatically has her feeling the flame of God just as the gallows appear before her bringing her death. Chamblit's last words are said to be for Jesus to remember her, but her body proves otherwise. Like Rodgers, she has a moment of faintness where she "grew difordered and faint, and not capable of attending further to continu'd difcourfe" (68). This moment of fear is where her body speaks for her. The minister continues to pray and encourage her, but this is a disordered moment where the body seems to be resisting the previous discourse about being saved by God. Rather than the flame of God leading her to a secure and safe death, her body

speaks another story. One of weakness, of faintness, of fear, and of one that may work against the clear ministerial intent.

Rebekah Chamblit's narrative follows a similar trajectory of appealing to credibility with the overhanging idea of other voices in control with an agenda. It claims that this Declaration is "carefully taken from her own Mouth" (Chamblit). The Declaration is also "Sign'd and Acknowledg'd in the Prefence of divers Witneffes with a desire that it may be publifh'd to the World" (Chamblit). It is abundantly clear that the narrative is meant to be coming from her mouth and with a legitimate appeal by her to publish this word in order to help others. Like Rodgers, there is a similar focus on helping the young individuals of the society. The narrative says that Chamblit "call[s] upon our YOUNG PEOPLE in particular, to fecure an Intereft in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and in thofe precious Benefits He has purchafed for His people; for furely the favour of GOD, thro' CHRIST, is more worth than a whole World" (Chamblit). The focus is still extremely narrowed upon one concept and one seemingly similar role. It is the young people who need to be saved and need to be targeted for this special message. It is in youth that people are led astray from their focus on the Godlier side of the world. This drifting from God at a young age is the sin that leads to the greater sins as viewed by the society—the concealment of a lack of obedience to God which is, as constructed by her final confession, one step away from the concealment of dead children and eventual death.

Like her other discussed texts, the broadside inspired by her story establishes a clear discourse in order to transmit a message to the community through Chamblit by those helping craft the finer points of her text. However, stripped of the framing bundle of lengthy sermons, there is a different way to read this particular text. Thought still maintaining the traditional

formula, the broadside also illustrates a different type of appeal from Chamblit. Like the traditional text, Chamblit has a section devoted to lying indicating this obsession with the idea of concealment. She says that "the Sin of Lying I have to bewail, and wou'd earneftly caution againft; not that I have took fo great a pleafure in Lying; but I have often done fo to conceal my Sin: Certainly you had better fuffer Shame and Difgrace, yea the greateft Punifhment, than to hide and conceal your Sin, by Lying" (Chamblit). The focus on lying and concealment at this point is very clear. The crime becomes more rhetorical than just the act itself. Concealment indicates a preoccupation with the truth and control over woman's bodies and voices. The infanticide narratives, in certain ways, try to regain that control by controlling the performance of women's bodies in the eyes of the society. The greatest punishments of all imaginable are worse than lying to hide and conceal the shame of sin. There is a traditional idea to all of this where a close-knit society of open love of God is still the goal and people hiding anything are immediately placing themselves in the path of sin. Chamblit goes further to state that it is the best aspect of her life that her sin is uncovered. She admits that "had I been let alone to go on undifcovered in my Sins, I might have provok'd Him to leave me to a courfe of Rebellion , that would have ripen'd me for a more fudden and everlafting Defruction" (Chamblit). This being alone in the face of sin and not being uncovered and not letting the light pervade into the dark solitary existence courted by darker designs is what would cause an everlasting wound against her soul. This exposure of her sin and coming clean before community and God is what ends up being her salvation.

In a poetic moment, she claims that "I have had more comfort and fatisfaction within the Walls of this Prifon, than ever I had in the ways of Sin among my vain Companions, and think I wou'd not for a World…have my liberty in Sin again, and be in the fame Condition I

was in before I came into this Place" (Chamblit). Here, there is a contrast between perceived freedom versus the reality of what she is defining as true freedom. The prison becomes the place she can be truly free. This freedom with God only comes at the expense of losing her physical freedom. This returns to the idea of her needing to be watchful to avoid sin. The prison, perhaps, becomes this haven for her just for its locked walls. They keep her safe from sin's way at the same time as keeping others safe from her. This concept of true enlightenment only happening once confined continues in her next statement where she declares that "I had the advantage of living in feveral religious Families; but alafs, I difregarded the Infructions and Warnings I there had, which is not a bitternefs to me; and fo it will be to thofe of you who are thus favoured, but go on unmindful of GOD, and deaf to all the Reproofs and Admonitions that are given you for the good of your Souls" (Chamblit). Similar to the idea of freedom, deafness becomes a quality that she has while legally free. Once locked in prison, she regains this ability to "hear" the way that she is meant to be experiencing the world as a Christian.

She is particularly careful to warn "thofe of my own Sex" to "fubmit yourfelves to the Orders and Government of them" (Chamblit). She admits to the added uncertainly that comes from women being in these situations as opposed to men. There is more of a need to be watchful and to be watched over in order for women to avoid falling into these sinful traps. The call to submission is paired with this idea of her being symbolically deaf. She is deaf to the orders and control that are there to help her and not hurt her or suppress her pleasures. The control of religious households that likely would have had certain rules or expectations becomes the desirable place for young people to be to keep them where they need to be with God. This control and guidance is only something that Chamblit fully submits to after she is

physically forced by being put in jail. It is strange that it is only through strict restraints that sin is kept at bay and is no longer allowed to tempt Chamblit. Of course, this is symptomatic of a greater cultural discourse about sin and the ways to avoid falling into or being tempted by "carnal pollutions" that are so easily drifted toward even against your wishes. Concealment is only condoned when it is secret worship of God which should be practiced publicly and privately. She says that when she was innocent and younger she often "maintain'd a confant courfe of Secret Prayer for fome time" but "afterwards neglecting the fame...He left me" (Chamblit). God truly abandons her only once her private thoughts that used to be earmarked only for prayer for her own safety have strayed to other thoughts. She warns the general young people, again, to maintain these secret prayers in order to guard against slipping into sin. While public displays are desirable as well, it is not Baptism which keeps Chamblit pure for so many years, but rather the secret prayers which signify a willingness to eliminate too much freedom in any way. God is present in all thoughts, hidden or otherwise. This is in contrast to public displays that are not fully embraced in the privacy of home because "Vain companions" or thoughts are more fun. There is a clear discourse being established here that incorporates what would be an anxiety held by others in power at the time. The language illuminates all the key points that would have been a legal and moral concern of the time period.

Chamblit's broadside has a similar framing where she claims a similar good childhood before a common sin leading her into greater sins just like Rodgers and Garret. However, this similar framing reveals the beginning of a different type of narrative that portrays Chamblit as passive in her sin, but also innocent. The broadside proports that she was "very tenderly brought up, and well infructed in my Father's Houfe, till I was Twelve Years of Age; but

alafs, my Childhood wore off in vanity" (Chamblit). This is her origin story and it begins with love, tenderness, and good instruction in life until this childhood temporary time of innocence melts away into vanity. There is a relatable human moment here where she transitions from childhood into a different type of life as an adolescent when being good becomes more complex. However, she is still "under fenfible Impreffions from the SPIRIT of GOD; and I was awakened to feek and obtain Baptifm when I was about Sixteen Years of Age" (Chamblit). At sixteen, she is baptized and still embraces the word of God even though that early childhood moment of innocence has been lost. It is "two or three Years after this, I was led away into the Sin of Uncleannefs" (Chamblit). It is years after her Baptism that the first true moment of sin occurs. There is passivity to her tone. She does not choose sin, but is led away into it. There is a physical movement here to her words that describe not only a physical act of uncleanliness, but also a shifting of her spirit away from God. After this, Chamblit claims that she "became again more watchful, and for feveral Years kept my felf from the like Pollutions, until thofe for which I am now to fuffer" (Chamblit).

We are given a fairly detailed timeline here. If she is 27 at her death in 1733, then she had been sin-free in this particular matter for nearly a decade just by being more watchful. This portrays sin as something that needs to be actively guarded against. It is an active process to remain good instead of just a quality to have. This sentiment, of course, would not have been out of place with common religious beliefs. In these traditional, earlier narratives the focus is on sins that anyone could commit. By merely not being careful, sin can infest and take over even good Christians and lead to their imminent destruction. There is a similar structuring here that guides the text into being an adequate one for mass consumption. Chamblit is humanized in a manner that makes her appealing to a community and

sympathetic. The idea of the spiritual health of the community and the collective ability to drift away from virtue even with a good childhood and upbringing repeats itself.

Here, the broadside allows a space for Chamblit that is less apparent in her traditional, sermon-based text. Though the firm letter of the law is maintained with Chamblit, the words used to describe her crime insert a certain level of doubt breaking away from a cohesive narrative. This concealment and passivity extend themselves to the actual instance that warrants her execution. On May 5th, she "received confiderable hurt, which put me into great Pain, and fo I continued till the Tuefday following; in all which time I am not fenfible I felt any Life or Motion in the Child within me" (Chamblit). At this point, her pregnancy pains are something that she "receives" and she is unable to feel whether the child is even alive or not. There is a specificity here contrasted with the lack of knowledge. The date is named and the specific types of pain while she is performing a certain chore, but she does not know whether the baby is alive or not and the pain is something to be received passively. She finally delivers her baby on May 8th while alone. She does not "perceive Life; but ftill uncertain of Life in it, I threw it into the Vault about two or three minutes after it was born; *uncertain* I fay, whether it was a living or dead Child; tho' I confefs its probable there was Life in it" (Chamblit). There is a back and forth to this testimony that simultaneously asserts ambiguity at the same time as embracing that that ambiguity does not truly matter. She is problematically alone when giving birth and again cannot tell whether life exists in the baby or not. This process of thinking is repeated multiple times from before birth and after. She does not perceive or cannot be sensible of life existing in the tiny male infant form. This is a significant point just for its repetition. She does not think the baby is alive and perhaps this hesitation to move past this moment seems like a particularly human moment. She repeatedly cannot sense life

supposedly in the form of movement or sound. If there was movement or sound, then would this narrative have ended differently? Would she have been able to throw the baby callously down the Vault if the baby had moved? There is no way to know with absolute surety, but this moment of hesitation almost seems like a moment of hesitation over how important this fact seems to be. Disposing of an already deceased child is, at this moment, legally still worthy of the same punishment as stopping life in a live child. There is no perceived difference between the two. However, the emotional difference must have been significant for the mother and perhaps also public perception. This ambiguity inserted in the text seems to close itself after a moment of reflection. She immediately "owns to the Juftice of GOD" and admits that there probably was some life in the child (Chamblit). Chamblit is executed on this note and the word "probably" seems very telling. Her body and her experience are used as a performative spectacle for a specific purpose. However, this purpose ends on a "probably" signifying the uncertainty of the moment and the slippage between certainty and symbolic power within the culture.

Garret and Rodgers both have moments of ambiguity where important thoughts or words are glossed over for the purposes of the text. Ruptures and ambiguity, however, can occur in a variety of other ways as well. Chamblit and Alice Clifton both illustrate transitional moments where there is even question marks surrounding the nature of their crimes and punishments. In the move toward more moral and legal ambiguity in certain crimes such as these, Chamblit remains as a symbol in the battle surrounding shifting views about guilt and responsibility in matters such as ambiguous infanticide cases where there is no proof that the baby was alive when born. She is found guilty of the felony of "concealing the birth of her fpurious Male Infant, of which fhe was Deliver'd when alone in the Eight Day of May laft"

(Chamblit). The beginning of her sermon makes very clear the terms of the original laws against infanticide. It is the concealment that is problematic. It is the hiding of the birth alone that signs her death warrant. This transitional narrative begins with a focus on the traditional concept of concealment earmarking the felony capital case and not necessary just the death of the baby. The broadside, as a separate text not framed by endless sermons, develops an image of Chamblit who is able to be even more ambiguous and sympathetic by, at the very least, denying her active participation in the death of her baby.

Alice Clifton: A Black Slave's Experience with an Unjust Court

Alice Clifton's narrative is different from these other texts due to the fact that we only have a trial transcript from her and, coming in 1787, she is the latest of the four examples discussed in this section and at the tail end of this genre in general. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, two paths begin to emerge. More trial transcripts appear, such as Clifton's, at the same time as fictionalized stories begin to explode in popularity, which will be the subject of Section 3. This impulse toward trial transcripts is sometimes seen as a movement for more facts and transparency when dealing with infanticide cases. As Clifton's case reveals, however, facts and transparency are tricky subjects when it comes to infanticide narratives. The concept of voice as discussed in the previous three examples is problematic as well. In Clifton's case, there is no call to credibility by utilizing her own words. In fact, her words are not even included except through secondhand testimony. For Clifton, the textual bundle has been stripped away and what is left is an ambiguity-filled trial transcript instead. Eleazer Oswald publishes her trial transcript spanning 16 pages with no cover page in various bookstores around Philadelphia. It is bundled with two other trials. The trial of James McGlochlin for breaking and entering spans two pages and ends in his being found guilty, but

let off with fees and a warning to be more careful about the company he keeps. The very last short paragraph briefly recounts Frederick Erdman's trial for burglary where he is found not guilty for lack of evidence. Alice Clifton's trial transcript comes at the end of the eighteenth century and exposes a nominal desire for facts at the same time as the reality of being not only female and criminal, but also a black slave accused of a crime.

Clifton's trial deconstructs the idea that trial transcripts may give more facts and transparency than other crime narratives. The transcript does not include any of her own words except through second-hand retellings from other witnesses. These witnesses often cannot even agree amongst themselves about what happened. These ambiguities lead to gaps in the narrative that present certain interpretative challenges and expose the experience of a black slave in an unforgiving legal system. As a trial transcript, the focus is not on transforming her into a figure of God and grace, but instead illustrating guilt. She is not called to testify or give a statement. The various voices and testimony that form an important component of the text create not just legal ambiguity, but also expose ambiguity surrounding the performance of gender and race. Viewing these discrepancies and potential mitigating factors portrays just how much they do not matter in the grand scheme of charging a slave for a child's death. The actual judge in the situation speaks directly to the Jury with his own opinion at the conclusion of the trial. He acknowledges the mitigating factors, but then ultimately claims that, though it is their decision to make, that the evidence is not necessarily enough to prove that the baby was born dead. He states that even if the child was dead, her actions showed that "fhe exerted them unpitying, and void of maternal affection" (12). He clarifies that, under the law, "whenever a fingle or unmarried woman was delivered of a child, and attempted to conceal it, the bare concealment was made conclufive evidence againft the

mother, that fhe murdered it, unlefs fhe could make it appear by one evidence at leaft, that the child fo concealed was born dead" (12). However, even with this acknowledgement of a shifting perspective away from just concealment equaling guilt, he professes that "this law has long been deemed to favour of feverity" (13). Though showing both sides of the debate, his language seem to reinforce an idea of severity and judgment against Clifton for her choices as a mother. Furthermore, we see Clifton at the center of a shifting legal landscape where concealment is no longer proof enough to get a murder indictment. However, even with this shift, in three hours the Jury came back with a guilty verdict. A call for a new trial is rejected and Clifton emerges with a final death sentence. There is a fracture in this case where there is not only, like with Chamblit, confusion over whether the baby lived or not, but also a cultural battle is going on whether it mattered or not if the baby was alive. The contradictory testimony and statement from the judge create a fragmented narrative that seems to contradict as much as inform.

The perception of racial and cultural difference seen with Garret is echoed with Clifton. There are many witnesses who create her text instead of herself. Examining her text is an exercise in gaps and silences; we can only view Clifton through the words of other people. Their perceptions of her play into the text that is created and that we receive. There is less overt manipulation of her into a symbol of grace or salvation like with the other narratives. There seems to be a more vested legal interest in how her trial is shaped for others. The audience in mind here may not be the entire community or a community drifting from God, but rather a narrower focus on a legal ambiguity about the importance of whether the child is living or dead at the point of its concealment. The judge takes a more direct stance directing

the Jury and, therefore, the legality of the issue at hand. He states that there can be no solid proof, but that this fact did not always matter:

> The concealment of the child, as I have already remarked, was deemed fufficient of its being murdered, though the Courts and Juries in England and here, for this many years, have always required fome circumftantial evidence befide, or they acquitted the prifoners; and this law has long been deemed to favour of feverity. Therefore the Legisflature have latered the law in this refpect, fo as to make it correfpond with the already eftablifed practice of their Courts of Juftice, and have recquired the fecund degree of circumftantial evidence to convict the prifoner. (13)

This sets up her trial as an exploration of the ambiguity where more emphasis is placed on severity instead of leniency which leads to a firm guilty sentence with no chance of a new trial. The different circumstances lead to a different imagined audience and, therefore, a more specific and narrowed rhetoric that guides the text. Here, we see more legalistic and scientific language. Of course, this is not to say that it is devoid of morality. The undercurrent in the rhetoric still highlights the same concerns with the need to punish women for not properly performing a gendered role of motherhood. However, there is less overt sermonizing or focus on the entire community as audience for this transcript.

Clifton, like Garret, also reveals the differing experiences depending on race and class in infanticide cases. Black women accused of infanticide rarely received the same treatment focusing on conversion as white women or even Native Americans. Sharon Harris illustrates this difference through the example of Bettee, a black slave who was executed for infanticide with no proof that a baby ever even existed and executed immediately where others would

have received months in jail to convert. The value of black lives and black children are clearly perceived as different from white or even Native American lives. There is little trying to create a godly martyr out of a black slave. Alice Clifton is a fairly clear example of this tendency. Occurring in 1787, this execution narrative is affected not only by time, but also by culturally encoded responses to her race. This narrative never takes the form of an execution narrative and remains just a set of trial transcripts. The focus is on the gory details of the baby's death rather than any spiritual or even moral reaction to the case. Where others have at least pretended to be unfiltered, in this case we mostly have other people's voices. The transcripts include experts giving opinions on the crime and, at times, saying what Alice Clifton said, but not in the form of her actual voice coming out in the transcripts. This is in stark contrast to narratives previously discussed. Most importantly, examining the trial transcripts in contrast with the execution narratives before compares women that in significant ways are similar (gender and crime) and in other ways could not be more different. These texts stand as evidence to a fragmented cultural narrative of race.

However, interestingly enough, Clifton is not executed. A note records that some time afterward her sentence is "respited by the Honourable Supreme Executive Council (Gross 17). This is a curious move that could be interpreted in various manners. Though, in some ways, Clifton is given less of a voice and less of the benefit of the doubt compared to the other discussed cases, in other ways her slave status may have helped her retain her life. It is possible that her owners stepped in and requested or influenced a change in the sentence due to her being their property. The loss of Clifton would mean a loss of labor and capital. A similar tendency happens during the Salem witch trials where every slave goes back to their master after the trials avoiding what might seem like a clear case of execution. In some ways,

their positions as property win out over their positions as criminals. Their lives are valued in a monetary way that complicates their position in a criminal case whereas someone who is not a slave, like Chamblit and Rodgers, may be more valuable for their symbolic value through execution. Each narrative is crafted in a manner that reflects upon the perceived value and meaning placed upon each woman's race. In this manner, race guides each text and reading each text helps recreate culturally encoded responses to racial bodies.

Even with these factors changing how we can read Clifton's case versus the others, there are still similar moments of ambiguity that create the possibility that Clifton's voice exists even in this convoluted text. Clifton's case is rife with ambiguity that helps to deconstruct the cohesiveness of her tale. The text bluntly details that she "with a certain razor….did, in, upon, and acrofs the throat of the faid child, felonioufly, wilfully, and of malice afore-thought, did penetrate, and cut, with the razor aforefaid, one mortal wound, of the length of four inches" (1). The transcript is immediately geared more toward details about the actual crime that are very bluntly stated with a focus on scientific fact. However, with these specifics also portrays embedded assumptions inherent in the language used in the text. The people assume that the baby was alive and that there was "malice" involved in the "murder". The use of rhetoric is clear here and marks her as a malicious body deserving of punishment.

It is here that we start to receive a filtered version of Clifton's story told through other people observing and quoting her. John Leacock begins the trial by stating that Clifton says that she cut the infant's throat in order "to prevent its crying" (1). A few lines later, Leacock clarifies that she also claims "fhe had done it by the order or exprefs command of the father of the child" (1). Of these facts, Leacock states that he is "not positive" (1). This is an

ambiguous beginning to a serious court case. There are already multiple reasons for the violence against the child. These reasons are supposedly quotes by Clifton, yet the qualification of not being positive throws even these statements into question. The father is also named as John Shaffer, a white man who lives nearby. The power dynamic in this situation is important. As a slave, she would have had no power over her own body in the eyes of the culture and legal terms. The very power dynamic is so uneven that it emphasizes just how much a consensual relationship between a slave and free white man cannot be equal. Shaffer is never called to testify and never has to account for his actions legally or otherwise. At one point, he is said to have promised her freedom; however, he is able to walk away at the end without keeping any promises or facing the consequences that Clifton has to face. Furthermore, "the legal system responsible for punishing Clifton itself bore no small measure of culpability in the circumstances leading up to her child's death" (Gross 18). The legal situation for a female slave left her sexually vulnerable and at a distinct disadvantage if a pregnancy did occur.

Returning to the testimony, through Leacock we know that Clifton declares repeatedly that "[the baby] was born dead" (2). On one level, this statement asserts Clifton's innocence in the matter of murdering her baby. On another, it serves as a legal tactic to soften the possible sentencing against her. Mary Bartholomew, her mistress, states that there was no blood on the baby when she found it indicating that the wound did not bleed as if done on a living body. She also testifies that Clifton suffered a fall down the stairs soon before giving birth indicating the possibility of a stillbirth due to that trauma. She also very firmly claims that if the child had been living and cried, then she would have heard it being located directly underneath where she gave birth. All of these factors seem to problematize a picture of

Clifton murdering a live child. Miss Mary Bartholomew portrays a similar picture with no blood, no visible wounds, and another possible manner of death when she explains that Clifton told her that "ſhe faid ſhe had laid on it, but could not help it" making it an accidental death rather than deliberate one (4). Doctor Jones further testifies that the "size and appearance of the child, I faw enough to convince me that it was not born alive" (6). Though the Doctor is convinced that the child was not developed enough to be alive when born, the Attorney-General repeatedly tries to convince him that he may be mistaken and that some children are smaller. Doctor Faulke confirms his medical opinion that the baby was most likely not living when it entered the world. The multiple versions of the story and uncertain language filtered through others reveals an ambiguity over what type of crime, ultimately, has been committed. Each person has a slightly different story that they supposedly witnessed or heard from Clifton herself.

The transcript ends with shades of truth rather than a truth being established. It is significant that her story comes in the form of a narrative that never even allows her own voice to be heard except filtered through others. This fragmented narrative that has clear political leanings and excludes the voice of Clifton completely is important because it reveals much about a black slave experiencing the legal world of eighteenth-century America. Through this text, we can read perceptions of maternal bodies in disorder, but also perceptions of racialized maternal bodies. We can read her voice through inferences from the facts that we do have, the gaps in testimony, and witnesses reiterating her continued denial of guilt. No matter how convoluted, this is a transcript that records the experience of an Early American black slave and the perceptions of her by her community.

Rhetoric and Maternal Bodies

Through a close analysis of the patterns, language, and silences in infanticide narratives, a prism of voices emerge. There is a pattern of performative moments and guiding perceptions that lead to the fragmentary texts that still exist today. To understand each bundle of texts requires a careful negotiation of the various voices and contexts that would have influenced them. There are voices in power trying to influence a community under their control. However, the community or audience exerts their own influence. Furthermore, this is not to diminish the importance of the actual woman at the center of these texts. Acknowledging and exploring these ambiguities and ruptures in the narratives provides fruitful means of analyzing complicated texts. These are moments where a cohesive text following a certain formula reveals how a concrete formula cannot exist when dealing with human beings caught in extremely complicated cultural situations. These moments are often glossed over like Rodgers' stumble or Garret's omitted words and physical reaction against her sentencing. There is a level of ambiguity introduced where an audience or even the woman herself may not even know if her baby was alive or not.

A cohesive narrative fractures and, in those fissures, one can see humanity. Not only the humanity of the woman at the center of the text who cannot be boiled down to formula, but also the humanity of the culture with shifting laws and a desire to control the rapidly changing and often confusing world around them. These ruptures in the bundled texts provide brief moments of significant meaning that expose a fragmented culture within a controlled formula. Rodgers, though in some ways establishing the formula, also leaves clues as to her life experiences including her choice of partner and faltering before her execution. Chamblit refuses to admit complete guilt at any point, obscuring her ability to be a perfect symbol of piety especially in her broadside. Garret's text reveals multiple instances of her attempting to

communicate even if the actual words are not transcribed. Through second-hand accounts, we can construct a narrative of Clifton that records her experience and salvages her voice in the midst of the convoluted and ambiguous trial transcript. The patterns and ruptures reveal cultural perceptions of not only sin and behavioral expectation, but also racial and gendered lived experiences. They reveal how the creation process of a text involved not just one person, but a litany of different voices and influences. All of these strands of meaning intersect in the cultural site of the murderous maternal body. The intersection of all these interlocking moments produces a fragmented cultural narrative rich in its diverse and fluid possibilities for meaning. The rhetoric in these texts reveals how the maternal body was both feared and controlled. The cultural situation was one where gender and penance was supposed to be performed once marked by criminality, but cultural perception of this ritual is influenced by race and class. The process is also deconstructed by the human element, both with the women and the audience working with and against the control of the ministers guiding these texts.

Section 3

The Fictionalization of Elizabeth Wilson's Body

In 1785, a news item emerged in the Pennsylvania Journal that explained how a traveler made a gruesome discovery after his dog "brought out the head of a child in his mouth" (Williams 148). It is in this brief, but memorable beginning that the future central figure of "one of the melodramas of the early American republic" emerges (Tufts 149). Elizabeth Wilson's eventual execution for infanticide triggered a whirlwind of attention that led to the sensational story spreading through gossip and oral retellings throughout the region. It also warranted multiple published retellings of the story each with their own nuances. The newspaper account and the subsequent announcement of her execution nearly a year later were dramatic enough to capture the attention of the public, but sparse enough to leave people wanting more. There was a demand for details and a desire for explanations. Various publishers exploited this demand in a manner that leads to the greater fictionalization of her story. While my previous section explores multiple women's stories of infanticide told through the course of the eighteenth century, this chapter does the inverse and explores the same woman's infanticide story told multiple times through different genres guided by different authors with different intentions. Reading Wilson's various texts reveals a movement away from concerns about a real, physical body to an idealized character more embedded in the rise of fiction and sentimentality in the late eighteenth century. This movement, punctuated by an overall trend toward sentimental fiction, involves a significant shift in rhetoric including a movement away from religious rhetoric to a more plot-based narrative that increases the importance of elements such as details of the actual crime and creates a cast of characters to help connect to an audience moving away from traditional religious texts.

Coming at the end of the eighteenth century, Elizabeth Wilson serves as a bookend to a century of execution narratives, noting a shift away from the traditional sermon bundle to another, more sentimental type though still grappling with legalities involving female bodies and accepted behavior. The formula from earlier narratives still exists here. She is a young girl who has a positive origin story and later falls into sin because of a man who corrupts her down the path to unwed motherhood and destruction. The same major themes emerge in Wilson's texts compared to earlier ones. The cultural milieu of the execution narratives and Salem witch trial transcripts also emerges with Wilson; there is still an anxiety over female bodies and controlling the behavior of those female bodies, and there is still a gendered, racialized, and class-based reaction to Wilson. However, the focus is more geared toward fiction in a way that attempts to claim the rhetoric of these types of texts while also increasing the existence of such elements as plot, including an increase of characters and focus on emotionally gripping sensationalistic details. There is a shift with Wilson's texts that moves away from conversion or carefully controlled ministerial accounts to a fictional world where it seems like everyone has the chance to claim Wilson's story. This analysis of one narrative retold many times through the genres of newspaper, narrative, ballad, and fiction gives a different perspective than examining many different narratives with a similar subject like I analyzed in earlier chapters. These genres move aggressively away from the sermonic tradition established in Section 2. The genre shift seen in Wilson documents a transition from a spiritual and legalistic examination of body to a fictionalized and sentimentalized one. In other words, as Schorb describes in "Hard-Hearted Women," "the earliest narratives encouraged audiences to feel like the woman on the scaffold—to identify her soul as their own and her imminent death as their own—later narratives constructed the woman as a sentimental object of pity" (305). In this manner, the performative

power of female criminality shifts here to one that focuses on character and plot. This power and energy emerges in different ways depending on the desired effect and genre of the specific retelling. In this manner, Wilson is the singular figure who illustrates an evolution of texts surrounding female criminality, important for its shift away from ministerial control to editors and writers who saw the popularity of these types of narratives and their cultural resonance. This shift in authorial control sets in motion a different type of text emerging, all of which can be traced in the publication history of Elizabeth Wilson.

The first narrative published about her story is *The Faithful Narrative of Elizabeth Wilson* published in 1786 by Hudson printer Ashbel Stoddard two days after her execution. This 16-page execution narrative follows most closely the traditional types of infanticide narratives examined in my earlier chapter. The title page claims that a "friend" requested this document though unconnected to the case or Wilson. The text has a three-page third person general introduction to the case before breaking into a 10-page first-person narration of Wilson's story. The last three pages include her final prayers supposedly transcribed from papers left by her. This edition "surpassed the standards of its genre" by going through at least 3 editions within a year (Tufts 149). More editions were being published even into the early 1800s. This extreme popularity helped fuel even more curiosity and desire over Wilson's story. Ezekiel Russell, in 1786, published *Elegy &c*, a one-page broadside ballad that survives only as a fragment. This translates Wilson's story into a ballad, changing the genre significantly from its original form. A footnote advertisement notes that this ballad is a promotional teaser for another, completed narrative of her story that either never happened or was destroyed with time as no known copies exist. This ballad exists as an advertisement that serves to shape Wilson in a certain way to be appealing to an audience. It is here that more sympathetic language begins to develop around Wilson

especially compared to the earlier execution narrative and newspaper articles. The story lingers in popularity and attention leading to Boston printer, J. Wilkey, releasing *The Victim of Seduction!* This 12-page narrative published in 1802 continues to transform the case in ways that move it further away from the sparse or unflattering earlier versions. This sensationalistic tale changes her name to Harriot and continues the lasting effects of this story as it ripples through the community. Here, the now-named Harriot becomes an even more sympathetic figure with a clear focus on her relationship with her family including her tragic brother's last attempt to save her life. Separated by time and distance from the other depictions, *Seduction!* is the most fictionalized account manipulating every detail of the story in order to appeal to an imagined female audience.

All of the texts together portray the process by which Elizabeth Wilson transforms into a character who is meant to appeal to an audience in an intimate, emotional manner rather than just being the symbol of a sermon. Her story, told through multiple genres, reveals much about both the purpose behind the formula of these genres and the specific alterations made once the control shifts from ministers to editors and other writers who create a different female criminal for the same audiences. As time progresses, there is less of a focus on the actual physical body and fears concerning it and more of a focus on emotions and idealized types of characters. There is an increased focus on plot which, coincidentally, also increases certain elements of the crime that were ignored or just touched upon in earlier texts such as, notably, the man involved. There is a clear trajectory in these texts that allows Wilson to transform from cold murderess to increasingly more sympathetic. This sympathy is gained through shifting rhetoric emphasizing her as more feminine, her family as more loving, her as closer to her brother than she really was, and by villainizing her seducer "Deshong." The published texts develop a story that makes a

community question if she should have been executed at all. This shift in theme and focus lay the foundation for texts that more closely follow a style of sentimental fiction and wronged women. It is after death that she received the sympathy lacking in life through her brother's efforts and the "romantic speculation which popular retellings of her tale imbued her" (Tufts 172). Strangely enough, the texts and events surrounding her death eventually make her "a sympathetic victim of male cruelty" even as a "convicted murderer" (Schorb 302). This is a stark contrast to traditional tales where the focus would most definitely not even hint at the real problem being male cruelty.

The same cultural tension surrounding women's bodies still exists here; however, there is a fundamental change at this point guided by increased sympathy for the woman that allows for a very different narrative to be told. It is significant that the cultural narrative surrounding this story progresses to a place that allows for Wilson to be a sympathetic victim rather than face of communal sin or disorder like in previous execution narratives or the witch trials. This shift allows Wilson to be a victim in a manner that incites, potentially, an audience being on her side rather than quietly accepting and participating in her execution. The further away from rhetoric attempting to control actual physical bodies, the closer the audience gets to a sentimentalized, emotional connection to the female character at the center of the story. This fundamentally changes the relationship between audience and subject of the text and allows for different possibilities when analyzing female criminality in text and rhetoric. The bundled sermons and religious language slowly disappear to make way for a novelized, sentimentalized character who is different from the symbols of communal sin seen in earlier, more traditional texts.

Cultural and Narrative Changes

When examining the scope of infanticide narratives, the second half of the eighteenth century leading into the nineteenth century is characterized by two competing impulses. The increase in newspaper and trial transcript publications helps to create a different manner of telling these stories and transmitting facts about them. Toward the second half of the eighteenth century, Daniel Cohen notes a shift toward trial reports that supposedly clarified or at least exposed ambiguities in cases and, at the same time, an almost paradoxical increase in sentimental fiction. Alice Clifton represents the first impulse with just a trial transcript representing her story. Wilson portrays the second impulse that leads to a focus on developing plots and sometimes imagining facts that would fill out a plot for a story that might have before remained firmly in the realm of sermon and scripture with tales like Garret, Chamblit, and Rodgers. There is a greater focus on emotions and, due to this greater focus, a greater focus on also controlling the emotions of a reading audience who calls for a greater development of characters even in the absence of actual information.

Through Wilson and her texts we can view the process by which infanticide narratives and narratives about female criminals in general "shifted from the pulpit to the market," as Williams describes in *Pillars of Salt* (43). A commercialization occurs that also leads to greater sentimentalization and a greater focus on vice or titillating details. For these reasons, the stories began to focus more on "dramatic plot" and how that plot plays out (Williams 46). This is in contrast to the earlier infanticide narratives like Esther Rodgers. These early execution narratives were not necessarily concerned with plot so much as they were interested in spiritual concerns leading to bundles of texts that consisted of mostly sermons or other scriptural talk. With this shift comes certain changes to how the stories are told. In Williams' terms, "What readers were

told and when they were told were manipulated to intensify the literary experience of the text, increasing the potential for imaginative involvement" (49). Publishers manipulated texts to appeal to the largest audience possible in a manner that encouraged the dramatization of vice and increasingly dramatic characters. This shift results in an increased amount of time spent developing the actual criminal in a manner that expands their individuality. In this manner, the criminal, in theory, was meant to connect to an audience in a different, more personal way than just being the face of communal sin for the area. In Williams' words, "the condemned criminal, regardless of guilt, was no longer just another hellbound sinner whose personality had been effaced for ideological reasons. Through narrative progression, readers became involved in the personalities of the criminal characters" (19-20). Cultural shifts made this appeal drift from scriptural tales of virtue to more dramatized accounts of deception, mayhem, and much more graphically described murder. At this point, there are more expectations from the audience for how a narrative should read. In Wilson's case, the bare details eventually expand to a more typical plot that had everything to capture the attention of the community. These filled in details include more explicit mentions of sex, a mystery man/villain, deception, the graphic murder of two infants, a pardon received moments too late, and more details about the woman in the center of the maelstrom.

Social Upheaval and the American Revolution

The American Revolution[1] is a historical event that helps shape this transition that we see illustrated through Wilson's texts. This major historical event, much like the numerous Indian

[1] The research, historical or otherwise, concerning the American Revolution is immense. For the purposes of this section, I have narrowed my focus to those issues and texts most related to my subject matter. To start with more general, historical texts about the Revolution, start with the following: Bonwick, Colin. *The American Revolution*. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1991. Print. Countryman, Edward. *The American Revolution*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003. Print. McIlwain, Charles Howard. *The American Revolution: A Constitutional Interpretation*. New York:

Wars and Salem, alters the course of publication as well as the utilization of female criminality in publication. Multiple theorists, including Julia Stern, Daniel Williams, Cathy Davidson, and Perry Miller note that the Revolution led to a greater focus on authority, justice, and independence in both the consciousness of the people and in fiction. In Jane Tompkins' terms, there was a clear shift to focus on politics and independence that saw writers seeing themselves as "shapers of public morality; and not only that, they saw themselves as helping to guide the ship of state as well" (45). There was a need to shape culture and respond to "the extreme instability of political and social life in the years immediately following the Revolution. It was not clear in the 1790s whether there would be a United States next year or the year after" (Tompkins 47). This uncertainty creates a focus on authority and relationships between citizens, authority, and freedom. These impulses can be read in the rise of sentimental fiction. The shift to sentimental fiction is not one that necessarily tries to capture the truth or true events. Tompkins explores the idea that "because the function of these scenarios is heuristic and didactic rather than mimetic, they do not attempt to transcribe in detail a parabola of events as they 'actually happen' in society" (xvii). In other words, this focus on authority and freedom can emerge through such texts as sentimental stories, utilizing the performative space of female criminality for a different purpose.

Julia Stern furthers this concept of a focus on emotions instead of facts:

> Rather than viewing the trauma of post-Revolutionary separation as a condition from which to retreat in some kind of reactionary return-to-the-womb of mother country,

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De Capo P, 1973. Print. Morgan, Edmund S. *The Birth of the Republic, 1763-89*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2012. Print. Morton, Joseph C. *The American Revolution.* Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 2003. Print. Patrick, John J., ed. *Founding the Republic: A Documentary History.* Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1995. Print. Raphael, Ray. *A People's History of the American Revolution.* New York: The New P, 2001. Print. Wood, Gordon S. *The American Revolution: A History.* New York: Modern Library, 2003. Print.

> Rowson crusades against the pain exacted by independence by transforming sorrow into an ostensibly enabling—because democratic-precondition for the future. The sacrifices exacted by the Revolution—symbolized by Charlotte Temple—and the work of mourning they inspire thus allow for the reimagining of the American polity as a body that is both more cohesive and more inclusive than its pre-Revolutionary avatar precisely because it is grounded in the sympathetic affective relations of its members. (37)

Here, sentimental fiction is inspired through the Revolution to encourage a different type of relationship with the women at the center of the stories and, therefore, the American community as a whole. Wilson's progression of texts help to illuminate this process as she shifts from traditional symbol to more sentimental character.

Williams also expands on the idea of the Revolution changing the relationship between those considered in authority and the people. To Williams, it was during this time that "a cultural climate evolved that generally distrusted any expression of absolute or unmediated authority" (20). Concurrent with this shift, Williams also notes penal reforms that shifted away from public humiliation and capital punishment to more emphasis being put on reform and incarceration. These changes cause a shift to more complex and sensationalized characters. This is not to say that earlier texts about female criminals were not sensationalized at all. However, there is a significant shift here about what is sensationalized. Instead of a focus on spiritual conversion and fear of disorder, the focus of texts in this historical moment sensationalize the actual details of the crime, the characters involved, and the harshness of authority.

Davidson continues this idea of the shift toward fiction:

> The emergence of the novel was part of a movement in the late eighteenth century toward a reassessment of the role of the "average" American and a concomitant questioning of political, ministerial, legal, and even medical authorities on the part of the citizens of the new nation who, having already accepted the egalitarian rhetoric of the Revolution, increasingly believed that the Republic belonged as much to them as to the gentry. (44)

This is a concern that is particularly related to women. Davidson states that "in almost all the sentimental novels, we see women dominated by larger social and economic forces, controlled by selfish parents, sadistic husbands, or strong-willed seducers (117). There is a firm sense of the legal restraints placed on women that lead to the types of situations that emerge in sentimental fiction. In this manner, the Revolution was a site of change that spurs a transition in how female criminals were discussed. My interest, in particular, lies in this shift and the significant changes that occur to the female criminal when transitioning from traditional texts to sentimental fiction. The fears of the body played out over female criminals eventually gives way to a portrayal of a female criminal who does not even seem criminal. She becomes an individual as a character in a set of characters increasing certain plot-based elements while eliminating other elements such as sermons.

The Personal and Historical Records of Wilson

In situations like these, it is often impossible to separate the fictional woman who appears and the actual woman that existed. None of the texts give many background details about Elizabeth Wilson. Furthermore, there was a "thin historical record" that is imbued with "embellishments that were added to her story over time" (Tufts 153). However, an understanding of what records do exist concerning Wilson can help give perspective on the types of narratives

that emerge surrounding her story. What we do know can be traced through independent records and an understanding of the historical time period. Historian Meredith Peterson Tufts attempts to recreate the early life of Elizabeth Wilson through a knowledge of the Quaker religion[2] and details that we know about her family and herself through records. Elizabeth Wilson is born in 1758 and joined her three brothers, John Jr, William, and Ephraim. Early life was likely not an easy one for Wilson. Her father's standing in the community as a drunk led to issues such as him being disowned by the Church in addition to continued poverty and economic instability. In Tufts' terms, "Wilson's drinking and disownment may not have affected his family's religious standing, but it likely resulted in some degree of economic uncertainty and social isolation. His home was not a happy place" (155).

The Quaker influence on Wilson's early life should not be underestimated. As Tufts explains, there was a system set up where the male head of the family provided land and money to their daughters and sons. This, in turn, set the children up to be attractive in the marriage market which was largely guided by Quaker interests in practical and successful matches that would bolster the Quaker community. This fact means that the Wilson children would have had to earn their own way into the marriage market, which would take significantly longer than wealthier families. Marrying a non-Quaker meant an automatic disavowal by the community. Women who did not have the amount of capital to make themselves attractive to proper suitors often found themselves in precarious situations. They either had to choose between "sinful men,

[2] For more on the Quaker religion in early America, please see Barbour, Hugh and J. William Frost. *The Quakers*. New York: Greenwood P, 1988. Print. Beneke, Chris and Grenda, Christopher S., eds. *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2011. Print. Gragg, Larry Dale. *Migration in Early America: The Virginia Quaker Experience*: Ann Arbor, UMI Research P, 1980. Print. Levy, Barry. *Quakers and the American Family: British Quakers in the Delaware Valley, 1650-1765.* New York: Oxford UP, 1988. Print. Nash, Gary B. *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania, 1681-1726.* Northeastern UP, 1993. Print. Peters, Kate. *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.

parental objection, or celibacy" (156). Of course, on this note, it is not like Wilson could just remain single forever. Without family support, Wilson had to support herself or marry an undesirable mate. Employment, of course, was limited as well. There were not many options available and the ones available often paid very low wages. Under these terms, the Wilson children had a shaky position within their early religious community. These biographical details begin a story that establishes a certain background for Wilson. From the beginning, there are economic issues and these economic issues breed other problems as well. There is instability from all corners, familial, economic, and communal. This instability[3] and details about her life help shed some light on her behaviors during the trials and changes that are made to the story of her life.

By 1779, when Wilson is about 21 years old, the New Garden Women's Meeting minutes note that she "hath so far given way to Temptation as to be guilty of fornication" (157). This fornication results in a child born out of wedlock. At this point, she is essentially disowned by the Meeting though they do at least make an attempt to counsel her about the matter and keep her in the community. She chooses not to appeal the decision and, at 21, finds herself disowned from her position as a Quaker like her father.[4] Her pregnancy leaves her in a very precarious position.

[3] By 1775, the unstable family found itself in further turmoil. Records indicate that by this point Wilson's mother was likely dead and at least two brothers were listed as freemen which means that they would have been considered separated from their birth family. Wilson requested a removal from the New Garden Monthly Meeting. This was a monthly meeting between members of the faith who had power over certain aspects of the members' behavior such as making decisions about behavior that needed correction like alcoholism or other business-related decisions made within that faith community. This served administrative and business purposes for that area. It was granted which indicates that she is still in good standing at this point. She might have done so because she was employed by Josiah Wilkinson, a farmer in nearby Chester County, East Bradford. However, the details are unknown

[4] A lot of ambiguity surrounds how the child was produced. The members of the counsel blame her for her choices in bringing about the child. However, "her resistance to an admission of guilt suggests other interpretations" (Tufts 158). These interpretations are widespread and, for the most part, lost to history and time. It could be that Wilson just did not find her actions wrong especially considering the circumstances that led to her being essentially not marriage material in the Quaker marriage market . She may have thought she was in love. There are also far more

Even if she could appeal and repent herself back into the Quaker religion, she would not be able to marry which leaves her vulnerable, still poor, and needing to have some form of employment to support herself. A few years later, Wilson lived in Philadelphia, a place "a few miles distant but worlds away from rural Chester County" (159). Philadelphia is a huge seaport city at this time with an influx of "international people, commerce, and ideas" (159). Theoretically, this should have provided new opportunities for Wilson with a new community and different ideas from the strict Quaker community she left behind. However, this is not the case. The same employment issues follow her here where many women struggle to support themselves through various forms of domestic service. The wages are extremely low and many positions are only short-term. It is extremely common to barter "casual sexual access for money or material goods to supplement their income from low-paying, uncertain employment, or, indeed, for mere survival" (160). The living situation would always feel unstable, uncertain, and, at any moment, survival would be difficult to maintain.

The existence of a boisterous seaport community and accompanying pubs illustrates social issues of the time that also reveal insights into the lived experience of Wilson and individuals like Wilson. Wilson resides at the Cross Keys Inn which would have been close to the waterfront and considered a place to socialize for lower-class individuals. There is resentment against these people and establishments from so-called upstanding community members due to the lack of "republican moral restraint" shown by their actions. This booming seaport community results in a "tenfold increase in the number of illegitimate children in an adult population that had tripled" (160). This population explosion comes with all the issues that

sinister possibilities in the form of sexual coercion or rape. Whatever the circumstances did not matter to the members of the counsel, however. The end result is still her being disowned from a community she had followed for all of her life.

typically come with a rapidly changing populace. Money and supplies are scarce. There are many poor trying to climb socially. Differing belief systems collide in the midst of a population boom with many illegitimate children. This all happens within the context of a society that is still conservative in many ways. The conservative elements viewing this chaotic production of children and parties must have felt at the very least uncertain about the future and results of this population boom.[5]

In 1784, Wilson is pregnant again with twins which likely led to her being asked to leave the pub she lived in. Employing or even having an unwed mother at the place of business would not be allowed due to perceptions over reputation. She must leave again and, significantly, does not return to her father, but rather Josiah Wilkinson, a former employer. It is here that she gives birth to her twin daughters. She leaves for Philadelphia twice after that claiming that she is returning to the city before being arrested in Philadelphia after the bodies of her infant girls are found near Wilkinson's. She initially denies killing her children, but admits that she abandoned them. For almost a year, she sits in Chester Jail while being visited by many different clergymen from the surrounding area. She maintains her innocence in the murder of the infants throughout this stay. She apparently "did not reveal her background…whether out of bitterness for her father's disownment and her own, out of shame for the way her life turned out, or out of fear that disclosure of her past might cause the ministers to lose interest in her" (163). For whatever reason, she sets herself up to be someone who has no firm root in any type of religion. She faces a jury that has twelve white men the majority of which have a Quaker background and likely

[5] For more on Philadelphia see Weigley, Russell F. *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*. Philadelphia: Barra Foundation Book Series, 1982. Print.

would have known who she was. She "faced this formidable array of men alone" due to her being unable to afford representation (164). They likely would have known about her father's alcoholic tendencies and her own previous illegitimate children leading to a particularly unsympathetic jury. In Wilson, they might have seen all of society's tensions illustrated in her. There are many factors stacked against Wilson as she goes to trial which also contribute to the harsh sentencing that she receives.

An understanding of the records that do exist and the historical situation of women in this position are important to understanding Wilson's situation. The concealment statutes that we see being an issue with Rebekah Chamblit and other women accused of infanticide are also at play here. In Wilson's case, "her status as an unmarried woman meant she was susceptible to prosecution under the "concealment statute," passed in England in 1624 and incorporated into Pennsylvania law in 1718" (164). An unmarried mother faced legal issues such as these as well as damaging perceptions about herself. As Tufts summarizes, "implicit in the law was the belief that pregnancy outside of marriage could be so ruinous for a woman that she would attempt to hide not only the pregnancy, but the birth, and would kill her child in order to conceal the consequences of her unchastity" (164). This assumption induces a belief in guilt or probable guilt before innocence. Single women often faced the worst of this law and others like it where there is a perception that murder is a very easy step to take once having a baby outside of wedlock. Being charged with murder was actually a more lenient charge than being charged with infanticide under a concealment statute due to legal protections that assumed innocence at the beginning of the trial.

This is a similar concern seen in early execution narratives and especially Rebekah Chamblit, discussed in Section 2. Single women, under concealment laws, could be found guilty

if the prosecutor was able to prove "that a child belonged to the mother; that it was illegitimate; that it had died; and that the death had been concealed" (165). Under this concealment statute, state of mind, premeditation, or outstanding circumstances do not matter at all. Under these rules, it really did not matter if the baby was stillborn or murdered and the burden of proof is placed on the woman to prove innocence while facing this unsympathetic male jury alone. These laws were not entirely popular in America or England. Even in legally ambiguities, many juries could see the "inherent unfairness" in the law (165). This lack of popularity increased as the 1700s progressed with fewer women being tried or convicted under the statutes. The ambiguity surrounding the concealment situations and a growing sympathy for mothers in this situation made the statutes used less frequently as the nineteenth century approached. However, this statute was used far more frequently "by colonial legislatures than any other, reflecting not only their concern for public morality and social order, but the underlying economic burden to the community that unmarried mothers and illegitimate children represented" (165).

It is telling that William Bradford,[6] Attorney General for Pennsylvania at the time, decides to try her under the concealment statute. This choice meant that he intended to go for the death penalty instead of a charge for a lesser crime and lesser punishment. Even though Wilson had some mitigating including the fact that she did not conceal the pregnancy, birth, or children up until their deaths, she is still found guilty even under a fairly unpopular statute. It is impossible to guess why Wilson received such harsh sentencing. It could have been what she and her children symbolized as the population boom of illegitimate children grew. Tufts theorizes she was convicted under the statute because of a combination of the jurors having personal feelings

[6] William Bradford is a lawyer and judge from Philadelphia who served as the Attorney General for Pennsylvania from 1780-1791 and became the second United States Attorney General from 1794-1795. Oddly enough, he later helps Thomas Mifflin, the governor in 1793, to reduce the use of the death penalty in Pennsylvanian courts.

about Wilson and also possibly her unapologetic appearance and demeanor in court. It is while waiting for the death warrant that Wilson supposedly begins to write statements that call for mercy and repent for her crimes. Records indicate that William, her brother, assumes her guilty until she states the story of her lover killing the children. He seeks a stay of execution once this development occurs. It is here that we are introduced to Deshong, the mystery lover about whom history has no actual details. William claims that he finds the mysterious Deshong, but the stay of execution emerges just a bit too late. Wilson is hanged on January 3 1786. The facts of her life reveal that she led a "marginalized, insecure existence with little prospect of improvement" (173). She is also the last person in Philadelphia executed under the concealment statute. Widespread legal reform particularly of concealment statutes spread by the 1780s into the 1790s with such acts as An Act Amending the Penal Laws of This State in late 1786.[7] Though treated harshly during her trial, her set of texts reveal an increasingly sympathetic portrayal of her story. It is after death that she received the sympathy lacking in life specifically through the fictionalization of her tale including sensationalizing her brother's efforts to save her life. It is in the retellings of her story that she gains the cultural power of "romantic speculation which popular retellings of her tale imbued her" (172). Strangely enough, the texts and events surrounding her death eventually make her "a sympathetic victim of male cruelty" even as a "convicted murderer" (Schorb 302). It is through her life, her real lived experience and the

[7] This Act, and others like it, required more evidence of infanticide in order to gain a conviction especially through needing evidence of a live birth. This Act is one of many that portray a transition in legal and public sentiment about infanticide cases with a move toward the need for more evidence and less focus on the death penalty. For more on laws in general in Pennsylvania see Marietta, Jack D. and G.S. Rowe. *Troubled Experiment: Crime and Justice in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2006.

rhetoric surrounding the various retellings of her story that reveal the changing cultural perceptions of female criminals and the shifting need for them as cultural symbols.

The First Account: Newspaper Sensationalism

Beyond the scarce records that exist in Wilson's case, the first text that we receive of Elizabeth Wilson is the newspaper article that details the basics of the story. Newspaper articles, on the surface, may seem like the type of text that constitutes more facts than fiction. However, newspaper articles often combined fiction and fact in a way that caught readers' attention and, in many ways, become a unique blend of creativity and facts just like execution narratives. It is in this genre that the first introduction to the community to the story of Elizabeth Wilson occurs. The initial article, published on January 5 1785 by *The Pennsylvania Journal*, states a brief and sensationalistic version of the events:

> About a week ago a woman was committed to Chester gaol, on suspicion of murdering her two sucking infant twins, whose bodies were found under some brush, a traveller passing by, observed his dog searching among the brush, and presently after brought out the head of a child in his mouth. This induced his master to [a]light, and examine further, when he found the bodies of the two innocent babes, who had been put to death not long before. The woman was charged with the murder, which she denies, but acknowledged having placed the children by the road side, in order that any person passing this way, and who had humanity enough, aught take them up. The head which the dog brought out had been cut off; and the woman was seen sucking the children near the spot but a little time before the bodies were discovered. (Williams 148)

This is the first public record the community receives of Wilson's story and the first introduction to the story that would later explode with popularity and gossip throughout the country. The newspaper article is very blunt and sensationalistic in its reporting. There is a focus two different times in the 147-word blurb that describes the child's head being separated from the body and found by a dog. There are also assumptions made even in this tiny portion of text. It is immediately assumed that the babies had been "put to death" without considering possible mitigating circumstances that could have caused the injuries seen. The babies are left out by the road by the here unnamed Wilson who claims that she wants "someone who had humanity enough" to take care of them. She admits part of the guilt just by admitting to putting them by the road, per the concealment statute that she is tried under. The blurb also directly places Wilson near the babies right before they are discovered. The story is dramatic and sensationalized in a manner that already assumes guilt on Wilson's part in the death of the babies.

A year passes with no newspaper articles detailing Wilson's experiences or court case. However, a year later after her execution, the same newspaper concludes the story:

> On Tuesday instant, the woman who was tried and convicted at Chester, of murdering her two bastard children, ten weeks after birth, was hanged at the place, pursuant to her sentence, the respite given by the honorable Council having expired. (148)

These two newspaper articles form the "official public narrative" of her life in a manner that portrays "both the disruption and the reassertion of the social order" (Williams 148). The conclusion is far shorter and more to the point than the initial article. At this point, there is no desire to imply guilt or innocence. There is no immediate impulse to sensationalize or make the story more dramatic for a public. There is a quick forty-word blurb that reminds people who "the

woman" is and briefly mentions her execution after a respite granted for some time from the Council. These public documents that lay out the bare bones of the case indicate a general structure for the texts that are to come. Behind these limited words lurked a communal desire for more of the story. This blank page becomes open for interpretation and many individuals immediately take part in the fictionalization and commodification of her story. The sensationalistic, but sparse language used in the newspaper representations of her case opens the playing field for reinterpretation and possibility.

A Tale Caught Between Cultural Moments

The Faithful Narrative of Elizabeth Wilson is released only two days after her execution, displaying a desire to strike quickly while people were still interested. It is in this text that we see the most similarities to earlier execution narratives. If only this text existed, Wilson's story may just fit neatly into other accounts of mothers who commit infanticide. Though mostly still traditional, there are significant shifts in rhetoric that foreshadow the eventual creation of a different type of text to utilize female criminality. Her role is expanded compared to earlier execution narratives and this early text in the development of Wilson as a character portrays this transformation especially when compared to the other texts that emerge. This narrative is a complex narrative fighting between facts, fiction, and lingering scriptural influence. This text, published in 1786, reveals the steady progression away from religious rhetoric and ministers interpreting physical bodies as symbols of communal concern to a more plot-based and sensationalistic story dominated by authors and editors. The third person beginning to the text focuses on the shocking details of the crime and details leading up to her conversion and confession while in prison. It is through this sensationalistic filter that a version of Wilson's voice emerges through the fictionalization of the account. Though her parents are apparently a

good influence over her, Wilson claims that she falls into the sin of fornication and has three children by the time she is 21 without being married. The sin of fornication is what she says is her downfall though naivety might as well be her main downfall according to the narrative. Throughout the end of her life, she remains firmly in denial of accusations that she murdered her twin infants. There are a few notable differences here compared to earlier execution narratives like Esther Rodgers. Wilson's narrative is, in some ways, much more dramatic than Rodgers with a graphic description of the murder of the infants and more focus on the twists and turns of the story. In other words, the salacious details have been amped up in a clear sign of the change of times and genre. Wilson also always denies actually harming the children, which is in contrast with earlier execution narratives placing emphasis on confession and accepting guilt as part of the ritual process. Denying guilt, in earlier execution narratives, would have been a sign that a soul had not been saved. You could be accused of having "fearful stupidity" or otherwise harassed until you owned up to your crime (Harris 31). There is a significant change that happens in this shift. Where earlier texts were focused on the soul and the soul as metaphor for community, the progression toward the nineteenth century began a movement away from the scripture-heavy details of religious conversion to sensationalized and sentimental forms of writing meant to sell to a very wide audience. This movement away from ministerial control allows Wilson to proclaim her innocence to the end and still be seen as a sympathetic or even tragic figure. This change creates a different type of cultural space that allows for clearer ambiguity into the possible innocence of the female criminal as well as a greater focus on the motivations of the woman at the center of the case.

Wilson's narrative also includes two pieces of writing that are supposed to make the audience feel more intimately connected to her. There is a portion that claims it is copied

verbatim from handwritten notes she left as well as a confession that is supposedly transcribed from her exact words. Many of these cases do not have handwritten letters or notes and relied solely on the process of dictated words.[8] The mix between oral story and handwritten in her case is similar to the claims of authenticity made in earlier texts like Rodgers and other execution narratives. There is a sense of credibility that comes from claiming it is the prisoner's words and Wilson's handwritten notes are no exception. This move toward handwritten texts becomes increasingly popular as the print culture world of the late eighteenth century began moving toward the epistolary and other forms of personal narrative. There is a power shift that is beginning in texts like *Faithful Narrative* where, instead of a minister clearly controlling every event, the woman, or character created based on a woman, becomes the one guiding the story. Though earlier narratives and this one both include calls to credibility by claiming to have actual words either written or spoken by the woman, the motivations for including these sections reveal different purposes. The earlier texts focus on genuine conversions and, in the power of performing this conversion well, controlling and manipulating the hearts of the community toward piety and penance. With Wilson, the inclusion of this type of section does not focus on the genuine conversion and penance side of the story, but instead becomes a place for her to assert her innocence. In this manner, the copied notes or her own words become a vehicle to develop her in a manner that allows greater access to her individual personality and experiences.

[8] The amount of research over letter-writing and the epistolary tradition is immense. For a more focused discussion of the epistolary tradition specifically focused on Gender and literature, and Early America see Cook, Elizabeth Heckendorn. *Epistolary Bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-century Republic of Letters.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996. Print. Decker, William Merrill. *Epistolary Practices Letter Writing in America Before Telecommunications*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1998. Print. Gillis, Christina Marsden. *The Paradox of Privacy : Epistolary Form in Clarissa*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1984. Print. Gilroy, Amanda and W.M. Verhoeven, eds. *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture.* Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 2000. Print. Kauffman, Linda S. *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions*. Ithaca : Cornell UP, 1986. Print. Zaczek, Barbara Maria. *Censored Sentiments: Letters and Censorship in Epistolary Novels and Conduct Material*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997. Print.

The section supposedly copied from handwritten portions are supposed to be more intimate, allowed more access to the woman, or character's, mind and increased a type of sympathy for the woman that went beyond just being ordered to be sympathetic by a minister.

There is a focus on playing to an audience who wants the gory details and a tragic and beautiful female to titillate their senses. There is also a desire to make Wilson more sympathetic or at least sympathetic in different ways compared to earlier execution narratives. The text is "Intended to arouse sympathy, if not empathy…this passage allowed readers to experience an emotional overflow that, in turn, prompted them to place their convictions in opposition to the official conviction" (Williams 155). Though Wilson does repent, there is a lack of ministerial control here not only in the type of rhetoric used, but also just in the number of pages dedicated religious language. Gone are the lengthy sermons and prayer sections that frequently dominated the focus of the earlier execution narrative published bundles. These bundles are replaced by those in power in other ways through judicial power or those controlling the printing presses. *Faithful Narrative,* though still having lingering rhetoric from these earlier texts, focuses instead on a bizarre, twisting tale that allows the woman who dies to proclaim her innocence until the moment of her death.

A Faithful Narrative was carefully crafted to leave audiences entertained and curious about the events within its text. The text "combined both third and first person narratives" in a manner that developed a "textual journey" for readers (Williams 151-152). The text was "structured to achieve the greatest effect on readers by carefully controlling the devices of disclosure and progression" (Williams 151). The audience receives sensational facts combined with a unique view into Wilson's interiority and religious conversion. Through the text that we do have, we can analyze the perception of Wilson as well as some of the bare facts about what

happened. She was a person who was hanged for the crime of murdering her two infants. She had a brother who tried to save her life and likewise, there is a piece of her that survives in the cultural phenomenon that swirls around her during her imprisonment and after her death. The narrative begins very bluntly with a third-person account that introduces Wilson and her story by quickly detailing that the dead infants were found and Wilson was tried and executed. This seemingly straightforward introduction is not without its framing though of Wilson. It claims that "Before, at, and after the trial, she persisted in denying the fact; her behavior was such, in general, as gave reasons to conclude she was innocent of the murder with which she was charged, or was an insensible, hardened creature, and did not expect to die for this crime" (2-3). In other words, her behavior indicated someone who was innocent or so expert and seasoned as a criminal so that she could perform or act out innocence in a very authentic manner.

The third person introduction also serves to humanize Wilson by including a note that mentions her desire to see her younger brother:

> O could I but see my own brother! to speak just a few words to him to ease my broken heart, that is so distressed. Oh how hard a thing it is that I cannot see him! Were he in my place and I in his, I would go to him, were it on my hands and knees; but he will not come to me, to speak on word to me, before I depart this life and see man no more: so I just give myself up to the Lord, begging that he would hear my cries, and give me life everlasting. (3)

This letter, denoted as written from her own hand, reveals a few important characterizations being made about Wilson. At this point, Wilson is not a hard-hearted woman and becomes a sympathetic woman who wants to talk to her beloved brother. She indicates that in the same

position she would gladly come to his aid and speak to him. There is an indication that her brother is the one being hard-hearted and not Wilson. Historically, this would have been accurate in that her brother did not immediately come to see her in jail and assumed her guilt, according to Tufts. When the brother finally comes and hears her side of the story, the evidence and accounts given were ones that the Honourable the President and Council were "pleased to grant her a respite for one month" (3). This introduction begins a subtle defense of her humanity, though ignorant and naïve, and the fact that her guilt may not be completely certain. The handwritten nature of it and focus on her relationship to her beloved brother serves to make her a sympathetic figure who is connected to others in a way that allows her to be a figure who an audience can identify with through common bonds.

The portion of Wilson's confession that is supposedly directly from her own mouth was dictated to her minister John Stancliffe the night before her execution. This is very much like the earlier execution narratives discussed in Section 2. She claims that she was born to "honest, sober" parents and "had a religious concern" between the ages of 16 through her early 20s. However, she did not know about the "subtilty [sic] of Satan" that led her to the "soul-destroying sin of fornication" (5). These details parallel some interesting facts about her life. First, she did not have sober parents or at least one parent was not sober. It also indicates an acknowledgment of her dismissal from the Quaker community which ended her connection to a religious experience in life. However, the story she gives is a more conventional and acceptable narrative compared to what her actual life would have been like. The importance of this quote is that she was concerned with religion, but Satan was still able to lead her astray specifically through the sin of lust and, eventually, fornication. This differs from tales like Rodgers and Chamblit in a few key ways. Where Rodgers did not seem to care about religion when she was younger despite

the same good influences over her life, Wilson claims that she was religious, but was still corrupted through the sneaky powers of Satan. The focus of Rodgers and Chamblit's texts seems to be the lack of care the women give to religion that eventually leads to other sins. With Wilson, the relationship to the sin appears to be much more direct. Satan is the tempter which both appeals to the religious viewpoint, but also mitigates her own guilt. Then, the sin is the actual fornication and not the lack of care about religious concerns. The terms are more specific and direct while at the same time remaining universal. The focus shifts just a bit from a narrative that wants to focus on a sin that every community member might be committing (not being dedicated enough to God or Christ) to one that shows a focus on the sexy details that entice and titillate. Even in this titillation, Wilson becomes represented as more of a tragic victim than any of the traditional execution narratives.

Deshong, the main villain of this story, further illustrates Wilson's victimization and seduction. His seduction of her causes her downfall. Deshong is a man who does not exist under that name and is a non-factor in the actual trial; however, he becomes a main player in all of the texts surrounding Wilson and public sentiment about the case. This is very different from earlier execution narratives that mostly ignored the father's involvement. This is one of the ways in which Wilson's tales becomes increasingly more focused on plot and sentiment. Including the father allows for certain changes to occur in the text. There is a love story now that is overt instead of hidden or nonexistent in most infanticide narratives. There is someone else to blame. There are interactions that occur between Wilson and someone other than just the ministers or officials controlling her case. His inclusion and growing importance marks an important shift that opens up the texts written about female criminals. She claims that he lies from the beginning not only about his name, but also saying that he "insinuated himself into my company, under

pretense of courtship, declaring himself a single man, and by repeated promises of marriage deceived and persuaded me to consent to his unlawful embraces" (5). He not only misrepresents the details of his life, but also misrepresents the type of desire that he has for her. The rhetoric she utilizes distances her from the source of the sin and puts the emphasis on his persuasion of her to sin. So, he is courting her, single, and she believes that he will marry her. This innocence causes her sin and not necessarily completely debased choices made on her part. In this sentence, it is not so much lust or the actual sex that causes her downfall, but naivety. He is aligned with the sneaky, dishonest side of humanity when he "insinuates" and uses false pretenses with her. These are schemes that trick her and, in turn, paint her as an innocent who is ignorant rather than cunning.

When she announces her pregnancy to him, he immediately withdraws promises of marriage, but does still claim ownership of the children and promises that he will pay for his part in raising the children. The focus is on the fact that Wilson just wants money to care for the children. She acknowledges her "deplorable situation" and insists that she will not "apply to the law" if he gives her a "supply of money" (4). In a subtle way, this defends Wilson's character against just being someone who wanted to murder or dispose of her children. She is not hiding them or even abandoning them. She wants money and is willing to go to the law in order to secure that money in order to care for her children. Traditionally, this would not have mattered due to the strict concealment statutes that essentially assumed guilt of the other even if the child is not actively murdered. However, the late eighteenth century saw a movement against these statutes where more sympathy was given to the abandoned mother. Though it comes a bit too late for Wilson, these types of details serve to make her a sympathetic character before a public audience and even a jury rather than a murderous mother who deliberately kills her children.

Another important change is the increased importance of the babies as both participants in the story and evidence of Wilson's innocence. Wilson is careful to avoid assuming guilt for the actual crime that brought her sentencing of execution. She repeatedly calls the infants "dear" and "innocents" bringing forth an image of herself that focuses on her innocence and maternal feelings toward her children. This is a more positive light, to some extent, than earlier infanticide cases were portrayed. The discussion of the babies in earlier texts would be very brief, often clinical, and almost tangential to the main narrative. However, for Wilson, the babies become characters who serve dual purposes of being sensationalistic and entertaining as well as developing her characterization. Wilson seems to be directly portraying herself as a misguided maternal figure who made some mistakes, but ultimately was not the real villain of the story. This shift would seem to make people more sympathetic toward Wilson who maintains innocence and eventually receives a pardon though a bit too late. Wilson states, of the actual crime, that she goes to her "deceiver" in order to get help for her children and herself. She claims that she will "go to the law" if he does not help her (6). She emphasizes her "pitiful case" and "deplorable situation" (6) which, again, illustrates her innocence in the situation as well as the guilt of other parties. There also seems to be some criticism of the situation that led to her position as an unwed mother who would struggle to care for these dear babies.

The description of the actual crime is sensationalistic and continues the narrative trajectory of Wilson being led astray with seducing tactics. When going to meet Deshong at a house, he meets her miles away from the house in an isolated spot. He then jumps a fence and requests that she "go into the woods with him" (7). The woods metaphorically function as a place of lawlessness or potential religious downfall. The woods are isolated far away from the agreed upon and respectable original meeting place. The meeting place takes her away from

civilization and makes her vulnerable to Deshong. She sits down on a literal (and figurative) "rotten log" (7) while waiting for him to make good on his promise. The language surrounding the babies is imbued with innocence. They are referred to as innocent, dear, and "dear little fellow sufferer" (7). He takes the babies and claims that he just wants to look at them before placing them on the ground. She claims that she truly believes that he just wanted to see if they had a resemblance to him. He reveals that he has no money to pay for her "bastards" (compared to her use of "dear innocents") and proceeds to pull a pistol on her and threaten to shoot her. Then, he "wickedly stamped on their dear little breasts, upon which the dear infants gave a faint scream and expired" (8). This image is horrific and molds Deshong into pure evil that has not only murdered innocent life, but also led Wilson astray. In other words, this is not Rodgers or others leaving their children in the wilderness, but instead an active, detailed, physical murder. He then forces Wilson, in her words, through fear to strip the babies and then quickly buries them before taking her with him to Philadelphia. In this moment, she helps with the emphasis being on her intense fear of this evil man waving a gun at her.

Up until this point, the confession has been surprisingly devoid of overt religious commentary considering the genre and the fact that it was framed as a confession given to a minister the night before her execution. Most early infanticide cases are laden with biblical quotes and religious imagery throughout compared to the gaps in this narrative. Wilson's text comes 80 years after Rodgers and exists in a very different religious situation. The genre of confession and execution narratives shifts from a focus on religion to a focus on the crime. The audience receives many more details about Wilson's crimes than we ever do with Rodgers, Chamblit, Garret, or Clifton. Not to mention, there are no framing, lengthy sermons to guide how an audience should read the details we do receive. While these details are tantalizing, they do not

necessarily indicate verisimilitude in Wilson and not other, earlier texts. Both texts still have the same issues of convoluted voices and a lack of a true way to define which voices are influences which parts. Both are filtered through a minister or other authors and sold for profit (to varying degrees) to serve as a lesson for the community. However, the shift in genre and rhetoric is one that moves away from female criminal used as symbol of community guilt and rather to one where she can be the victim in a sentimental story of seduction and pain.

Faithful Narrative illustrates this transition well especially since parts of it do return to more traditional religious commentary. She emphasizes that "to the truth of this relation, I appeal to the eternal God to witness, before whose dreadful bar I expect to appeal the ensuing day" (8). The ending returns to Wilson not necessarily just prostrating herself before God, but rather calling upon God to corroborate her truthfulness in the tale that she has told and, in particular, the fact that she is innocent of murdering her infants. She admits that her "sins are more in number than the hairs of my head" (8) yet the actual crime that she is being executed for she supports her own innocence in the involvement. She acknowledges that she deserves "not only death, but hell; yet, nevertheless I hope to obtain mercy" (8). Most of the narrative seems to reject the sins that she has been accused of committing. It is crafted to emphasize her innocence in the affair. Williams acknowledges that "rather than describing her preparations for death and final judgment, a popular convention of most criminal narratives", it merely reported facts about her concerns over being seen as sincere and truthful (154). She is focused on seeming sincere and that sincerity making her a more sympathetic character because if she is sincere then the guilt lays more with the men in her life who failed her. This incorporation of religion portrays the gradual transition that occurs with the cultural tension over female bodies and the narratives

that seek to explore this tension. In many ways, this particular Wilson text is a mixture of traditional execution narrative and a newer style that focuses on sentimental formula.

The conclusion of this more religious section even more overtly returns to a more traditional approach by acknowledging her acceptance of her death and the correct nature of this sentencing. She embraces the idea that she is not worthy, but seeks mercy through God who is the only one who can save her soul at this point. There is a focus on proving her sincerity in both her conversion and her innocence in the actual murder, but this focus also brings positive results for Wilson. In Williams' words, "Using the gallows as a stage, Wilson acted out the final—and ultimate—demonstrations of her truths. In order to confront the uncertainties of the grave, she required the belief of the spectators, since by convincing them she in turn could convince herself that her conversion had been true and that salvation was possible. Their belief reinforced her belief" (155). Again, the gallows becomes the stage by which female criminality is performed. Where the proper way to die is performed in earlier tactics, here Wilson actively performs a role that garners her sympathy as a character. There is a great indication that the audience is a significant part of the story. It is their belief that affects how Wilson is seen and thinks about herself. It is their belief that makes her sincere or not. This relationship between text, audience, and subject of the narrative is a complicated one that changes over time. Traditional moments seep in during a text that otherwise feels very far from traditional execution narratives. Ultimately, Wilson is a figure of ambiguity who represents a cultural shift to a different way to deal with unruly female bodies. Instead of just being a symbol of community guilt explored through fear and control over a body, Wilson becomes a character in her own story. This transition develops a different relationship between Wilson and the community where Wilson is

able to proclaim innocence and be an individual with motivations worthy of sympathy beyond a minister's orders.

The narrative concludes with a third person summary of what happens after the confession is signed with multiple witnesses. It implies that certain prisoners are "intimating the insincerity of her profession" and that she "was greatly distressed, and accounted for them in such a manner, as to remove all scruple of her sincerity" (5). There is a continued focus on the idea of her being sincere and to remove doubt of her insincerity. She reaches the day of her execution which she claims that she expected to die (contrary to earlier reports that deemed her not expecting to get the death penalty) and some of the final images we get of Wilson are of her expressing sympathy for her brother traveling to try to save her ("my poor brother") and that she "was taken with a fit" to an extent that the ministers have to leave and the women take care of her. This is an interesting parallel where she is, again, caring and sympathetic with love for her brother at the same time as having a type of fit that belies, possibly, an unwillingness to die or fear. The brother, notably, becomes a character in a way unseen in earlier infanticide narratives. During her final words, she is said to say amongst the normal telling of others to shun sin that she "forgave all that had injured her" (5). This statement indicates, again, that she is sincere in the fact that she is not guilty of the crime accused of her even if she is not so innocent in life either. She reaffirms her innocence again and again even while at the place of her execution. This change is very significant. In early infanticide narratives, the female criminal was expected to admit guilt and openly or even happily accept her punishment and death. Not doing so would indicate a failure of the ritualistic process designed to control the religious tendencies of the community. In this case, the narrative allows Wilson to embrace her innocence in a manner that subtly challenges the authority of the men who have condemned her to die.

She “quickly left the world” at this moment and the text speculates, “in exchange, we hope, for a better (world)” (6). The text ends with “but here we must drop a tear! What heart so hard, as not to melt at human woe!” (6). She leaves the world very quickly after affirming her innocence multiple times. After that, the narrator steps in to make sure the audience is reading the text in the correct manner. The audience is supposed to cry at this point and to hope that she has went to a better (implying more just) world. The story gets more pathetic as the narrator recounts how the just too late brother attempts to “restore her to life” (6). There is a move here to perform familial bonds in a manner that would connect to an audience. Wilson’s relationship to her family and particularly to her brother becomes increasingly emphasized and central to the story. This is not for religious reasons like earlier narratives, but rather in a rhetorical move to gain empathy from an audience. The sensationalized and tragic brother and love for his sister serves to entertain, to cause emotions, and also creates a more sympathetic Wilson. The narrative continues this line of empathy by having the narrator continue to affirm Wilson’s innocence after the fact by stating that she was “innocent, we believe” and that “May others reflect, that a few years past she was esteemed having a virtuous character” (6). The narrator, having the final word, makes it clear that she is likely innocent and had a virtuous character beforehand. It is important for Wilson to be a virtuous character not necessarily for religious reasons, but for the purpose of creating a tragic figure who has further to fall, and, therefore, a more entertaining story to tell for an audience. This transition also allows for more questioning of the authorities who have chosen to execute her.

The very end of the text does keep true to the formula by utilizing increased ministerial language such as “The wages of sin, says an inspired apostle, is death. Painful idea!” (6). The text ends with an affirmation of religious sentiment and that her death was justified by her sins.

Supposedly taken from her own notes, Wilson declares herself to be a "warning" for others and that "Oh Lord! Be merciful unto me!" (7). This feels like a return to the more formulaic religious sentiment where she admits guilt, wants or assumes she will act as a warning for others, and begs the Lord to be merciful and cleanse her of her sins. This assumes an air that is much closer to the earlier execution narratives where the focus is on the sins of the woman. In this manner, this narrative offers competing impulses between embracing a new form that allows Wilson to just be innocent and nods to more traditional forms where she has to accept her own death. The entire narrative, including the proof of her sincerity, innocence, and the tactics taken to make an audience sympathetic with her and her brother, creates a story that allows for ambiguity at least when it relates to her guilt. In this ambiguity is a shift from assumed and clear guilt to the possibility that others are guiltier for creating a situation that led to a "virtuous" young woman's downfall. Earlier execution narratives assumed the guilt of the woman as uncontested including the fact that she must be executed for her crimes. This situation allows for a Wilson who is unjustly executed and even a victim of male treachery and unfairness. She is seen as the losing victim to authority rather than rightfully submitting to this unquestioned authority.

Revising Elizabeth: The Transition into the Nineteenth Century

Elegy &c, by Ezekial Russell is another major portrayal that transforms public perception of Elizabeth Wilson through altering details and rhetoric surrounding her story. Published in 1786, this Boston printer created this broadside ballad in a manner that was meant to entice readers to buy a future, longer narrative to be published at a later date. It sought to provide a balance of details that would "titillate readers, piquing their curiosity about those that it left out" (Williams 150). This influences the creation of the text due to the fact that there is an intense

desire to bring readers into the fold who would want to spend money on the text and buy the future publication. Liberties are taken with the story to ensure this interest in the text. This text, very overtly, illustrates the transition that Wilson, in all her incarnations, experiences from someone who is just convicted and executed to an object of pity who is deserving of sympathy. This text moves even further away from traditional execution narrative styles and closer to a fictionalized sentimentality that was becoming increasingly popular. There is a shift away from the original narrative and even the newspaper articles toward a more deliberately created character and plot.

It is also significant that this version is a broadside ballad. The broadside ballad, called by John Anthony Scott as "singing newspapers," were short lyrical texts that often dealt with topical issues of the time to the community (5). Leslie Shepard writes, about the broadside ballad, that this particular genre was characterized by "cheap printing, each sheet usually contained the words only" and that it "satisfied equally the need for news and the nostalgia for tradition" (48). He states that these texts were often focused on political subjects, but in a manner that was easily accessible to normal citizens and tried to create meaning behind political events. These facts lead to a few conclusions when we attempt to analyze Wilson's own broadside ballad. First, it was meant to be cheap and consumed by many people. It was meant to be entertaining and topical at the same time as a hybrid form of oral tradition and print culture. Furthermore, a broadside ballad would traditionally attempt to transmit meaning in a manner that is easily understood and accessible to a community.

The text immediate begins by appealing to a very specific type of audience. Instead of a general note about the origin story of Elizabeth, the text begins with "Fair Daughters of America, And eke of Britain's Ifle, Attend my doleful, mournful cry" (Russell). This immediately sets up

an audience-centric text. It is specifically giving the appearance that the text will be targeted toward young women in America and Britain. The introduction also plainly sets the stage for a sympathetic, but also mysterious beginning. The mournful cry indicates a tragic tale that is about to unfold. The next line also takes a significant step away from traditional execution narratives that often did not mention fathers or men at all or, if they did, it was an extremely limited mention with little guilt placed on the man. The ballad continues with "Hear how vile Men beguile" (Russell). In the first four lines, the focus is put on men who deceive and likely seduce rather than the woman herself. Deshong again exists as the center of blame for the events that take place with Wilson the innocent, seduced woman. This is compared to earlier execution narratives, like Rodgers, Chamblit, Garret, and Clifton, where a father is either briefly mentioned or not mentioned at all and no blame is put on them for the birth and death of the children. This refocusing shows a shift in balance between a traditional narrative and execution tale. This shift allows for a more sympathetic view of the woman and a more sentimentalized account that necessarily treats the woman in a different manner than the days where the goal was the woman as symbol for communal guilt. Separated by time and the beginning of separation by genre, now the men involved in the death of a young woman can be held more accountable for their actions.

The poem also sets up a story that has a narrative trajectory that focuses on developing an epic or universal milieu. This is not entirely unseen in earlier narratives. Esther Rodgers and other execution narratives began as a focus on a cosmic battle between good and evil. Garret's death of being hung while praying with hands outstretched begins to build a legend rather than just describing the death of a human being. A similar sense of urgency is developed in this poem in a slightly different manner. Utilizing common poetic tropes of speaking about humble pens, the poem speaks about "O could I write, with CLARKE indite/Who's fkilled in making rhyme,

Whole Volumes now I'd gladly write/And think well-fpent my time" and "Had I a pen of adamant/And feas of ink to fpare!/O had I pens in both my hands,/And floods of ink to spare" (Russell). The text then spends quite a bit of time convincing audiences that the story is so dramatic that even with time and ink it would be difficult to illustrate it. The poem continues with "This folemn Scene! Ah who can paint?" and "My pens would fail, my ink grow dry/With anguifh and defpair" (Russell). Coming at the beginning and ending of the fragment, there is an emphasis on the desire to make Wilson's story not just a story of someone being executed, but also a very important story that deserves floods of ink and whole volumes. This tactic mimics epic ballads who claim to be creating a history or legend instead of merely telling the story of one woman. The sensationalized and poetic rhetoric utilized changes the story to focus on the outpouring of emotions one should have when reading about Wilson's tragic story.

The text continues the trope of structuring Wilson in a way that makes her seem sympathetic rather than focusing on communal sins or her own failings as a person. The poem exposes that "fhe was caught in fnare deep laid,/Which led her foul aftray./Ah weep, my Mufe, in fable clad!/and fhed a forrowing tear!" (Russell). In this broaching of the subject matter, Wilson is caught in a trap. The trap is a deep one and, therefore, difficult to escape. This is what entices her soul into the mistake that eventually takes her life. However, even as her soul is led astray, the audience understands that this is something that should be seen as sad. The muse, personified now dressed in black mourning garments, weeps for Wilson rather than judges or sees Wilson as a mirror for herself. Wilson becomes someone who is tragic in a deep, cosmic sense instead of just a plain story of a woman who lived a life of sin. This shift in rhetoric emphasizes a more sentimental connection to the audience that is also meant to be exciting and thrilling to the emotions.

The man and the babies are finally mentioned in a way that clearly depicts this trope of shifted sympathies. The text describes "Two pretty Babes fhe had, I hear,/By this vile Man of late,/It makes my pen to quake with fear/When I the fame relate" (Russell). The pretty, innocent babies are born to a vile man. The man is supposedly so vile that the pen is literally shaking in fear to relate the story as has been told to the poet. In this case, the villain role is much more emphasized when it comes to the man than we have seen in previous texts. It continues to say that he is "A Hard-hearted Wretch! a Monfter fure/Disgrafe to human eye,/When that the Maid did afk relief/The Infant-Babes muft die!/His cruel feet did ftamp the blow/Can I for truth relate? (Russell). The poem continues to call the man "The Wretch abhor and hate" "O Bloody Wretch" "infernal Fiend" "inhuman Beaft" and "From Satan you were fent" (Russell). Interestingly enough, this idea of hard hearts is usually reserved for women and especially women in infanticide narratives. Here, this hard-hearted nature is put on the man and not the woman. The evil and failing here transfers to the man. In this manner, a sympathetic character is created at the center of the story with a proper villain set up to foil the so-called damsel-in-distress.

The idea of hard-heartedness is connected to the earlier anxieties more religious narratives brought forth. Jodi Schorb discusses how early execution narratives focused on the concept of "late Puritan anxiety" over "so-called cold hearts and communal backsliding" (293). The traditional infanticide narrative itself is one that shows the shift from this cold-hearted movement away from God to finding a "spiritual readiness for death" by "laying bare the interior—the heart" (Schorb 291). This movement would "reanimate spiritual zeal by cultivating in audiences a felt response to another's proximity to death and suffering" (293). Women who sinned to the extent of killing their children are often characterized as having hard hearts until they are converted by God. All four execution narratives mentioned earlier start with this idea of

unfeeling, cold, or hard-hearted women until they are saved by God and the minister's guidance except in the case of Alice Clifton where we do not receive a complete narrative or conversion tale. This hard heart also discussed by Schorb is now reserved for the man of the story who would typically have not played a major role in an execution narrative. He is now wretch and a monster who does not deserve to be seen by decent human beings. His is now the hard heart that should be feared.

Furthermore, he is so terrible a man that he goes beyond just being a wretch into being accused of being in league with Satan. This adds to the dramatic quality of the story that is meant to bring an audience in and give them something entertaining. Deshong becomes a clear villain here juxtaposed with Wilson who is seen as the victim as opposed to the aggressor or the wicked one in this situation. When Wilson asks for help, he responds by murdering the babies in an extremely cold, graphic manner. The "Can I for truth relate" indicates that the story is so horrific that even for the greater goal of truth the poet may not be able to relate what is happening. However, this serves a dual purpose as certain details are left out of the poem with the idea that a future, longer narrative may give more details that an audience may want to read. This sentiment is repeated at various points in the text. For example, the poem claims that "A Crime more fhocking fure I think/I never heard the name" (Russell). This emphasizes the singular shocking nature of the tale aimed at an audience who might feel like they have heard it all before due to the earlier obsession with execution narratives. The crime cannot just be a crime. It has to be one of the most shocking crimes that has ever existed. This statement, again, is ambiguous. The line before clarifies that "Thefe pretty Ones were laid on ground" and then never directly continues the description after that point (Russell). The idea is to hook readers into wanting to read the text while not giving away too much so that people may not buy the actual text when released. What

readers want also portrays a cultural shift away from sermon-centered religious narratives to ones more focused on narrative-driven tales with sensationalized plots and characters driving them.

The dramatic quality is emphasized further by marking Deshong as a special type of villain due to his singular evil. Like the trap laid before, he is said to have "hellifh fchemes" that "Such cruelty fure ne'er was known in our *America,/*GOD grant we may'nt find fuch in Town/Who Babes will kill and flay" (Russell). This is important because Deshong is characterized as going far beyond just being a bad person and rather being so uniquely evil that he apparently planned such evil and invented hellish schemes that have never been seen before. Here, he becomes the main villain in a dramatized depiction of the events that occurred. Of course, this is untrue in the scope of just the facts of the case. Infanticide by men and women was common enough and execution narratives for infanticide popular enough that tales of infanticide would not necessarily strike people as a scheme never before imagined in America. However, the point is dramatizing the story beyond what might have been seen before in execution narratives or common gossip. This story is not just one of infanticide, but a dramatic tale of which has details that set it aside from other tales like it. This is revealing for multiple reasons. Firstly, this indicates the shift in gendered expectations for what an audience might want to view. The earlier texts with a focus on communal sins and righteous judgment against a converted woman seems far away from this tale that broaches Wilson as the poor victim to be pitied while Deshong becomes an over-the-top representation of villainy. The poem takes a few bare facts and then fictionalizes and imagines them into the type of story that an audience might want to hear. This fictional account marks a shift to focusing on a father who can be held accountable and a marked difference in how the woman at the center of it all is viewed.

The poem serves as an advertisement as noted in the footnote that is included with the poem supposedly from the "Poetess." According to the note, "at the earneft requeft of many, to infert" the "whole of this fhocking and tragical Affair" which would include a hymn on death, religious account, and other interesting "particulars" that are supposedly written at least in part by her own hand while in "confinement" (Russell). The poem teases the entire story that is to come. There is still a call to credibility though where some of these texts are going to supposedly come from her own hands written while waiting to be executed. This shift also makes her an artist. Where the earlier narrative focused on handwritten notes and letters, this one makes her a poetess. She becomes the creative center of the piece with a rhetorical move that more closely aligns her to other poets than figures like Esther Rodgers. The note hammers in the idea that "this moft melancholy Tragedy" is one that "have never been publifhed in thefe Parts, although they have fo juffly engroffed the attention of a very refpectable part of the Publick in feveral of the Southern States for some time paft" (Russell). It continues with an endorsement from Reverend Isaac Story who declares that the tale is calculated to "religioufly affect the mind and heart of all" and "The whole story is fo interefting to the feelings of human nature, that it muft command a diffufive fale" (Russell). There is a focus on the idea that the story is so epic that it has already captured an audience and will capture an even larger audience. It is meant to affect everyone through its never before seen depths of tragedy and human nature. In this manner, the advertisement clearly establishes a niche for the poem and upcoming narrative to fulfill for the community in a way that clearly focuses on sensationalism.

The advertisement emphasizes that they have, essentially, exclusives that have never before been published indicating the special nature of the text that would appear. The endorsement indicates the idea that it will focus on religion; however, the right number of details

are spent focusing on the more sordid details that this veil of respectability would not have been absolute. Even with this religious claim, the focus is not on religious or sermon-based rhetoric or purposes. The residential effects of traditional forms still exists in the fact that this claim is made at all, but ultimately, as evidenced even through the advertisement, religious instruction is not the main goal. Finally, it is presented as an exciting tale that gets at the very heart of human nature. Unfortunately, the actual tale never appears in the American Bloody Register either never being published or being lost at some point in history. However, even the advertisement indicates a significant shift in how Wilson is viewed and fictionalized for a public audience. At the very least, it indicates, in Williams' terms, "the value of Wilson's story as a commercial commodity" (151).

Ultimately, this section "reflects two concurrent social and nationalistic themes: a reassessment of the traditional view of women and an exaltation of motherhood in the new republic" (Tufts 151). There is a clear transition here to a focus on motherhood beyond just the fact that Wilson is a mother. In this manner, she is seen as "not as sinful daughters of Eve, their traditional role, but as inherently virtuous, yet—especially young women living alone in the cities—vulnerable to sexually predatory men" (Tufts 151). This is a significant shift where Wilson becomes a loving mother who innocently falls into a trap of a sexual predator instead of being a hard-hearted woman who kills her own child. She becomes a more sympathetic character here and one to be pitied rather than reviled or even as a stand-in for the communal sins of the society. This shift can be seen in the growing fictionalized market of female seduction tales in America in general. Changing perceptions and changing genres lead to a more fictionalized tale that allows for a move away from the formula established by typical execution narratives earlier

in the eighteenth century. Now, Wilson is free to be a symbol who can be a good mother even in her mistakes and more sympathetic as an actual character.

Seduction and Sentimental Fiction

These changes and shifts in focus and rhetoric with Wilson continue with *The Victim of Seduction! The Life and Untimely Fate of Miss Harriot Wilson.* This story is, along with the broadside ballad, a very sentimentalized version of her story straying far from traditional formulas or patterns. This is an admitted "fictional treatment" of the earlier story (Williams 151). While the story is clearly based on Wilson's life and the earlier execution narrative, there are significant changes that utilize, but then also transform the original rhetoric used with earlier, supposedly more factual texts about Wilson. In Williams' words, "exploiting the same basic series of events, the two texts were created according to different sets of genre conventions for two different audiences" (151). This text is published in 1822 and demonstrates a shift in perspective that, in some way, frees Wilson to be utilized as a symbol for tensions being viewed in a slightly later time period. It is here that the now-deemed Harriot fully transforms into a sentimental figure meant to captivate audiences emotionally.

Audience is a key component to how a text is structured. Editors and authors imagine an audience who desires something other than religious instruction leading to significant shifts in rhetoric and focus. This shift can be seen immediately even in the title page. The title utilizes the words "victim" and "untimely" both of which indicate a level of innocence on the part of Wilson. She is a victim here who has been wronged rather than necessarily being the perpetrator herself. It also emphasizes her patience and overall goodness while struggling under a horrific death sentence. The title page focuses on "her Penitence and becoming behavior while under the

awful sentence of Death" (1). The accompanying woodcut helps solidify the meaning put forth with the words. The now named Harriot Wilson sits on the ground on her knees passively. She appears to be praying with hands locked in front of chest in a way that seems to be begging. Her unhappy face with sad eyes is contorted into a pout in a way that is almost child-like. She is bent over slightly lowering herself visually. This image echoes the rhetoric used earlier by titling her as a victim and as penitent. She prays on her knees with a sad, but solemn face in a way that seems to be reaching directly for the reader to understand her plight.

Wilson herself undergoes a transformation that is meant to establish her as an even more sympathetic victim. She is said to be born to "creditable parents" (3). In order to help transform Wilson, her family situation is revised. This happens subtly in earlier texts as well, but this retelling really emphasizes this point. Not only are the parents creditable, but they also raise her with the "utmost tenderness, and every possible care was taken to impress on her mind sentiments of virtue and religion" (4). Knowing her early history lays bare the ways in which this is not exactly true. However, to be a symbol for the society meant a good family who tries to raise the woman correctly. This is true for Wilson and, in this text, goes beyond just a quick mention of good parents. We get extremely over the top descriptions of not only good parents, but ideal parents. Her parents are also "aware of the impropriety of their daughter's forming too hastily an attachment for one who was yet to them a stranger" (4). So, not only do they become loving and attentive parents, but they also are aware of what happens in her life and actively try to protect her from the dangers of the world. The parents also receive more space and characterization than the brief or non-existent mentions in earlier infanticide narratives.

The text continues to emphasize their uprightness when it claims that "Such was the respectability of the unfortunate prisoner's parents and connections and such the sensibility

cherished by all with whom she had been acquainted, that on the day of her trial, the court room was early filled with more than it could conveniently contain" (5). Here, Harriot's parents become not only tender, loving and protective, but also extremely respectable in the eyes of the community. This enforces Harriot's standing as beloved and raised by the right type of people which, again, would not have been the lived reality of the real Elizabeth Wilson. Finally, her parents stand by her side until the very end as "aged and afflicted" sufferers that literally move the people who view them "beyond description" (7). In reality, Wilson's parents are not at her execution or trial. However, here the rhetoric shifts to focus on a family. To be a sentimental character, Wilson has to have a background which includes a sympathetic background where this detail is largely unnecessary in earlier infanticide narratives.

The parents are not the only family members who get a slight revision in order to become more sympathetic mirrors for Harriot. Her brother also becomes a much more active and sympathetic participant in Harriot's life. She now has an "only brother" compared to the three she has in reality. His "grief for the wretched fate of his beloved sister, bordered almost on distraction" (6). When he discovers that Harriot has been executed, he reacts in such a manner that "to attempt to describe the horror depicted in his countenance, and his agonized feelings on discovering that he had arrived too late to save his beloved and unfortunate sister, would be a task which we have not the ability to perform (7-8). He receives a letter from Harriot who bemoans the fact that "it is in eternity my dear brother that we must expect to meet" (9). The repetitions of beloved and dear indicate a level of closeness that stretches beyond the initial lack of contact and tension between the real Elizabeth and her brother. This is true of earlier texts as well where her brother becomes a more sympathetic character. This, in turn, molds

Harriot/Elizabeth into the type of character that she needs to be or that they assume she needs to be to be a sympathetic figure through the influence of the protective and grieving brother.

Harriot herself is also transformed into a character who more closely suits the needs of the audience being courted in this particular text. In addition to the sympathetic family, Harriot becomes a standard beacon of femininity for the time. The text establishes early that "She was of a sprightly and affable disposition, polite in manners and engaging in conversation—in a word, she in early age exceeded most of her sex in many of those accomplishments, which are calculated to grace and dignify the female mind" (4). There is a rhetoric here that is not seen in the other texts. We get more of a description of her personality, or at least an imagined personality, than any other text. She fits into the qualities that make a good wife and mother in the nineteenth century. She is polite, can make conversation, and is friendly and open with others. She is so accomplished that she is considered better or above others of her sex. The text emphasizes again and again how she is "innocent" "unsuspecting" and "credulous" (4). These qualities make her, in some ways, a good female, but in others vulnerable to vice and being seduced. The story also describes "her whole conduct, evidently showed, from this temper of mind, a composed, and even cheerful submission to the views and will of heaven; a modest unaffected submission entirely becoming her age, her sex and situation" (7). She is again described as submissive, cheerful, temperate, and in all ways prudent, modest, and appropriate for her age and sex. The text further describes her as "all the bloom of loveliness—charming as a cloudless vernal morning—lovely as youth, beauty, and innocence could make her—doated on by her parents and brother, and idolized by all her acquaintance" (9-10). This rhetoric closely mirrors the rise of sentimental fiction that focused on developing a different type of woman at the center of the texts. She becomes a respected angel who falls into a bad situation rather than

low-class, uneducated, or otherwise not worthy of respect. Interestingly enough, this is the one text that completely implicates Harriot in the murder of the now one child. It is her "diabolical plan" that she creates and then carries out against the children. Though passive and innocent in other portions of the text, Harriot takes on the thinking and plotting role in this instance. This curious choice serves dual purposes. It creates a character who is active, but also creates a complex character who can be sympathetic even while actively disposing of her children.

After the clear indication that she solely committed the crimes, the text portrays a character who has realized that her fate has been sealed. The text creates sympathy for her. She portrays an "uncommon degree of fortitude" that seems to indicate that she is already understanding of her fate. Her main concern seems to be with her family when she "lament[s] the misfortunes of her wretched parents and her brother, on whom she had brought disgrace than her own fate" (5-6). This moment reinforces an image of femininity that only considers others. As for her final words, she writes to her brother and portrays a similar selflessness. She states that the only regret she has is "from the consciousness of the disgrace and misery that I have brought on you and my dear afflicted parents!" (8). One of her defining characteristics becomes the fact that she no longer thinks of herself and her well-being, but rather the pain that she has brought her beloved parents who have been revised into parents who deserve that love and dedication.

She dies in a manner that reinforces this idea of a hyper-idealized image of femininity that is damaged due to this one fatal flaw and mistake. The text describes that "her countenance displayed a serenity that appeared more than human, and when she gave the signal, there was a recollected gracefulness and sublimity in her manner that struck every heart, and is above words or ideas" (7). Here, she has a calmness and grace that goes beyond just being the proper image of a woman. Her serenity is something that is not even human anymore due to its perfection and

strength. Again, she affects everyone's opinions of her through her conduct and words. Though I have spoken about how to die the correct way before, Harriot's death here characterizes both the impulse for graphic details and the more traditional desire to see the physical body as reinforcing spiritual or human emotions. Her death is described in the following manner:

> after she had been suspended nearly a minute, her hands were twice evenly and gently raised, and gradually let to fall without the least appearance of convulsive or involuntary motion, in a manner which could hardly be mistaken, when interpreted, as designed to signify consent and resignation. (7)

Even as the life leaves her physical body, she is a picture of grace and serenity. The only gentle movement is her hands being raised and then falling just as peacefully. In this case, the narrator acknowledges the physical descriptions that a real body dying would experience for the audience at the same time as sympathetically portraying someone who is so accepting of her fate that she even has control over the biological functions of her physical body as she dies.

The villain appears again except Deshong's name is changed to a more respectable Smith in this telling of the story. Smith becomes the predator who seduces the innocent, weak Harriot. He is the aggressor in the relationship from the very beginning. After time, he "succeeded in ingratiating himself into the affections of this innocent and unsuspecting young lady" (4). The word "succeed" indicates a level of trying on his part in order to trick the "unsuspecting lady." The text quickly begins to characterize him as a "vile seducer (by the repeated and solemn promises of marriage)" (4). He becomes the vile villain who only tricks her into unladylike behavior through his lies. It is through the promise of goodness and a legitimate relationship that he eventually is able to seduce the unsuspecting Harriot into marriage. This lying and seduction

is described as being "a wicked device made use of only to enable him to effect the ruin of an innocent girl" (4). Smith here becomes a scheming monster who actively strategizes against Harriot to ruin her deliberately. He is put at the forefront of the wickedness while she remains innocent, yet in a way very gullible. It is her innocence that, strangely enough, puts her in danger of being seduced, however. She is unable to see through his lies or scheming partially because she does not have the experience to identify that in a man. Her virtue is vulnerable for this reason. The end of the text makes sure to clarify that, as an audience, we should be feeling pity for "the unfortunate victim of his arts" and only "abhorrence for the seducer" (9). Harriot is designated as the victim while he is the one who we are supposed to hate even though she is technically the one who hurts the babies.

Part of these oddities can be explained by the tension that the text is engaging with that would be different from some of the earlier texts. This text is clearly marketed toward a young female audience and engages with popular beliefs about femininity in the time period. It is focused on this idea of the "horrid vice of seduction" (10). Seduction as a focus of a cultural narrative is not a new concept by Wilson's moment. To a certain extent, the witch trials and earlier infanticide narratives focused on the idea of seduction of virtue and the body. However, there is a subtle difference in the treatment of this matter where, now, the focus is more on sexual intercourse and the consequences of it. In this manner, "seduction, of course, served as both metaphor and metonymy in summing up the society's contradictory views on women. The huge social interest vested in women's sexuality, which was fetishized into a necessary moral as well as a social and biological commodity, meant that women themselves had little voice in the matter" (Davidson 110). When this seduction happens, in some ways death is the only option because the value of the woman is gone. *Victim of Seduction*! incorporates these ideas when

stating that “the tenderness and sensibility that prevails in the minds of female subjects them to many temptations and dangers from which men are in a manner exempt. Their weakness and dependent state, places their reputation on a foundation so slender, that the smallest breath of wind will overturn, and the slightest touch indelibly tarnish” (10-11). This quote is sensationalistic on its own. The typical gender breakdown emerges here where the woman is so weak and dependent that even the tiniest bit of wind can completely ruin her. The focus is on the value of her body and how easily that value can be ruined through the deceptive and seducing tactics of a man. The perceived anxiety over gender and virtue comes out in full force here while reiterating the fact that Harriot is a lot more vulnerable than Smith in this situation. This is one aspect that remains strikingly true throughout. Smith is never brought to trial or held responsible for his supposed part in the story except textually where he becomes the main villain on trial with the community even if not legally.

The story reinforces this idea of Harriot being an example of the tenderness of femininity by stating that, while waiting to be executed, “she intreated such of her young female friends who visited her while in prison, to take warning of her fate, and to be ever on their guard against the intrigues and seducing arts of the other sex” (6). This is the same stated audience as earlier execution narratives, but with a markedly different focus. The effect of her message seems to imply a movement away from assuming sole guilt of the weakness of the woman at fault and rather focuses on the guilt of others around her. The focus is clearly on teaching women to be “on guard” against the seducing abilities of men. This seems to deconstruct the idea of an innocent woman being the pinnacle of femininity, however. In order to know to guard against men, the woman has to have some experience or knowledge about these “seducing arts.” In some ways, Harriot’s innocence and her family’s protection of her work against her as she cannot see

through Smith's evil seducing ways. This seems to work against later quotes that state that "a chaste and virtuous woman sits exalted on the pinnacle of excellence, giving rational happiness and pleasure to all within the circle of her acquaintance" (11). The chastity and virtue might be part of what works against Harriot when she does come across someone like Smith.

The rhetoric further emphasizes how virtue is tied to value of women. It expounds on the fact that "the value set upon her reputation, very often prevents them from the commission of acts of folly which precede the depravity of vice, and as a daughter, the joy of her parents, and the sweet smoother of the path down the vale of life from time to eternity" (11-12). Her value is tied in with her virtue completely. Once this value has been "stolen" through premarital sex, the smooth path down to eternity is lost forever through this loss of reputation. It is the value that often stops women from committing these "acts of folly" that eventually turn into depraved vices. This language is interesting because the focus is placed on not doing something because of the reputation rather than not doing something because of an inherent virtue or goodness of the woman. The ending has sensationalistic glory as it again hammers in the point that losing virtue makes a woman "lost all that rendered them dear to society" tying all of their value, literally, into this shaky idea of virtue that can be destroyed literally with a breath of wind. The dramatic ending calls for the audience to behold "her final exit" (12). Here, we see another woodcut with a small, stiff-looking Wilson accepting her death with a noose around her neck about to fall to her death. However, viewed as a whole, this tale is one that does not have the same religious rhetoric framing its meaning. Furthermore, the focus on dramatic details, without the religious appeals, shifts the rhetoric to one that embraces the progression into sentimental fiction rather than didactic religious narratives.

The Fictionalization of a Life

The transition in Wilson's story emphasizes the manner in which "the earliest narratives encouraged audiences to feel like the woman on the scaffold—to identify her soul as their own and her imminent death as their own—later narratives constructed the woman as a sentimental object of pity" (Schorb 305). Through Wilson's texts, we see this shift very clearly from the more traditional form of religious, communal ritual to her as a character in a story that is allowed to be sympathetic in ways not seen in these earlier cases. It is clear that "Wilson's story had widespread and enduring appeal. It was tragic and romantic; it was an unsolved murder mystery; and it was pertinent to a variety of cultural currents of the time. The cause was not only sensational, but controversial because it involved the execution of an arguably innocent woman" (Tufts 149). All of the elements are there to make Wilson's story an extremely popular one. It had the mystery and tragedy that appealed to an audience. Her story is open for interpretation and the manner in which she is interpreted is significant. Though still concerned over female bodies and crime, the interpretations of Wilson focus on creating a character through plot-devices. Her retellings create characters out of people who would have been nonexistent or barely mentioned in earlier infanticide narratives. The focus also shifts from didactic religious rhetoric to details over the crime and Wilson herself.

All of these various depictions of Elizabeth Wilson together reveal a transformation in how female criminals perceived by and used for the community. Where bodies were at the center of concerns with the Salem Witch Trials, now there is less of a focus on actual physical bodies and more of a focus on emotions and sentimentalized accounts. In other words, "while the task of explaining crime remained unchanged, the explanations themselves had shifted, adapting to the new cultural context of revolution and republicanism" (Williams 51). As time progresses, each

account follows an increasingly sentimental narrative structure. *Faithful Narrative* signals the beginning of this shift with a narrative that embraces older religious rhetoric at the same time as allows Wilson to claim her innocence and seem sympathetic through the inclusion of her family. The broadside ballad, *Elegy*, dramatically aligns Wilson as a sympathetic character while attacking the villain Deshong. Separated by time, *Seduction!* is the most fictionalized account manipulating every detail of the story in order to appeal to a perceived female audience in a society that has constantly evolving concerns about virtue. This one most closely mimics the rise of sentimental fiction in America in the nineteenth century. These changes allow for a female criminal who is very different from the ones seen in early infanticide narratives. Though they are nominally interested in the same issues of female bodies, control, and sin, in effect they are very different types of texts. Instead of spiritual guidance, this transformation allows for a Wilson who connects to an audience through pity and empathy due to the increased focus on plot and developing characters who help expand Wilson's role as a character. In this manner, the ambiguous cultural space that a female criminal occupies is repurposed to address different types of concerns more topical to the time period such as evolving ideas of virtue, women's role in the country, and issues of freedom and authority.

Conclusion

Criminal and Sentimental Bodies

From Salem to the sentimental fiction of the nineteenth century, female criminals became a performative symbol through which to explore and control societal behavior. This control was often linked to public trials and death. One of the first American sentimental novels emerging in 1797, *The Coquette,* by Hannah Webster Foster ends with a tombstone, a visual representation of death. This novel, in many ways, echoes Elizabeth Wilson's journey from historical footnote to fictionalized heroine. *Coquette* is modeled after Elizabeth Whitman, an upper-class woman from Connecticut who dies after childbirth in a tavern in Massachusetts. Her unmarried status as well as her demise in such a place made the story an instant scandal. This initial frenzy was stoked even further with the release of *Coquette* which went through close to 10 reprints in the first half of the nineteenth century alone. In this novel, Elizabeth becomes Eliza Wharton, sympathetic heroine of a sentimental novel. Here, Foster, through similar sentimental means to those in Wilson's various texts, tries to explore and explain the situation that led to Elizabeth Whitman's scandalous death. It is here that Foster is able to gain control over the cultural narrative surrounding her character, but also the representation of Whitman. Foster's choices are significant. In Davidson's terms, Whitman "was much criticized and scorned in contemporaneous newspaper accounts. In the novel, however, she takes on a surprising dignity" (111). The reader is pulled into the story and made to feel sympathetic with Eliza as she navigates a world of choices that do not really seem like choices. On the surface, Eliza has agency. There is choice involved. However, neither choice open to her is a valid one for Eliza's

happiness. Davidson asserts that "Eliza Wharton must choose for herself between matrimony and coquetry, between one set of constraints and another" (111).

This immediately makes the novel important in a way that is not just mindless entertainment, a common critique levied toward sentimental fiction. Rather, it becomes another way of manipulating female bodies in disorder for cultural commentary. For example, Eliza, on the surface, should be the one who is in the wrong. She is the one who has an affair with a married man, gets pregnant, and forsakes her own virtue on her path to becoming a social pariah. However, Foster's manipulation of the finer details of the story artfully portrays a more complex situation than this strictly didactic overarching plot. For example, marriage, still seen as the main or most logical goal of a woman's life at this time, is represented as a type of constraint in a manner that invites one to be sympathetic to Eliza's situation and, therefore, the situation of women in general. For example, Eliza's friend, Mrs. Richman, describes married life in the following terms:

> Not long since I was a gay, volatile girl; seeking satisfaction in fashionable circles and amusements; but now I am thoroughly domesticated. All my happiness is centered within the limits of my own walls; and I grudge every moment that calls me from the pleasing scenes of domestic life. (Foster 872)

Though Mrs. Richman adores married life, it is difficult to imagine life described in less appealing terms to Eliza and also readers who empathize with Eliza. Marriage becomes a type of prison here stifling the happy girl into a woman who grudges leaving the house. It becomes an institution that Eliza herself calls a "tomb" and the means by which she would "resign [her] freedom" (830). The novel offers a choice, a way for contemporary readers of the time to explore ideas of freedom and authority that were not necessarily allowed in their actual lives. The novel

places the reader in the head of Eliza, who is not a bad person, but rather a person living in the wrong time period, a time period characterized by restriction of freedoms.

The novel ends in her silencing and then death with her tombstone for everyone to read. The tombstone, in part, reads in the following manner:

> THIS HUMBLE STONE, IN MEMORY OF ELIZA WHARTON…LET CANDOR THROW A VEIL OVER HER FRAILTIES… SHE SUSTAINED THE LAST PAINFUL SCENE, FAR FROM EVERY FRIEND; AND EXHIBITED AN EXAMPLE OF CALM RESIGNATION…AND THE TEARS OF STRANGERS WATERED HER GRAVE. (915)

The tombstone itself is a representation of physical death—a body that was and is no more. This, however, is not a real tombstone, but a fictionalized representation of the female body that no longer exists. In this manner, the physical bodies that were examined during the Salem witch trials slowly fade into a fictional representation of loss. This loss is something that is felt not only by those close to the situation, but also felt by "strangers" who water the grave. Davidson asserts that this novel ends with "the negation of the female self" through not only the death, but perhaps more importantly Eliza's silencing (Davidson 146). However, silence is not just silence. Silences can be loud. The lack of Eliza's voice in the form of less letters and eventually no letters from her point-of-view represents the power that silence, or absence, can have. The loss of her as a main character in her own story is one that creates a powerful sense of absence and elicits a painful reaction in readers.

It is not only in *Coquette* that these tensions reveal themselves. *Charlotte Temple*, by Susanna Rowson, is another novel that similarly deals with a fictionalized female character who

has a baby and then later dies. Published in 1791 in England and 1794 in America, a similar narrative is established where a young, naïve girl falls prey to a seducing villain and, interestingly enough, Mademoiselle La Rue, a teacher who helps facilitate Charlotte's fall. There are a few differences between this text and *Coquette*, however. Here, the body both disappears and becomes concrete at the same time. Charlotte is a fictional character who, nonetheless, receives her own tombstone in real life. This real grave does not contain a body, yet it still becomes a monument that, even today, people visit and leave memorial tokens. Furthermore, in the story, Charlotte's baby lives. This tale shows a fictional body made physical through the tombstone and also affords the possibility for life and not infanticide to be the result of the story. In this manner, sentimental fiction changes the mold exploring different avenues for this space of disordered female bodies.

Contextually, the progression of texts I have discussed dealing with aberrant female behavior shift notably through changing religious beliefs and other cultural traumas like war. Eventually, this progression leads to sentimental fiction like the aforementioned *Coquette* and *Charlotte Temple*. Julia Stern summarizes this progression through cultural trauma and non-citizens:

> The nation's non-citizens—women, the poor, Native American, African Americans, prematurely interred beneath the great national edifice whose erection they enable, provide an unquiet platform for the construction of republican privilege…these tales envision and give voice to the otherwise imperceptible underside of republican culture in the age of reason, offering their newly constituted American audience a gothic and feminized set of counternarratives to read against the male-authored manifest accounts of national legitimation. (2)

Davidson echoes a similar idea when she states that "the novel, I would insist, addressed those gaps in independence…The revolution that did not occur for many Americans on the level of the political and legal system did occur, to a greater or lesser extent, within a fictive world of words" (Davidson vii). In this manner, the silenced of the country become visible through a fictional world based on choices and possibilities. This is the performative space opened up by female criminality. This impulse also reveals much about the shift between women who fall away from virtue in crime literature such as execution narratives and how this type of literature is related to their eventual fictional counterparts. A similar cultural tension emerges with how to control women's bodies and perceptions of criminality and gendered expectations connected to those bodies. Even as this process seeks to control, the discursive process of trying to control leads to ruptures in meaning leading to a picture that is essentially fragmented. Furthermore, the rhetoric surrounding the now sentimental texts dealing with female criminals reveals the manner in which performance changes in small, but significant ways. The sentimental shift reveals a specific process where certain trends, such as an increase in the focus on family and a shift in the villain of the story, reveal a greater cultural shift in the perception of female criminals and how the culture both utilizes and is transformed by this power.

This uneasy pattern uses female criminality for the purposes of discussing the nation's problems, punctuated by violence and bodily fears. In 1692, witches took the central focus of a community in turmoil from war, economic issues, and religious strife. Their bodies intertwine with rhetoric during trials to create meaningful texts of fear and control. This pattern continues into the eighteenth century with crime literature that utilizes much of the same rhetoric of body and sin in infanticide narratives. Here, ministers attempt to adapt the voice of the female criminal to be suitable as a warning for a community they felt was falling apart through lack of attention

to God. This process continues with, again, similar rhetoric of body giving way into the rise of sentimental fiction. This process can be read through the example of Elizabeth Wilson whose texts span all the possibilities of female crime literature in this time period in America from trial narrative to fictionalized sentimental account. Though often controlled by a dominant voice, such as ministers or leaders of the community, female bodies and behavior also became the vehicle through which women gain visibility and, at times, a voice. Rather than just analyzing these texts for their historical merits, I propose an approach that considers more than just the facts that historical records give us. Just considering facts, or what we can know for sure, simplifies the complexities of what is actually happening with these women and their stories. Acknowledging the gaps in knowledge opens possibilities to understanding not only these texts, but also the culture that produces them. Those attempting to create one true accurate account from these types of cultural artifacts are missing the point. This process is not one that ends in a period, but rather endless ellipses that allow us to embrace the ambiguity of these spaces. This ambiguity is what gives us the ability to understand a more accurate portrayal of the complex processes happening on all levels from the woman's story to the complexities surrounding a rhetorical and cultural situation.

It is also important to question why women become this symbol, this site, this function for the culture. Asking these questions leads to answers that are necessarily gendered both in the cultural moment and in how we attempt to read the stories of female criminals. Though cultural context changes, this process of channeling the performative power of female criminals during tense cultural moments in order to control, but also mark a loss of control continues. These are not random rulings or cultural artifacts, but rather an ideological battlefield born of cultural tension playing itself out over women's bodies and behavior. Reflecting back allows us to trace

these patterns and analyze the rhetoric that emerges from female criminality historically. This historical understanding allows us to understand the cultural moment of the eighteenth century in America. We can recover voices and a more complete, though fragmented, cultural narrative characterized by ambiguity and negotiation. This process can also help negotiate the continued pattern of control and violence when it comes to female bodies that become public and the desire to use and control those bodies. It is in the symbolic space of defaulting to women's bodies to entertain, to instruct, to control, and to become a symbol of everything the country is, should be, or wants to be that we can hear the voices of female criminals and the cultures they reflect and inform.

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