

From Hawthorne to History: The Mythologizing of John Endecott

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Edward M. Griffin
advisor, mentor, friend

ABSTRACT

Since the Revolutionary War, American historians, literary artists, and social commentators have undertaken a retroactive search for an acceptable myth of origin predating the Revolution. While the war itself has been endlessly and successfully deployed as a sterling founding moment, that claim alone has proved insufficient for several reasons. First, Americans have long been ambivalent about their pre-Revolution Puritan heritage. The new republic emerging from the revolutionary effort rested on ground previously inhabited by British colonists (and others) since the 1620s, but the colonial past did not readily speak to the feisty, independent, and distinctively “American” self-image that mythologized during and after the war. Additionally, by the 19th century, when the writing of New England history came prominently into vogue, quite a few pages of the Puritan chapter had become embarrassing. Something else was needed: an event *earlier* than the shot heard round the world in 1775, and a governing image *more manly* than the standard figure of the pious Puritans.

When Nathaniel Hawthorne’s stories “Endicott and the Red Cross” and “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” entered the nubile world of American literature in the 1830s, Hawthorne seemed to have answered that call. Reaching back to 1634, he made historical John Endecott a central fictional figure: a man “wrought of iron” wielding a mighty sword against the idolatrous May-Pole and slashing the red cross from the English flag—precisely the needed image. Typically, Hawthorne’s readers, then and now, have generally missed his ironic signals and interpreted Endecott’s sword-play as the first declaration of independence.

Hawthorne’s slippery tone has seldom produced more long-lasting literary and historical consequences than it has in his Endecott stories. This study analyzes their manifestations in a gallery of colonial and American historians, annalist, and folklorists (Hutchinson, Johnson, Parkman, Bancroft, Motley, Felt, Drake), through Longfellow and Whittier, to scholarly and family biographies of Endecott, and into the 20th century in Lowell’s plays and the *Merry Mount* opera of Hanson and Stokes. Endecott’s case dramatizes literature’s power to perform “cultural work” by trumping history when a nation needs to create its myths of origin from accounts of a dubious past.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| List of Figures | v |
| Introduction | 1 |
| CHAPTER ONE: HAWTHORNE AND ENDECOTT 1830-1838 | 7 |
| 1. “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” (1836) | |
| 2. “Endicott and the Red Cross” (1838) | |
| 3. “The Gentle Boy” (1832) | |
| 4. Conclusion | |
| CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY, LEGEND & FOLKLORE: THE SHADOWS OF JOHNSON AND HAWTHORNE FALL UPON 19 TH CENTURY HISTORIANS AND FOLKLORISTS | 69 |
| 1. Introduction: Accountability and Erasure | |
| 2. The Problem with Historical Truth | |
| 3. Colonial Historians Edward Johnson, Thomas Morton, and Thomas Hutchinson on Endecott: A Fit Instrument or Great Swelling Fellow? | |
| 4. The Imaginative Historians: Parkman, Bancroft, Motley | |
| 5. The Anthologists as Historians: Griswold and the Duyckink Brothers to the American Literature Survey | |
| 6. Endecott in Legends, Annals & Folklore: Drake, Felt, Hawkes, the Flag, and the U.S. Congress | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER THREE: ENDECOTT'S TEMPTATION: WHITTIER, LONGFELLOW, AND THE QUAKERS | 125 |
| 1. Introduction | |
| 2. John Greenleaf Whittier (1802-1892) | |
| 3. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) | |
| 4. Conclusion | |
| CHAPTER FOUR: THE LURE OF GENEALOGY | 157 |
| 1. Story as Primogeniture | |
| 2. The Irony of John Endecott's Offspring | |
| 3. Biography, Glory & Honor | |
| 4. Portraiture as Historical Artifact | |
| 5. Myth, Blasted: The Future of Family Memoir | |
| CHAPTER FIVE: ENDECOTT ON STAGE IN THE 20 TH CENTURY | 195 |
| 1. Introduction | |
| 2. Merry Mount: The Opera | |
| 3. The Old Glory | |
| EPILOGUE: JOHN ENDECOTT'S SWORD | 226 |
| 1. The History of the Sword: 1634-1991 | |
| 2. The Search for the Sword: 2003 | |
| 3. The Search Continued: 2009 | |
| 4. Conclusion | |
| Bibliography | 236 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | |
|------------|--|-----|
| 2.1 | Portrait of John Endecott | 96 |
| 2.2 | The British Union Jack and the Flag of England | 116 |
| 2.3 | 1600 flag of the British East India Company | 116 |
| 2.4 | Flag of the British Virgin Islands | 116 |
| 2.5 | English Red Ensign | 116 |
| 2.6 | Flag of New Zealand | 117 |
| 2.7 | Flag of Scotland | 117 |
| 4.1 | Portrait of John Endecott | 157 |
| 4.2 | Portrait of John Endecott | 157 |
| 4.3 | Portrait of John Endecott | 157 |
| 4.4 | Judge's Cave, New Haven, CT | 173 |
| 4.5 | John Endecott: Image from an unidentified copy of <i>Magnalia Christi Americana</i> | 187 |
| 4.6 | John Endecott: From the portrait painted in Boston in 1665 and now in possession of William Crowninshield Endicott | 188 |
| 4.7 | Reproduction by Michele Felice Corne, 1802, now in possession of the American Antiquarian Society | 188 |
| 4.8 | Copy by T. Mitchell after the portrait in the Council Chamber, Boston. In possession of the Essex Institute, Salem, MA | 189 |
| 4.9 | Image from www.mass.gov : "Portrait by an unknown artist, 1665" | 190 |
| 4.10 | An unidentified copy from www.salemfocus.com | 190 |
| 4.11 | Image from www.hawthorneinsalem.com | 191 |
| 4.12 | One of two dissimilar copies by James Frothingham | 191 |
| Epilogue.1 | English flag with Red Cross of St. George | 226 |
| Epilogue.2 | John Endecott's sword | 229 |

Introduction

Since the Revolutionary War, American historians, literary artists, and social commentators have undertaken a retroactive search for an acceptable myth of origin that predates the Revolution. While the war itself has been endlessly and successfully deployed as a sterling founding moment, that claim alone has proved insufficient for several reasons. First, Americans—especially those of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant heritage—have been ambivalent about their pre-Revolution Puritan heritage nearly since the last pumpkin-shell haircut grew out. The new republic that emerged from the revolutionary effort was built on ground that had been inhabited by British colonists (and others) since the 1620s, but the colonial past did not readily speak to the feisty, independent, and distinctively “American” self-image that mythologized during and after the war. Additionally, by the nineteenth century, when the writing of New England history came prominently into vogue, quite a few pages of the Puritan chapter had become embarrassing. America, alas, did not suddenly materialize in 1776, like Athena bursting fully formed from the head of Zeus, although that transformation would have been very convenient. Something else was needed: an event *earlier* than the shot heard round the world in 1775, and a governing image *more manly* than the standard figure of the pious Puritans.

When Nathaniel Hawthorne's stories "Endicott and the Red Cross" and "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" entered the nubile world of American literature in the 1830s, Hawthorne seemed to have answered that call. He had reached back to 1634, positioning John Endecott as central figure in those fictions, calling him a man "wrought of iron," supplying him with a mighty sword to wield against the idolatrous May-Pole and to slash against the red cross in the flag of England, and suggesting that Endecott's attack on the flag was the first blow to prefigure the eventual American revolt from the mother country more than two centuries later. It was precisely the image that was needed. As was so often the case with Hawthorne, readers missed his ironic signals and interpreted Endecott's sword-play as a deadly serious (and historically accurate) moment in American history-making, and this study demonstrates that Hawthorne's slippery tone has seldom produced more long-lasting literary and historical consequences than it has in his Endecott stories.

Endecott was perfect for several reasons. Before being immortalized by Hawthorne, Endecott was a historical personage—the first Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1628—about whom little was known prior to his arrival in New England at the age of forty, the gap in his background thus providing a gap in the record that could be filled selectively and often apocryphally with Endecott's alleged deeds, ideology, and, despite his Puritanism, demonstrations of hot-headed manliness. Combined with this absence of verifiable personal information was the fact that Endecott conveniently wrote almost nothing, even during the seventeen years he served as governor of the Bay Colony. Hence, he was ripe for imaginative creation as a character in fiction. I suggest that the incorporation of Endecott is a process of cultural reinvention that relies on either

rendering past events “accountable” or erasing them from public memory.¹ The appropriation of Endecott enabled the creation of a national literary narrative including the highlights of America’s colonial past while ignoring the embarrassments, such as Endecott’s persecution of the Quakers. The construction of the governing myth was necessarily a two-step process: the American Revolution was the nation’s myth of origin, and the revolution’s myth of origin was the red cross incident.

The search for myths of origin bears upon the uneasy dance that has ensued in recent years between theorists regarding America’s status as either colonized or colonizer.

Edward Watts argues persuasively in *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic* that a country can be both at once.² Watts correctly points out that the debate about the nation’s ambivalence toward its colonial legacy has never been resolved.³ Moreover, the symptoms of America’s cultural anxiety over the issue of its colonial origins have taken many forms. The construct of particular interest in this study is the demonstrated power of literature to distort the historical record. In this regard, Jane Tompkins has been helpful. Tompkins, in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860*, was one of the first scholars to posit this inextricable connection between literature and politics, arguing that literature which has attained “classic” status—the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne, for example—has done so not necessarily on its merits, but because the values it embodies represent the partisan interests of preeminent parties or

¹ Terminology is borrowed from Stephen Carl Arch, *Authorizing the Past: The Rhetoric of History in Seventeenth-Century New England* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994).

² Edward Watts, *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 1.

factions.⁴ Although the particulars of her case against Hawthorne have been sharply debated, the persistent usefulness of Hawthorne's Endecott stories to various parties and factions will become clear in this study. Furthermore, Tompkins has provided a useful concept, "cultural work," that helps explain the ongoing appropriation of John Endecott as a cultural hero, and especially the interpretation of the red cross incident as a self-consciously constructed omen of the American revolution. The phrase "cultural work" signifies that, at certain points in cultural development, a nation asks significant questions of itself and looks to its literature to accomplish the work of answering them. For nearly two hundred years this version of America's classic search for "a useable past" has relied on Hawthorne's fictional version of the historical Endecott to perform the work of supplying an originary myth, a story that has satisfied many historians, fiction writers, poets, and biographers and raised the eyebrows of only a few of them.

My study proceeds from the documentary record to the imaginative record, first establishing a background based on the documentary record and on a thorough review of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century commentaries on Endecott as man and governor. Having done so, I demonstrate how Hawthorne, himself an assiduous student of the colonial past working two centuries after Endecott's life in New England, mixed and matched elements of the historical record and various commentaries to assemble a new, fictional version of history for his collection of tales and stories that in the aggregate compose an imaginative history of the colonial past. After Hawthorne's work, both his

⁴ Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

contemporaries in literature and historiography and their successors found themselves forced, perhaps seduced, into taking the Hawthorne legends into account, both for what Hawthorne did with Endecott and what he left out. Hence, I trace Endecott through the major writers of the nineteenth century, in prose and poetry, to demonstrate the resilience of the Endecott myth and the subsequent erasure of some of the less savory aspects of the career of Hawthorne's iron man. To exemplify the persistent fascination of this tale, I turn finally to Endecott's revival in the twentieth-century world of operatic theater and poetic drama.

Chapter 1 of this study addresses the Endecott phenomenon inadvertently created by Hawthorne in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" (1836), "Endicott and the Red Cross" (1838), and "The Gentle Boy" (1832). Chapter 2 traces the Endecott myth as it appears in nineteenth-century history, legend and folklore. Endecott's role in the persecution of the Quakers during the 1650s and his function as a character in the poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is explored in chapter 3. Chapter 4 investigates the way the biography of Endecott has been appropriated and celebrated in the many memoirs and memorials written by his descendants, demonstrating that it is Hawthorne's creation rather than the historical Endecott who is memorialized. Akin to Endecott's biographical morphing is his depiction in portraiture; only one original (and highly damaged) portrait exists, but there are twenty-three extant copies. Chapter 5 follows the Endecott myth onto stage in the twentieth century for two more reinventions through the dramatic vehicles of the Howard Hanson/Richard Stokes opera, *Merry Mount* (1931), and the original and revised versions of Robert Lowell's play, "Endecott and the

Red Cross” (1964, 1968). The Epilogue tracks my search for the sword with which Endecott supposedly cut the red cross from the English flag from 1628 to the present.

This study contributes to the debate about whether the United States can properly be termed a post-colonial nation, for my work demonstrates, even if it seems theoretically unlikely, an ongoing preoccupation with national identity that, in the period following independence and stretching to the twenty-first century, feels it must take into account its continuity with its long colonial past as well as asserting its radical departure from the colonial empire of which it was a part for nearly two hundred years.

Chapter 1

HAWTHORNE AND ENDECOTT

1830-1838

Nathaniel Hawthorne portrayed John Endecott, the first acting governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, in three tales, “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” “Endicott and the Red Cross” and “The Gentle Boy.” In Hawthorne’s short fiction, Endecott appears as a major figure only in these. All three demonstrate Hawthorne’s rich familiarity with the available documentary sources, a familiarity all the more significant because he chose to exclude some features of the Endecott story that he encountered in his research while emphasizing others. Subsequent writers who retold the stories of these historical events adopted many aspects of Hawthorne’s versions, including his internal editing of the primary documents. Because later writers most often fixed on and borrowed from “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” “Endicott and the Red Cross,” and “The Gentle Boy,” they have continued to supply updated versions of Hawthorne’s Endecott, thus perpetuating a depiction that remains, in terms of the historical record, a decidedly partial, distorted portrait. If we pursue the *history of the construct* of the Endecott legend—if we endeavor to read Endecott as he appears in the historical record, not as literature constructs him—a new picture of America will emerge which will challenge the sacred

myths of origin invented in the 19th century and reveal an evolving, four-hundred-year-old tale of deception that would be amusing if the first draft had not proved so deadly.

In these tales, Hawthorne displays his characteristic ambivalence about the Puritan past: he casts Endecott in three very different roles, none black-and-white. In the first, Endecott plays a sword-wielding religious fanatic and spoil-sport, protective of the Puritan community; in the second, a sword-wielding Separatist revolutionary whose heroism is tainted by the political danger it brings to the colony; in the third, a persecutor of the Quakers, but not without a strange fictional counterpart in the form of a neglectful mother. No single Endecott emerges from these portrayals, and each characterization contains many gaps. A more comprehensive portrait is needed because the Endecott of legend, Hawthornian in origin but reinforced throughout American literature, no longer suffices at a time when both the histories of the early modern world and of American literature are under reconsideration and reconceptualization.

Hawthorne himself was descended from both persecutors and the persecuted. His ancestor Major William Hathorne arrived in the New World in 1630 on the *Arbella*, the ship that carried Governor John Winthrop; William became a deputy to the General Court of Massachusetts, attained the rank of major in campaigns against the Indians, and was a “bitter persecutor” of Quakers (Hawthorne’s words). Hawthorne’s grandmother, Rachel Phelps Hawthorne, was descended from Salem Quakers who were jailed and banished by William Hathorne.⁵ Hawthorne was, in Michael J. Colacurcio’s view, “genuinely and

⁵ *Hawthorne in Salem*, “The Paternal Ancestors of Nathaniel Hawthorne: Introduction,” <http://www.hawthorneinsalem.org/Life&Times/Family/Paternal/Introduction.html>.

deeply ambivalent about the American past” and wanted his readers to become so as well.⁶ Colacurcio believes that Hawthorne’s divided feelings, his “personal ambivalence,” receives “its literary redemption as historical ambiguity”: For Hawthorne, Endicott was *both* a bigot *and* an exemplary figure of colonial revolt.⁷ Viewed retrospectively, as Hawthorne and other writers necessarily viewed the seventeenth century, there were in the American past many events incompatible with the new nation’s ever-growing myth of itself as a land of freedom and equality, and to typify the contradictions Hawthorne found in Endecott a useful personage.

The ambivalence of Hawthorne’s characters is typical of the constant rewriting of the story of America in which John Endecott is only one player. John McWilliams, tracing the shifting history of American myth-making between 1620 and 1860, identifies a “pattern of recreating the New England past built upon a double rhetoric of liberty that succeeds in having it both ways.”⁸ Referring to Emerson’s 1861 essay “Boston,” McWilliams observes that “depending on the context, Emerson can urge his audience toward good work in the present by tracing Boston’s tradition of Puritan and neo-Puritan Liberty back either to the early governors *or* to Roger Williams, to John Winthrop *or* John Wheelwright, to George Whitefield *or* to Charles Chauncy. . . . Whenever the voice of the people threatens to shout the voice of God, Boston’s history shows that a libertarian heresiarch, not unlike Hawthorne’s Gray Champion, will arise, and will

⁶ Michael J. Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne’s Early Tales* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 224.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ John McWilliams, *New England’s Crises and Cultural Memory: Literature, Politics, History, Religion 1620-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17.

somehow not only be heard but followed.”⁹ For McWilliams, Hawthorne’s tale captures the essence of New England’s love affair with genealogy: “Should domestic tyranny oppress us, or the invader’s step pollute our soil, still may the Gray Champion come; for he is the type of New-England’s hereditary spirit; and his shadowy march, on the eve of danger, must ever be the pledge, that New-England’s sons will vindicate their ancestry.”¹⁰ This is but one example of the many ways in which nineteenth-century writers wove together history, genealogy, and myth as competing but overlapping ways of engaging the past. I suggest that the historical tendency to “have it both ways” (and like it) is an important factor in John Endecott’s usefulness to both American history and fiction: Endecott has been employed to represent the rebel *and* the majority.

In a recent interview, Irish playwright Thomas Kilroy discussed the creative process involved in borrowing well-known characters from history for *The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde*. “To write a play or novel about characters who have already lived in history is only possible after a process by which the writer comes to possess those characters in a highly personal way,” Kilroy said. “This may, indeed, distort historical reality. . . . It is for this reason that writers of historical plays or novels are particularly *drawn to gaps in the historical record* [my emphasis]. I see such gaps [as] missing pages in the evidence, as ways of intervening in the story. . . .”¹¹ This contemporary observation is keenly applicable to John Endecott, whose literary value for nearly four centuries has

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Gray Champion,” *Twice-Told Tales* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 10. The story was written in 1835.

¹¹ Thomas Kilroy, “The Wildean Triangle,” performance program, *The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde*, Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis, MN, 8 June 2008, 14. This article is an abridged text of a radio-talk given by the playwright at the time of the Dublin production of the play. www.guthrietheater.org.

proven to rest both in his status as a known character and as a “gap in the historical record.”

“The May-Pole of Merry Mount” (1836)

In his brief introduction to “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” Hawthorne admits to fashioning “a sort of allegory” from the “facts” recorded by New England annalists, although he also states that the allegorical process occurred “almost spontaneously,” thus setting up the tale as being powered by a force beyond himself, and making him an early advocate of the literary notion that some stories write themselves.¹² Perhaps the spontaneous influence he alludes to is emotional truth, or something like it. But, typical for Hawthorne, the process is *almost* spontaneous.

“Jollity and gloom were contending for an empire,” Hawthorne writes in the opening paragraph, apparently preparing us for an uncomplicated, binary reading of the tale that subsequently proves to be impossible. Merry Mount, the puritanically unorthodox settlement of Thomas Morton and his followers, was engaged in celebration of the May, an old European custom that included dances around a decorated may-pole, costumes, wine, role-playing, possibly unauthorized sex—in short, a list of uninhibited festivities sure to offend Puritan sensibilities. Into this thespian, intoxicated celebration of spring and fertility stomps “iron man” John Endicott and his band of Puritans, “most dismal

¹² Hawthorne, “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” *Twice-Told Tales*, 38.

wretches” for whom the whipping-post served as a may-pole, to ruin the party.¹³ After some name-calling and chest-pounding, Endicott chops down the may-pole with his sword and lines up the merry-makers for whipping. However, a strange change of heart strikes the “Puritan of Puritans” when he perceives Edith and Edgar, a young couple dressed as the Lord and Lady of the May who were about to be married before the interruption occurred. Their love and devotion to one another—each wants to endure the “stripes” of the other—touch Endicott; he smiles “at the fair spectacle of early love; he almost sighed, for the inevitable blight of early hopes.”¹⁴

Endicott’s rather glum assessment of what life might have to offer is foreshadowed by the “dreary presentiment of inevitable change” Edith experiences as soon as she feels real passion. It was Edith’s “mystery,” Hawthorne tells us, that true love subjected her to “earth’s doom of care, and sorrow, and troubled joy.”¹⁵ Instead of flogging, Edith and Edgar are rewarded with pardon and assimilated into the Puritan colony. One might find this an unenviable blessing, but Hawthorne, ambivalent and unpredictable as always, tells us that it was a “deed of prophecy. As the moral gloom of the world overpowers all systematic gaiety, even so was their home of wild mirth made desolate amid the sad forest.”¹⁶ The young couple, by way of Endicott’s tantrum followed by his emotional about-face, are introduced to reality, which is portrayed here as a glum prospect indeed; their best hope is their love and support of each other “along the difficult path which it

¹³ Ibid., 47,43.

¹⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹⁵ Ibid., 41.

¹⁶ Ibid., 47.

was their lot to tread.”¹⁷

If Endicott is portrayed as a power-mad dolt in this tale, he nevertheless seems to have a grip on what Hawthorne suggests that real life—adult emotions, adult expectations—can reasonably be expected to render. Endicott’s angry intrusion into a private celebration has, in the end, a very mixed result. The fact that Hawthorne creates a highly flawed, ridiculous character to communicate a kind of wisdom is evidence of his art. It is also evidence of the slippery utility of the character John Endicott as a literary device.

Hawthorne’s creative rendition of historical events departs from the record in several significant ways. Endecott’s mercurial twists of temperament have a basis in his historical behavior, and he did destroy the may-pole, but that is where the similarities between history and fiction end. In fact, Endecott and Morton were not together at Merry-Mount; Morton had already been deported to England. Approximately seven adult men remained at Merry-Mount at the time Endecott barged in from the woods and hacked down the may-pole apropos of nothing. There was no party in progress.

Hawthorne takes this odd display of temper in the middle of nowhere, conflates several historical events, and creates a tale that serves to both criticize and accept the Puritan lot; to make Endicott both absurd and wise; to call organized mirth counterfeit happiness and yet portray the alternative as a difficult, pre-dawn to post-dark daily grind; in short, to leave the reader wondering what exactly happened and whose side he is supposed to take. This may sound like a lose-lose scenario to the modern reader, but I

¹⁷ Ibid., 48.

think something else is at work here: Hawthorne is exploring alternate realities and alternate historical possibilities as he writes. It is not a tidy, chronological process, which is why the Endicotts portrayed in the three tales under discussion here bear little or no resemblance to one another; the adaptation of the historical Endecott for creative purposes is not a march from 1628 straight through Endicott's documented blunders and recognized successes to a final characterization that unequivocally shows a master plan. For Hawthorne, Endicott is a literary test case. If in this story thoughtless gaiety and Puritan repression are equally unattractive options, then New England in 1830, synecdochical of America, must create some other kind of present and future. Hawthorne's delicate dance with history offers no easy moves, but it does offer a means of critically viewing the past that engages the reader, along with the writer, as a creator of history-in-progress. Within Hawthorne's fascinating tumble of words and meanings one thing is clear: it is no coincidence or authorial whim that the unlikely John Endicott is given a critical role to play in this founding moment of national seriousness. Merry-Mount disappears but Massachusetts Bay Colony survives. Hawthorne has Endicott the character stumble into a confrontation and precipitate a crisis, the ultimate meaning of which has nothing to do with Endicott and everything to do with an American myth of origin; in one sense, the story exists before he arrives. He is reinvented again and again as Hawthorne and other writers work at rendering a usable American past.

John Winthrop's journal, *History of New England 1630-1649*, published in 1790 and again in 1825-26, is frequently assumed to have been one of Hawthorne's sources for his

historical fiction. Michael J. Colacurcio, in his exhaustive study, *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales*, concludes that it was “surely” Hawthorne’s “primary” source.¹⁸ Although Hawthorne’s “Endicott and the Red Cross” (1838) and “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” (1836) have become two of the best-known of the Endecott legends and are certainly the most often borrowed from by subsequent writers,¹⁹ Mount Wollaston (referred to as Merry Mount under the irreverent leadership of Thomas Morton) gets only one brief notation in Winthrop’s *History*: on 17 September 1639 the town petitioned to have a minister. If the story of Endecott’s chopping down the maypole and punishing selective revelers had its origin in the historical record, it must have been recorded elsewhere, for in Winthrop’s account it is not mentioned at all.

William Bradford’s history, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, is another of Hawthorne’s likely sources. Bradford has an account of Endecott, but Hawthorne had no direct access to *Of Plymouth Plantation*, for the manuscript was removed either by Loyalists or the British military at the end of the siege of Boston in 1776 and was not discovered until 1855 in the library of the Bishop of London. Extensive parts of Bradford’s manuscript, however, had been copied or borrowed from it before its removal. Nathaniel Morton, nephew of Governor Bradford and Secretary of Plymouth Colony, was the first to utilize Bradford’s history when he freely referred to it in his history, *New England’s Memoriall*, published in 1669, after which he copied the first part of the

¹⁸ Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety*, 227.

¹⁹ Until 1724, John Endecott and his descendants spelled the name Endecott. After that, the spelling was changed to Endicott. See Stephen Salisbury, *A Memorial of Governor John Endecott* (Worcester: Charles Hamilton, 1874), 2. I have not been able to discover the reason behind the change. Hawthorne apparently chose to adopt the current spelling at the time he was writing in 1838.

journal (through to Chapter IX) into the Plymouth church records. William Hubbard used it for his *History of New England* (1683). It was also used by Increase Mather of Boston when writing his history of the Indian wars and by his son, Cotton Mather, for his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702). Reverend Thomas Prince referred to the journal in writing his *Chronological History of New England* (1736). The last person known to use the Bradford manuscript (before its theft) was Governor Thomas Hutchinson for the second volume of his *History of Massachusetts Bay*, published in 1767.²⁰

Hawthorne read Morton's *New England's Memorial* in its 1826 edition and frequently used it as a source.²¹ In *Hawthorne's Reading 1828-1850*, Marion Kesselring meticulously traces Hawthorne's library habits, confirming that either Hawthorne or his aunt, Mary Manning (who often borrowed books for him), checked out all of the above histories, plus dozens more, from the Salem lending library.²² The list of books is vast. Hawthorne read everything (or at least had the books in his possession) and apparently left few if any sources intentionally unexplored. Consequently, Governor Bradford's account of Endecott, as recorded in Morton, was in Hawthorne's possession and readily available as a source. Bradford tells the story of Thomas Morton's run-ins with the Plymouth Colony and mentions Endecott's cutting down of the may pole.

In transcribing Bradford's manuscript, however, Nathaniel Morton eliminated what Colacurcio identifies as a critical parenthetical phrase—"as follows to be declared"—the

²⁰ Samuel Eliot Morison, Introduction, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), xxvii-xliii.

²¹ Colacurcio, note, 606.

²² Marion L. Kesselring, *Hawthorne's Reading 1828-1850: A Transcription of Titles Recorded in the Charge-Books of the Salem Athenaeum* (New York: New York Public Library, 1949).

absence of which misleads the reader to believe that Thomas Morton was in fact present when Endecott cut down the maypole, which he was not (he was in England). The following passage from Bradford's original account is dated 1628:

They [Morton and cohorts] fell to great licentiousness and led a dissolute life, pouring themselves into all profaneness. And Morton became Lord of Misrule, and maintained (as it were) a School of Atheism. . . . They also set up a maypole, drinking and dancing about it many days together, inviting the Indian women for their consorts, dancing and frisking together like so many fairies, or furies, rather; and worse practices. As if they had anew revived and celebrated the feasts of the Roman goddess Flora, or the beastly practices of the mad Bacchanalians. . . . They changed also the name of their place, and instead of calling it Mount Wollaston they call it Merry-mount, as if this jollity would have lasted ever. But this continued not long, for after Morton was sent for England (*as follows to be declared*) shortly after came over that worthy gentleman Mr. John Endecott, who brought over a patent under the broad seal for the government of the Massachusetts. Who, visiting those parts, caused that maypole to be cut down and rebuked them for their profaneness and admonished them to look there should be better walking.²³ (My italics.)

Three pages later in this atypical diatribe (Bradford was usually a model of restraint), still on the subject of Morton, Bradford writes, "But I have forgot myself," and then returns at length to his complaints, agonizing over what a thorn the man was to the colony.²⁴

²³ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1629-1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 206.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

Clearly, Morton's shenanigans were of much greater urgency for Bradford than was Endecott's attack on the undefended maypole. One wonders if Bradford would have even mentioned Endecott's action if Morton had not gotten so thoroughly under the Governor's skin. Bradford mentions Endecott in passing in other various reports of daily business and does not write about the considerably more exciting 1634 red cross incident at all.

But it is the chronological irregularity of the account, unchecked by Bradford's original parentheses, that makes it appear that Thomas Morton and Endecott were together during the event instead of an ocean apart.²⁵ Colacurcio writes, "Nathaniel Morton changes only a few of Bradford's words, and yet he somehow manages to change everything."²⁶ The confusion was corrected in a footnote supplied by Morton's editor of the 1826 edition, John Davis; in addition, Bradford's original letter was contained in the Salem Athenaeum in a volume entitled "Governor Bradford's Letter Book" which Hawthorne borrowed in November 1827.²⁷ "There is no doubt," Colacurcio states, "that Hawthorne did indeed *see* that letter." Colacurcio observes:

Providing him with the facts required not only to set straight the chronological record but also to sort out the mix of issues, it showed him that Endicott's real victory had been to get himself into the story *at all*. Having intruded himself into a place where he had no earthly business or historic jurisdiction, and into an affair already (in 1629) concluded in every way except the literary, Endicott had succeeded in warping all

²⁵ Ibid., 205.

²⁶ Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety*, 267.

²⁷ Ibid., note, 606.

other stories into his own. Simply by cutting down the maypole when in fact nothing at all political depended on it, he had won at a stroke a contest of chronologies and even of deep historic issues in the name of Puritan Allegory: *here* is our meaning, don't you see—hack, hack!—and Devil take the view of the King and his Council for New England.²⁸

Colacurcio makes a great deal of the missing phrase—perhaps *too* much—but his point nicely illustrates the vulnerability of historical documents to the pens of even the most well-intentioned chroniclers. However, whether Hawthorne would actually have misread Bradford without the clarifying letter is doubtful—a more attentive and thorough researcher than Hawthorne can scarcely be imagined—and it is equally dubious that Hawthorne needed help sorting out “the mix of issues.” The fact that he chose to mindfully conflate the two events—the assault on the maypole and the arrest of Thomas Morton and his revelers—for the purpose of literary allegory is evidence of his grip on the historical record and the ways in which its inherently narrative nature could be manipulated. From this time forward, Hawthorne was a major point of reference for other writers who, having read Hawthorne's fictionalized version of the historical maypole event, must necessarily come to the story of John Endecott with preconceptions.

If Endecott was an also-ran in Bradford's history, Thomas Morton was a major antagonist. And when Morton took pen in hand to write *New English Canaan* (1637), that alternative history of New England which made William Bradford so testy, Endecott was mercilessly satirized as Captain Littleworth:

²⁸ Ibid., 268.

There was a great swelling fellow, of Littleworth, crept over to Salem (by the help of Master Charterparty the Treasurer, and Master Ananias Increase the Collector for the Company of Separatists), to take upon him their employments for a time.²⁹

He resolving to make hay whiles the sun did shine, first pretended himself to be sent over as chief Justice of the Massachusetts Bay, and Salem forsooth; and took unto him a counsel, and a worthy one, no doubt; for the Cowkeeper of Salem was a prime man in these employments. And to add a Majesty (as he thought) to his new assumed dignity, he caused the Patent of the Massachusetts (new-brought into the land) to be carried where he went in his progress, to and fro, as an emblem of his authority; which the vulgar people, not acquainted with it, thought to be some instrument of Musick locked up in that covered case, and thought (for so some said) this man of Littleworth had been a fiddler.³⁰

Here, Endecott is ridiculed somewhat innocuously for his pretensions.

But later, in a chapter titled “Of the Manner How the Separatists Do Pay Debts to Them that are Without” (i.e., “without” or “outside” of the congregation and/or community of “Saints”), he does not get off so easily. A character named Mr. Fairecloth who has “blasphemed” against the Church of Salem is set up by Mr. Charterparty to fail

²⁹ Morton’s naming of characters is both satirical and sharply critical. In the Bible, two men named Ananias are noted as examples of perfidy and cruelty. In Ac 5:1-10, Ananias and his wife Sapphira withheld money from the Apostles—in effect, lied about the amount of their donation. Both dropped dead. Thus, love of praise for pretended generosity and love for money led to the first recorded sin in the life of the church. It is a warning to readers that “God cannot be mocked” (Gal 6:7). In Ac 23:2, a different Ananias, a high priest A.D. 47-59 noted for cruelty and violence, arrested Paul. When the revolt against Rome broke out, he was assassinated by his own people. Kenneth Barker, ed., *NIV Study Bible*, 10th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 2144, 2194-95.

³⁰ Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (Scituate: Digital Scanning, 2000), 164.

in repayment of a debt and thus be liable for punishment. “Captain Littleworth must be the man must press it against him”; the ensuing sentence for the ill Mr. Fairecloath was “to have his tongue bored through, his nose slit, his face branded, his ears cut; his body whipped in every several plantation of their Jurisdiction, and a fine of forty pounds imposed, with perpetual banishment. And to execute this vengeance, Shackles (the Deacon of Charlestown) was as ready as Mephostophiles when Doctor Faustus was bent upon mischief.”³¹ Shackles “made Fairecloath’s innocent back like the picture of Rawhead-and-Bloody-Bones, and his shirt like a pudding-wife’s apron. In this employment Shackles takes a great felicity, and glories in the practice of it.”³² Morton showcases Endecott’s soon-to-be legendary religious intolerance (Fairecloath belonged to the Church of England) and foreshadows the cruel streak that would later emerge, full-blown, in Endecott’s persecution of the Quakers. “These Separatists have special gifts,” Morton concludes, “for they are given to envy and malice extremely.”³³

It is not known how many of the copies of *New English Canaan* (initially printed in Amsterdam in 1637) reached New England. Four hundred copies, perhaps almost the whole edition, were confiscated in 1637 in an act of British government censorship. The title was not reprinted in America until 1883.³⁴ Given, William Bradford’s peevish reference to the work in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, however, it seems that some form of the book arrived with Morton (or perhaps ahead of him) when he resurfaced in New England for the third and final time in the fall of 1643:

³¹ Ibid., 178.

³² Ibid., 179. Pudding wife: a maker of sausage “puddings” from butcher shop offal.

³³ Ibid., 193.

³⁴ Jack Dempsey, preface, *New English Canaan* (Scituate: Digital Scanning, 2000), xxix.

Yet [Morton] got free again [after imprisonment in England], and writ an infamous and scurrilous book against many godly and chief men of the country, full of lies and slanders and fraught with profane calumnies against their names and persons and the ways of God. After sundry years when the wars were hot in England, he came again into the country [1643] and *was imprisoned at Boston for this book*, and other things, being grown old in wickedness [my emphasis].³⁵

It is possible to surmise but impossible to prove that Morton's Puritan counter-narrative was a source for Hawthorne's characterization of Endecott. Hawthorne's characterizations of Endecott in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" (1836) and "Endicott and the Red Cross" (1838) are closer to Morton's satire than to Bradford and Winthrop's straight-faced accounts, which leads one to suspect that either Hawthorne did indeed read Morton or that these two *very* different writers came to the same conclusions about Endecott two hundred years apart because there was plenty to mock. It is unknown how many copies of Morton's "history" found their way to the colonies, or when that occurred, or who read them. Only sixteen copies are extant today.³⁶ In any case, Morton's work is one of very few published primary sources that tell the story of John Endecott. If it is biased against Puritan ideals, perhaps it is no less negatively predisposed than the "histories" of Winthrop and Bradford are prejudiced in favor of Endecott and the moral and political positions he represented.

³⁵ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 217.

³⁶ Dempsey, preface, *New English Canaan*, xxviii.

The question must be asked how this melange of primary sources and subsequent fictional interpretations have contributed, over a period of nearly 400 years, to a highly selective reading of John Endecott—how those sources have, in fact, been appropriated in the construction of the John Endecott *story*. For it is a *story*, a *historical myth*, equal parts history and fable, and perhaps an inextricable intertwining of the two, that we are investigating here. We are watching the genesis of a belief about American national identity through the writing and reading of fiction. Why did the multiple and contradictory tales of the feats and failures of Endecott matter so much to nineteenth-century fiction writers? Because Endecott served as an all-purpose character, able to be cast alternately as demon or saint, a man who had conveniently written almost nothing and therefore could not be pinned down by historians or anyone else.³⁷ He was marvelously and handily ambiguous; as post-Revolutionary and post-Civil War America sifted through its checkered past to see what should be treasured and what should be discarded, its fiction writers found the perfect foil in Endecott. They could play him both ways.

“Endicott and the Red Cross”(1838)

On November 5, 1634, in Puritan Massachusetts, John Endecott cut the red cross from the English flag, thereby making the rest of the colony very nervous. Historical

³⁷ McWilliams, *New England's Crisis*, 65.

opinions vary regarding his motive (a blow for independence? revolt against the Anglican Church, which was symbolized by the red cross? rage against idolatry?), but all agree about his poor timing. The historical record shows that several months earlier, in September, the colony had received a royal commission announcing the imposition of the Anglican church, a new royal governor, and new regulations on Massachusetts.³⁸ The changes were designed to curtail any notions of colonial independence; the new governor would report directly to the crown, and a bishop of the Church of England would be available to squelch any Separatist leanings. The colony was in a critical period; the last thing it wanted or needed was to draw further attention to itself, particularly through an act that could be interpreted as treasonous.

Unfortunately, little historical detail exists regarding the actual flag-slashing (one longs for an eye witness with literary leanings) although this *moment* is most often imaginatively recreated in fiction written about the incident. We know that a complaint was brought before the General Court by Richard Brown of Watertown in November 1634, alleging that the ensign had been defaced, apparently during military maneuvers.³⁹ Endecott was absent, so the Court summoned the ensign-bearer, Richard Davenport, to appear at the next meeting and told him to bring the colors with him.⁴⁰ It was discovered that Davenport was not the culprit, as had been initially suspected. Endecott, the commander, had taken his sword to the flag. It is unknown if a particular action or statement by one of his soldiers triggered his rage, or if a conversation regarding the

³⁸ Gretchen Short, Notes to “Endicott and the Red Cross,” *Twice-Told Tales*, 403.

³⁹ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, vol. I, 1628-1641, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, M.D. (Boston: William White, 1853), 133.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

colony's predicament with England set him off, or if any of a dozen other possibilities unsheathed the sword. In any case, Endecott hit his flash-point. He did not report the incident or mention it to anyone in authority, a silence suggesting either that he considered his actions justified because the defacement was done to a symbol of England and the papist tendencies within the Anglican Church (as opposed to a symbol of the Bay Colony and the Puritan faith), or that he understood the problem and hoped it would quietly disappear.

In May 1635 a committee of thirteen men was chosen by the General Court to consider Endecott's act and to report how far they judged it censurable.⁴¹ The committee soon reported that Endicott "had offended therein in many ways, in rashness, uncharitableness, indiscretion, and exceeding the limits of his calling"; the Court censured him to be "sadly admonished" for his offence and disabled him from holding any office in the Commonwealth for one year.⁴² Apparently, Endicott took umbrage at the reprimand; his twentieth-century biographer, Lawrence Shaw Mayo, alleges that he "was thunderstruck."⁴³

The aftermath of the red cross incident is, in several ways, more interesting than the act itself. It tells us a great deal about Endicott. Consider the possibilities. Did he simply lose control, or did he understand the implications of the flag-slashing but think himself to be above or beyond the law? Was he blindly self-righteous? Delusional? Why did he freely commit the same kind of rebellious act for which he punished others many times

⁴¹ Ibid., 145.

⁴² Ibid., 146.

⁴³ Lawrence Shaw Mayo, *John Endecott: A Biography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 87.

while in office? More important, why did he believe that he deserved no similar penalty? Was it as simple as “us” (Puritans) and “them” (everyone else)? Would a stint at the whipping post have changed him? While none of these questions can be definitively answered, together they suggest a disturbing profile—that of a man who loved the law but felt himself immune to it, who doled out brutal punishments to others but endured none himself, whose psychic temperature was hot and unpredictable enough to render him unreliable and at times, a real liability, but who craved authority and responsibility and grasped them at every turn.

Winthrop’s account of the red cross debacle fleshes out the court records with a bit of explanation but is surprisingly brief, considering the potential political impact on the colony. In his journal Winthrop writes, “Mr. Endecott was . . . called into question about defacing the cross in the ensign . . .” A committee was chosen to consider the offence. Their report stated that they found Endecott’s actions to be

rash and without discretion, taking upon him more authority than he had, and not seeking the advice of the court, etc.; uncharitable, in that he, judging the cross, etc., to be a sin, did content himself to have reformed it at Salem, not taking care that others might be brought out of it also; laying a blemish upon the rest of the magistrates, as if they would suffer idolatry, etc., and giving occasion to the state of England to think illof us;—for which they adjoined him worthy admonition, and to be disabled for one

year from bearing any public office; declining any heavier sentence, because they were persuaded he did it out of tenderness of conscience, and not of any evil intent.⁴⁴

The reprimand is marvelously vague. What, for example, can be meant by the criticism that Endecott only wanted to reform sin at Salem? Surely the magistrates did not mean that he should have taken his sword show on the road to the other colonies. But it is difficult to conjecture what they *did* mean and what they would have had him do. Most historical accounts and all literary interpretations of Endecott's antics neglect to mention this part of the reprimand. The portions of the judgment most often cited (perhaps partly for their clarity and partly for their political usefulness) are the phrases about Endecott "taking upon him more authority than he had" and his actions being judged "rash and without discretion"; he had made the colony look bad—seditious—in the Mother Country. These criticisms are later deployed by writers in the construction of a decidedly ambiguous character—volatile, irrational, and largely fictitious, given to fits of rage one moment and kindness or passivity the next. The *Dictionary of American Biography* states, "The [red cross] incident is without importance save as it indicates his lack of judgement."⁴⁵ Similarly, the *American National Biography* cites the two short passages quoted above.⁴⁶ So it would seem that this particular action of Endecott's was, in the judgment of these twentieth-century biographers, of no major significance. The efficacy of that action for nineteenth-century authors who adopted Endecott as a subject is another matter. It has captured the creative imaginations of writers from Hawthorne in 1838 to

⁴⁴ John Winthrop, *History of New England 1630-1649*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 149-50.

⁴⁵ "John Endecott," *Dictionary of American Biography*, 1930 ed.

⁴⁶ "Endecott, John," *American National Biography*, vol. 7, 1977 ed.

playwright Robert Lowell in 1965, perhaps because, like Endecott himself, it is open to multiple interpretations.

In the opening paragraph of “Endicott and the Red Cross” Hawthorne sets the political stage on which the historical John Endecott becomes an actor. There was dissension between King Charles I and his subjects, Hawthorne tells us, and Archbishop Laud was empowered to ruin the two Puritan colonies, Plymouth and Massachusetts. The prospects of the colonists had never been so dismal. In this charged atmosphere, Endicott had mustered the Salem trainband for routine martial exercise and, as was customary, the English flag was flown.⁴⁷ After this seemingly straightforward exposition, Hawthorne’s narrative tone subtly reverts to understated sarcasm. He refers to “the famous Endicott,” which is the reader’s first clue to the author’s device: In 1634, when the historical red cross event occurred, Endecott was not “famous” for anything—his 1628 may pole “fame” was a literary construct that came two centuries later, at the hands of nineteenth-century fiction writers. From this point in the story onward, Hawthorne plays the role of the “unreliable narrator,” a skillful fictional device in which the narrator relates a skewed version of events, leaving the reader to catch on that he is being sold a bill of goods, as it were. This authorial tactic is most often employed in a first-person narrative, but instead, here Hawthorne deploys the authoritative voice of a third-person narrator while simultaneously undermining that authority with naive, fallible judgments, thus rendering the narrative persona both unreliable and complex. Hawthorne was innovative and original; he wrote with a cleverness undetected by many of his readers but not missed by

⁴⁷ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Endicott and the Red Cross,” *Twice-Told Tales* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 339.

his friend Herman Melville, who instructs Hawthorne's readers to *look* for the cleverness and avoid being misled by its simplicity.⁴⁸ "This Man of Mosses," Melville writes, "takes great delight in hoodwinking the world." Whatever Hawthorne's motive, in Melville's view it is certain that some of his pieces are "directly calculated to deceive—egregiously deceive—the superficial skimmer of pages."⁴⁹ In "Red Cross," Hawthorne's powerful manipulation of reader expectation and narrative point of view create a mixed message that is on the surface patriotic but is in the deeper current profoundly critical.

Hawthorne is less than subtle when he first describes the setting of the action. A wolf's bloody head has been nailed to the porch of the Puritan "meetinghouse." Hawthorne tells us that the wolf had been slain within the precincts of the town and was "a token of the perils of the wilderness," but consider the scene he describes: The doorway of the Puritan "house of prayer" is covered with blood and anyone who enters must step in it.⁵⁰ The wolf—a *real* native to the locale—has been declared an invader to the Puritan precinct. The "peril" here is not the "wilderness" but what it represented for the Puritans—wildness, nonconformity, danger, "other"—and the wolf's demise foreshadows the Puritan perception and treatment of religious and political dissenters, not to mention Native Americans. In case we miss the point or are suspected of reading the text too closely, the next paragraph omits any question. The *human* invaders of Puritan "territory" have been dealt with only a bit less harshly than has the wolf: An Episcopalian [member of the Anglican Church] was pilloried, and a "fellow-criminal" who had toasted

⁴⁸ Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, vol. B, 6th ed. (New York: Norton & Co., 2003), 2292.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2302.

⁵⁰ Hawthorne, "Endicott and the Red Cross," 340.

the King was in the stocks. A “Wanton Gospeller” who “dared to give interpretations of Holy Scripture, unsanctioned by the infallible judgment of the civil and religious rulers” stood on the meetinghouse steps wearing a sign, enduring public humiliation. But these punishments were mild. Among the crowd were others whose ears had been cropped, cheeks branded, nostrils slit, and one woman wore the letter A on her breast.

Into this mass of sanctioned and maimed misdoers strides the “valiant” John Endicott: “‘Come, my stout hearts!’ quoth he, drawing his sword. ‘Let us show these poor heathen [Indians] that we can handle our weapons like men of might. Well for them, if they put us not to prove it in earnest!’” Hawthorne had access to many documents, John Winthrop’s journal among them, which told a very different story about Endecott’s supposed strength and military expertise. This passage in Hawthorne’s tale might be humorous to one who has read the historical accounts of Endecott’s military messes. There is no evidence that the man was valiant or brave, and he was clearly possessed of little tactical sense, but he appeared capable of great ferocity in favorable, often civilian, circumstances such as the one described in this story. For someone *not* familiar with Endecott’s blunders in the Pequot War, there is still ample evidence in this story for the close reader to appreciate the satire in this scene. A few “stately savages” armed with bows and arrows stood by watching the trainband, consisting of every male in the population between the ages of sixteen and sixty and outfitted with steel caps, iron breastplates, and guns. Here, Endecott’s chest-pounding is *meant* to sound ridiculous, and it does. Where is the danger? The peril? The bravery? Where is the terror for a company of soldiers armed to the teeth against a few uninterested Indians?

Endecott's actual military record was not exemplary. Hawthorne, thoroughly familiar with the Winthrop and Bradford histories and the unfortunate unfolding of the Pequot War, surely knew that. It is possible that many of his readers, only two hundred years removed from the events and living in New England where the action occurred, knew it as well. Students of Hawthorne today may not have the same benefits of prior knowledge, but I think it is impossible to understand "Endicott and the Red Cross" adequately without it. Endecott's real military blunders are the basis of Hawthorne's fictional sarcasm and of his caricature of a hero.

The historical record of Endecott's 1636 botched mission against the Pequots, which is often credited with starting the Pequot War, tells a story about Endecott's military expertise that under no circumstances can be termed "valiant." Winthrop's account of the mission leaves open many avenues for inquiry and criticism, none of which, to my knowledge, was pursued either by Endecott's superiors or contemporary or subsequent historians. Endecott's orders were to "put to death the men of Block Island, but to spare the women and children, and to bring them away, and to take possession of the island; and from thence to go to the Pequods to demand the murderers of Capt. Stone and other English, and one thousand fathom of wampum for damages, etc., and some of their children as hostages, which if they should refuse, they were to obtain it by force."⁵¹

Richard Drinnon comments that Endecott "was the last man to question his explicitly genocidal charge."⁵² On August 24, 1636, the forty-eight-year old Endecott "as general,"

⁵¹ Winthrop, *History*, vol. 1, 186.

⁵² Richard Drinnon, "The Maypole of Merry Mount," *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. XXI, no. 1 (spring 1980): 404.

along with four officers (including Captain John Underhill, who became infamous the following year for his part in the massacre of 400 Pequots at Mystic Fort) and ninety soldiers, set sail for Block Island. When they landed, forty Indians shot arrows at them, doing no harm, and then fled. The colonists discovered “two plantations, three miles in sunder, and about sixty wigwams,—some very large and fair,—and above two hundred acres of corn. . . . When they had spent two days in searching the island, and could not find the Indians, they burnt their wigwams, and all their matts, and some corn, and staved seven canoes, and departed.”⁵³ They did not “take possession” of the island.

The group then proceeded to the mouth of the Connecticut River, where Endecott made contact with the Pequots living there but concluded (for reasons that are anything but clear from Winthrop’s account) that their messenger was stalling to prevent the colonial force from meeting with their sachem. In Endecott fashion, the general issued an ultimatum: “If he [the sachem] would not come to him, nor yield to those demands, he would fight with them.”⁵⁴ Presumably, Endecott was not chosen acting general for his diplomatic gifts. In relating this scene, even Endecott’s sympathetic biographer, Lawrence Shaw Mayo, admits to Endecott’s “impulsive nature” and “customary lack of tact.”⁵⁵ Why he *was* chosen to lead this critical expedition remains a mystery. What follows would be almost comical if it did not have such bloody and tragic results, first for the settlers along the Connecticut River and later for the entire Pequot nation. The general “bad them be gone” and they “all withdrew.” Winthrop tells us:

⁵³ Winthrop, *History*, vol. 1, 188.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Mayo, *John Endecott*, 88, 91.

Some of our men would have made a shot at them, but the general would not suffer them; *but when they were gone out of musket shot, he marched after them* supposing they would have stood to it awhile, as they did to the Dutch [my emphasis]. But they all fled, and shot at our men from the thickets and rocks, but did us no harm. Two of them our men killed, and hurt others. So they [Endecott's force] marched up to their town, and burnt all their wigwams and matts, but their corn being standing, they could not spoil it. At night they returned to their vessels, and the next day they went ashore on the west side of the river, and burnt all their wigwams, and spoiled their canoes; and so set sail, and came to the Narragansett, where they landed their men, and, the 14th of 7ber, they all came safe to Boston, which was a marvellous providence of God, that not a hair fell from the head of any of them, nor any sick or feeble person among them.⁵⁶

Providence of God, indeed. To be injured in battle a soldier typically has to engage, which this expedition most decidedly did not. The astonishing aspect of this account (and its aftermath) is that Endecott was never reprimanded for not following orders. His inability to achieve his goals was blamed in Winthrop's account on the "excuses"⁵⁷ (the alleged delaying tactics) offered by sachem's messenger, and in Bradford's on the Indians' "deceit."⁵⁸ The Pequot sachem, Sassacus—the young, popular, third son of the former sachem—retaliated for the killings and destruction of his villages and goods by launching a series of raids on the colonial settlements along the Connecticut River which

⁵⁶ Winthrop, *History*, vol. 1, 188-89.

⁵⁷ Winthrop, *History*, vol. 1, 188.

⁵⁸ Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation*, 292.

Endecott, by sailing back to Boston (what could he have been thinking?), left exposed and undefended. Winthrop's first mention of the Indian reprisals is dated 2 May 1637: "The Pequods had been up the river at Wethersfield, and had killed six men, being at their work, and twenty cows and a mare, and had killed three women, and carried away two maids."⁵⁹

Bradford's rendition of the fiasco borders on candor (at least he makes the connection between Endecott's absconding and the subsequent danger to the settlers): "But it [the mission] was done so superficially, and without their acquainting those of Connecticut and other neighbors with the same, as they did little good, but their neighbors had more hurt done." Still, he cannot bring himself to blame Endecott for the ensuing mess: "They [the Pequots] did but delude them [Endecott's group], and the English returned without doing anything to purpose, being frustrate of their opportunity by the others' deceit."⁶⁰ In the final analysis, the failure of the mission was the Indians' fault for not holding still to be slaughtered.

The *Dictionary of American Biography* offers a rather different assessment of Endecott's performance: "Although frequently holding military office, he possessed none of the qualifications of a military leader. Following the murder of [John] Oldham⁶¹ by the

⁵⁹ Winthrop, *History*, vol. 1, 213.

⁶⁰ Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation*, 292.

⁶¹ John ("Mad Jack") Oldham had been exiled from Plymouth around 1624 for complicity in a scheme to undermine the colony's government, making it somewhat unlikely that twelve years later, Plymouth would participate in seeking revenge for his death. Oldham later resurfaced in the Bay Colony and became a successful trader. For an account of his 1636 murder, and of Endecott's retributive expedition, see Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 104-121. Cave persuasively argues that the Narragansetts, not the Pequots, killed Oldham: "Although the Bay Colony authorities at the time believed that Oldham was murdered by Narragansetts and their tributaries, later writers, eager to justify the subsequent Puritan assault on the Pequots, insisted that the Pequots were somehow implicated" (107).

Indians in 1636, Endecott was placed at the head of a punitive expedition of a hundred men, which not only proved a complete failure but in its ill-judged operations did much to bring on the Pequot War. His actions brought well-deserved protests from both Saybrook and Plymouth.⁶² Writing nearly seventy years later, historian Alfred A. Cave voices a similar judgment: “The man appointed to lead the expedition [Endecott] was ill suited for the task of negotiating with the Pequots, being by nature of impatient and sometimes violent temperament.”⁶³ (As one example of Endecott’s emotionalism, Cave cites a 1631 incident in which Endecott, presiding as judge in a Salem court, lost his temper and struck a defendant).⁶⁴ I have been unable to locate any record of what might be interpreted as “protests” from Plymouth, official or otherwise.

The objections from Saybrook were voiced by Lion Gardener, whose account is one of four (along with those of John Mason, John Underhill, and Philip Vincent) collected in *History of the Pequot War*.⁶⁵ Gardener, an engineer, was sent to New England by Lords Say and Seal and Lord Brook in November 1635 to construct a fort at the mouth of the Connecticut River and to command it.⁶⁶ He remained there four years, undermanned and under-supplied, and in 1660 wrote his account of the war, drawing on correspondence and memory. The picture he renders of his situation at the fledgling fort is stark, even before Endecott’s mishandled mission: instead of the promised 300 able men from England (“whereof 200 should attend fortification, 50 to till the ground, and 50 to build houses”),

⁶² *Dictionary of American Biography*, 156.

⁶³ Cave, *Pequot War*, 109.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ John Mason and others, *History of the Pequot War*, ed. Charles Orr (Cleveland: The Helman-Taylor Company, 1897). Reprinted from the *Collections* of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁶⁶ Lion Gardener, “Relation of the Pequot War,” *History of the Pequot War*, 116.

only two arrived.⁶⁷ The twenty-four men, women and children in the little colony were in a precarious position. Relations with the Pequots were tense and unstable, and provisions were scarce. Gardener writes that he “had not food for them [the colonists] for two months, unless we saved our corn-field, which could not possibly be if they came to war, for it is two miles from our home. Mr. Winthrop, Mr. Fenwick, and Mr. Peters promised me that they would do their utmost endeavour to persuade the Bay-men to desist from war for a year or two, till we could be better provided for it. . . .”⁶⁸ Gardener’s sensible pleas were ignored. Into this stew “suddenly after came Capt. Endecott, Capt. Turner, and Capt. Underhill, with a company of soldiers, well fitted, to Seabrook [Saybrook], and made that place their rendezvous or seat of war, and that to my great grief, for, said I, you come hither to raise these wasps about my ears, and then you will take wing and flee away.”⁶⁹ Soon after, Endecott’s negotiations with the Pequots broke down. Gardener writes in disgust, “The army went aboard, leaving my men ashore, which ought to have marched first. But they all set sail, and my men were pursued by the Indians, and they hurt some of the Indians, and two of them came home wounded. The Bay-men killed not a man. . . .”⁷⁰ Gardener accurately predicted the disastrous results of Endecott’s actions: “Thus,” he writes, “began the war between the Indians and us in these parts.”⁷¹ Sassacus’s retaliatory raids on the Connecticut River settlements soon followed. These attacks provided the Bay Colony with the justification it needed for all-out military aggression against the Pequot Nation.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 122.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 124.

⁶⁹ Gardener, “Pequot War,” 126.

⁷⁰ Gardener 127.

⁷¹ Gardener 127-28.

What followed, of course, was the Pequot War (1636-37). For that, the colony ultimately put John Underhill in charge, a man who exhibited none of Endecott's irresolution and squeamishness over bloodshed. Underhill enthusiastically led the attack, along with John Mason, on Mystic Fort (on the west bank of the Mystic River, near its mouth) in 1637. Underhill's account of the war, entitled *Newes From America, or, A New and Experimental Discoverie of New England*, was originally published in London in 1638.⁷² Underhill wasted no time in capitalizing on his part in the supposed destruction of the Pequot tribe. The tone of Underhill's rendition of the massacre of 400-700 Pequots⁷³ (mostly women and children) at Fort Mystic fluctuates between self-congratulation and justification. He and Mason had set fire to the east and west ends of the fort:

Many courageous fellows were unwilling to come out, and fought most desperately through the palisadoes, so as they were scorched and burnt with the very flame, and were deprived of their arms—in regard the fire burnt their very bowstrings—and so perished valiantly. Mercy did they deserve for their valor, could we have had opportunity to have bestowed it. Many were burnt in the fort, both men, women, and children. Others forced out, and came in troops to the Indians [the Narragansetts allied with Underhill's force], twenty and thirty at a time, which our soldiers received and entertained with the point of the sword. Down fell men, women, and children; those that scaped us, fell into the hands of the Indians that were in the rear of us. It is

⁷² John Underhill, *Newes From America, or, A New and Experimental Discoverie of New England* (London: Printed by J.D. for Peter Cole, 1638). Mason's narrative was not published until 1735 in Boston.

⁷³ Underhill and Mason's casualty numbers differ. Underhill states that 400 died and 5 escaped (81); Mason asserts that "in little more than one Hour's space was their impregnable Fort with themselves utterly Destroyed, to the Number of six or seven hundred, as some of themselves confessed. There were only seven taken captive, and about seven escaped." John Mason, "Brief History of the Pequot War," *History of the Pequot War*, ed. Charles Orr (Cleveland: Helman-Taylor Company, 1897), 30-31.

reported by themselves, that there were about four hundred souls in this fort, and not above five of them escaped out of our hands.

Underhill concludes, “We had sufficient light from the word of God for our proceedings.”⁷⁴

Interestingly, this coldly vivid description of human slaughter has, to my knowledge, been adopted by only two nineteenth-century fiction writers: Catharine Maria Sedgwick in *Hope Leslie*, in which Sedgwick borrows Underhill’s account nearly word-for-word to illuminate the shameful aspects of the Puritan past; and by James Fenimore Cooper in *The Last of the Mohicans*, in which the author glorifies the Mohican hothead Uncas, whose defection from the Pequot tribe and alliance with the colonists played a significant part in the Pequot’s defeat.

The point of this discussion is to establish the historical context in which John Endecott became fictionalized, mythologized, and sanitized. His actions on the Block Island mission, which directly led to Pequot incursions against the undefended colonists, were inexplicable but were not officially questioned at the time. More important, this chapter from Endecott’s life has been largely ignored by the literary historians and fiction writers who have found other qualities in the man which are worthy of preservation and historicizing, qualities that perhaps suited the national mind as emblematic of the spirit of America. This period in his career is an historical embarrassment and cannot be rendered acceptable as part of the national myth by any amount of authorial effort.

⁷⁴ Underhill, *Newes*, 80-81.

The historical record, then, belies the “valiant” Endicott. Hawthorne surely knew this and used it to create a parody of fierceness—a man with a plethora of fighting words and a peculiar fondness for his sword. Midpoint in “Red Cross,” where we left off our exegesis, Endecott has just drawn his weapon, presumably to terrify the Indian bystanders. Enter Roger Williams, minister of Salem, fresh from a meeting with Governor Winthrop, bearing bad news from England. Here Hawthorne again conflates two actual events—a letter from the King in September 1638 announcing a royal governor and Endecott’s defacement of the flag two months later, in November—to give Endecott a plausible motive for his action. Upon reading the missive “a wrathful change came over his manly countenance,” Hawthorne tells us. “The blood glowed through it, till it seemed to be kindling with an internal heat; nor was it unnatural to suppose that his breastplate would likewise become red-hot, with the angry fire of the bosom which it covered.”⁷⁵ Williams tells Endecott that Winthrop wants him to keep the contents of the letter private lest the people be stirred up into some outbreak. Endecott, who at this point presumably resembles a human stove, ignores Winthrop’s request as being too meek and moderate, and instead launches into a speech glorifying the Puritan mission in the wilderness. The “Wanton Gospeller,” still standing on the meetinghouse steps with a sign on his chest, challenges Endecott: “Call you this liberty of conscience?” Williams responds with a “sad and quiet” smile. Endecott, without a trace of irony, shakes his sword at the culprit, “—an ominous gesture from a man like him.”⁷⁶ In this scene,

⁷⁵Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Endicott and the Red Cross,” *Selected Tales and Sketches* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987) 221.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 222.

Hawthorne is writing tongue-in-cheek. Endecott has done nothing in this story to suggest that he is dangerous unless verbosity and saber-rattling serve to terrify; we are merely *told* by our unreliable narrator that Endecott is one tough customer, even while he is *described* as a quixotic buffoon.

After more speechifying, Endecott cuts the red cross from the English flag. Those few loyalist miscreants confined to the stocks and pillory earlier in the story shout objections. Our narrator tells us:

With a cry of triumph, the people gave their sanction to one of the boldest exploits which our history records. And, for ever honored be the name of Endicott! We look back through the mist of ages, and recognize, in the rending of the Red Cross from New England's banner, the first omen of that deliverance which our fathers consummated, after the bones of the stern Puritan had lain more than a century in the dust.⁷⁷

Michael J. Colacurcio argues that Hawthorne's "Endicott and the Red Cross" "not only describes a real person but confesses an historic deed. . . . The literal action of Endicott is here said to reveal. . . the 'first omen' of a 'deliverance' which Hawthorne was probably loath to repudiate. . . . Endicott slashed the (Anglican) 'Red Cross from New England's banner,' and we are forced to recognize a Revolution therein."⁷⁸ In Colacurcio's opinion, what is involved here is "some wish to discover what will and will not typologize; and more specifically, what events and figures will and will not serve as

⁷⁷ Ibid., 224.

⁷⁸ Colacurcio, *Province of Piety*, 223.

faithful images of our own (not very radical) Revolution.”⁷⁹ I agree that Hawthorne is experimenting with images which might signify American nationalism, but I do not believe that the event as described in this story is meant to be understood as a heroic feat. Is this impromptu sword-wielding truly a “bold exploit” to be compared to the passages of the *Mayflower*, the *Arbella* (which carried Winthrop) and the *Abigail* (which carried Endecott), or to the first hard winter in Plymouth Colony? Hawthorne does not limit his generalization to early American history. Does Endecott’s isolated act really hold up when compared to the events of 1776? The final paragraph of “Endicott and the Red Cross” is satirical; Hawthorne quietly mocks Endecott’s swaggering heroics and at the same time suggests that the *qualities* this prototype embodies—boldness, bravery, independence, a good sword arm—are a valuable part of our history. While part of Hawthorne’s larger purpose might have been to expose the moral and political effects of Puritanism, in this tale another kind of cultural work is being done: Hawthorne is playing fast and loose as myth-maker. He has selected one small, comparatively insignificant piece of history and fashioned it into a founding moment of the American republic. He is also playing *myth-breaker*: his mocking, satirical positionality debunks the myth he has just created.

Selective Editing: Endecott and the Quakers

⁷⁹ Ibid., 226.

More interesting, perhaps, than the “historical” accounts which got lifted by Hawthorne and others from the Bradford and Winthrop journals are the episodes which did *not*. Significantly less ink has been spent on Endecott’s notorious persecution of the Quakers than has been dedicated to the bloodless and comparatively tame events discussed above. Hawthorne did not back away from the subject, but neither did he construct a black/white, evil/good binary that demonized Endecott and the Puritans and idealized the Quakers. Few other major authors in the nineteenth century engaged the problem at all. The reluctance is owing in part to the fact that this piece of the Endecott story is profoundly undesirable as American creation myth, regardless of how useful and malleable Endecott might be as a literary character. The notable exceptions who tackled the subject head-on were Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in *The New-England Tragedies: I. John Endicott II. Giles Corey of the Salem Farms* (1868), and John Greenleaf Whittier, a Quaker, who began publishing his poetry in 1826. These authors will be discussed in a separate chapter.

From the vantage point of 1930, the *Dictionary of American Biography* offers a cold assessment of Endecott’s behavior:

Much has been made of the episode in which Endecott ordered the cross to be cut out of the English ensign as savoring of popery (1634). He was probably no more narrow-minded than many others, however, and aside from the passing criticism in England, the incident is without importance save as it indicates his lack of judgment. Far more essential for a study of the man’s character is the part he played in the persecution of the Quakers a few years before his death. Making all allowance for both the political

aspects of the problem as it presented itself to the rulers of the colony, and for the harshness of the times, Endecott showed himself blood-thirsty and brutal in his handling of the Quaker cases. He appeared at his worst in this, in many ways, supreme episode of his life.⁸⁰

In 1930, there was less at stake in leveling this kind of judgment against one of the founding fathers than there had been in 1830. The nation was established. The American Revolution had occurred in the distant past. The Quakers in 1930 had attained a reputation in mainstream America as gentle, peace-loving folk. We had moved, politically and culturally, well beyond those bleak early days, and could look back and face the mistakes of the past without threatening the integrity of the present. The implied assurance was clear: It could never happen again.

The first Quakers to arrive in Boston in 1656 were two women on a ship from Barbados. They were ordered jailed by Deputy Governor Richard Bellingham (Governor Endecott being out of town) and were confined for five weeks, after which time they were sent back to Barbados on the ship that brought them. A few weeks after their departure, nine more Quakers arrived from England and were promptly jailed. Eleven weeks hence they were similarly deported. During their confinement, Governor Endecott is alleged to have said to them, "Take heed ye break not our ecclesiastical laws, for then ye are sure to

⁸⁰ *Dictionary of American Biography*, 156.

stretch by a halter.”⁸¹

Between 1656 and 1658 the Massachusetts General Court met four times to confront the Quaker threat. Increasingly harsh laws were enacted in attempts at control. In October 1657 the General Court ordered that a male Quaker who returned to the Bay Colony after having been punished once would have one of his ears cut off and be kept at work in the house of correction until he could be sent away at his own cost; for a second offense he would lose the other ear. Women would be severely whipped and similarly exiled. For a third offense, both sexes would “have their tongues bored through with a hot iron.”⁸² In September, 1658, the Commissioners of the New England Confederation (John Endecott, presiding officer) tightened the law further:

Such Quakers as shall come into any jurisdiction from any foreign parts, or such as shall arise within the same, after due conviction that either he or she is of that cursed sect of heretics, they be banished under pain of severe corporal punishment; and if they return again then to be banished under pain of death; and if afterward they shall yet presume to come again, then to be put to death as aforesaid, except that they do then and there plainly and publicly renounce their said cursed opinions and devilish tenets.⁸³

The following month, the General Court released six Quakers from prison in Ipswich and banished them “under pain of death.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ George Bishope, *New England Judged, Not by Man's, But the Spirit of the Lord: And, the Summe sealed up of New England's Persecutions, Being a Brief Relation of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers* (London: Robert Wilson, 1663), 10.

⁸² *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, vol. IV, Part I, 1650-1660, 308-09.

⁸³ Ebenezer Hazard, *Historical Collections*, II, 400, qtd. in Mayo, 241.

⁸⁴ *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, vol. IV, Part I, 1650-1660, 349.

Nothing served to deter the Quaker emigrations to New England. During these years they were savagely persecuted. In 1659 two were hanged. In 1660, Endecott was reelected governor. The same month, three more Quakers were sentenced to death.⁸⁵ Two accepted the Colony's offer allowing them to leave for England.⁸⁶ The third, Mary Dyer, was hanged. In 1661 a fourth was hanged. Relief finally arrived in the form of a royal edict from King Charles II in November 1661 which ordered an end to the imprisonments, punishments, and executions.

In "A Quaker's Curse—Humphrey Norton to John Endecott, 1658," Frederick B. Tolles reviews the events which led to the publication in a 1659 English newspaper, the *Publick Intelligencer*, of a scathing public letter to Endecott from Humphrey Norton, a Quaker leader. Norton and his fellow Quakers had been whipped, banished, branded with an H (for heretic), and mutilated. A few sentences will suffice to demonstrate the tone:

Accursed are thy Rulers, thou Town of *Boston*, for they are become the High Priests servants, and hath cut the Saints right Ears. . . . Accursed is thy Governor, who past the sentence against his own soul, he being forwarned of it in expresse words from me. . . . The curse of God rest upon thee *Joh. Indicot*, for my brethren and Companions sake, the curse of God rest upon thee, thy deeds shalt thou answer for, as sure as ever thou consentedst to that deed, thou Son of a Murtherer.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 419.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 434.

⁸⁷ Frederick B. Tolles, "A Quaker's Curse—Humphrey Norton to John Endecott, 1658," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 14:4 (1951): 420-21.

Endecott's role in the Quaker persecutions is described by Michael J. Colacurcio as a sort of "holy sadism: the purer your religious ideal, the harder you hurt its felons and failures."⁸⁸ I disagree with this assessment of Endecott's motives. There is no evidence (except in his reply to King Charles II, which cannot be accepted at face value because of what was at stake) that at this point Endecott was preoccupied with Puritan religious orthodoxy. He was furiously angry. His authority had been defied. He was not fighting for religious ideals but to maintain control of the changing colony. The Quakers were a challenge to the political order; they disturbed the peace, and they won converts. They were perceived as even more of a threat once they formed alliances with the Rhode Island Antinomians. Endecott was near the end of his life (he would die in 1665), and his response was brutal and fast. He was struggling with an alien presence. He did not understand why many of the Quakers would not accept banishment to save their lives; he didn't understand why they kept coming back to the colony where they would be punished; and he did not know what to do about their mind-set *or* his own perplexity and frustration except to eradicate the threat.

In 1661, the historical John Endecott was wielding his power as governor like a club. William Sewel (1653-1720), author of *The History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers*, is one of the primary sources for this period.⁸⁹ His *History* is gruesome reading, laden with details of a horrid variety of punishments and

⁸⁸ Colacurcio, *Province of Piety*, 222.

⁸⁹ The printing of the original text was initially begun by Samuel Keimer in Philadelphia, 1725. It was not finished until late 1728, and then by giving out part of it to Benjamin Franklin and Hugh Meredith, both Philadelphia printers. It is preserved in Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans Readex Digital Collections, no. 3104.

persecutions inflicted at the hands of Endecott's government (and others). It consists of 12 books, 721 pages; it begins in 1415 with the burning of John Hus and ends in 1717. The history contains specific accounts of Endecott's response to the Quakers in the Bay Colony not found (to my knowledge) anywhere else. The "iron man" of the Puritans is rendered for the reader in dialogue and body gesture, and he appears equally merciless and stupid. Owing to its very nature as the history of a persecuted people, Sewel's text is understandably biased. Whether it is completely accurate—whether the author is guilty of embellishment or of filling in some blanks where actual records or testimonies do not exist—or whether *any* history is free from the editorial instincts of its writer are other questions. Perhaps anticipating scepticism, Sewel meticulously lists his sources for the *History*. He tells us that he wrote to England for "better Information; which having gotten at length after much Pains and long Waiting, I was several Times obliged to lay aside Part of my former Description, and make a new one. . . ." ⁹⁰ He refers to manuscripts and letters he copied during his "young years" in England and later inserted into the *History*; to borrowing from narratives of many "remarkable Occurrences given forth in Print [in England], and many Authentic Pieces in Manuscript," and from the journals of George Fox; from the "Works of deceased Authors, and out of abundance of small Books published in Print not long after Things happened, and not contradicted by whatever I could learn." "From my own Collection of Matters known to me [including oral histories from the 'Mouths of credible Persons'], I have compiled the greatest part of this *History*,"

⁹⁰ William Sewel, *The History of the rise, increase, and progress, of the Christian people called Quakers* (Philadelphia: Samuel Keimer, 1728), preface.
<http://www.lib.umn.edu/slog.phtml?url=http://opac.newsbank.com/select/evans/3104>

he assures the reader; “I have endeavored to assert nothing but what I had good Authority for.”⁹¹ It can be argued that Sewel obviously had an agenda and great emotional involvement in his subject, and therefore he could not provide an objective and undistorted account of the Quaker past. However, his writings supply us with invaluable, if arguably overwrought, insight into this period in American history.

Sewel recreates many incidents portraying Endecott’s command as an instance of authority run mad. In 1661, a Quaker named Wenlock Christison is found guilty of rebellion, which Endecott assures him is “*as the Sin of Witchcraft, and ought to be punished.*” Christison argues for his rights as an Englishman: “*For I never heard, nor read of any Law that was in England to hang Quakers.* To this the Governor replied, That *there was a law to hang Jesuits.*”⁹² Quakerism, witchcraft, popery—according to this account, all appeared the same to Endecott as long as he got the result he wanted, which was punishment for the accused. For the contemporary reader there is a disturbing, fanatical element to this exchange that makes one question the state of Endecott’s mind. While never stable, he was at this point seventy-three years old; he would be dead in four years, and his documented behavior seems to have grown increasingly erratic.

They (the Council) then voted as to the Sentence of Death, but were in a Manner confounded, for several could not vote him guilty of Death. The Governor seeing this Division, said, *I could find it in my heart to go home;* being in such a Rage, that he flung something furiously on the Table; which made Wenlock cry, *It were better for*

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 271.

thee to be at home than here, for thou art about a bloody Piece of Work. Then the Governor put the court to vote again; but this was done confusedly, which so incensed the Governor, that he stood up, and said, *You that will not consent, record it: I thank God, I am not afraid to give Judgment.* Thus we see that to be drunk with Blood doth not quench the Thirst after Blood; for Indicot [Endecott] the Governor, seeing others backward to vote, precipitously pronounced Judgment himself, and said, Wenlock Christison, *hearken to your Sentence: You must return unto the Place from whence you came, and from thence to the Place of Execution, and there you must be hang'd until you are dead, dead, dead.*⁹³

Before Christison could be executed, however, he and twenty-seven of his Friends were released from prison on account of a “new law.” Sewel tells us that “not long after” came the King’s order to desist in the execution of Quakers.⁹⁴

Sewel’s descriptions carry an undercurrent of deep and understandable anger. However, it is the individual parts, isolated from the rhetorical whole, which give the reader insight into the smells and tastes and pains of everyday life for Quakers in Massachusetts during Endecott’s last years. Even Hawthorne steers away from the worst of these uncomfortable sensory pictures. Sewel sets out a bill of particulars:

1662: The Constables. . . laid hands on Alice Ambrose as she was in Prayer, and taking her, one by the one Arm, and the other by the other, they dragg’d her out of

⁹³Sewel, *History*, 272. There is no reference to this verbal exchange in the Court Records. The entry merely states that “the Governor pronounce[d] sentence of death against him in open Court.” *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, vol. IV, Part II, 1661-1674, 21.

⁹⁴ Sewel, *History*, 272.

Doors, almost a Mile, with her Face towards the Snow, which was near Knee deep, over Stumps and old Trees, having put on their old Clothes, on purpose not to dirty their better Suits. Then they locked her up in a certain House, and so went back to fetch Mary Tompkins, whom they dragg'd in the same manner. . . . Next morning they got a Canoe, and threatened the women, *They would now do with them, that they should be troubled with them no more*; by which Saving, they seem'd to signify, that they would give them up to the Mercy of the Sea. . . . They laid hold on Alice, whom they pluck'd violently into the Water, and kept her swimming by the Canoe, so that she was in Danger of being drowned, or frozen to Death. . . . They brought the Women back again to the House, and about Midnight they turn'd them all out of Doors in the Snow, the Weather being so frosty, that Alice's Clothes were frozen like Boards. . . .⁹⁵

Anne Coleman, when she was to be whipt at Dedham. . . Deputy Bellingham having seen Hathorn's⁹⁶ Warrant, said, *The Warrant is firm*, and then bad the Executioner go on; who thus encouraged, laid on so severely, that with the Knot of the Whip, he split the Nipple of her Breast, which so tortur'd her, that it almost cost her her Life; and she, who was a little Weakly woman, thinking this would have been her Lot, said once, that if she should happen to die thus, she was willing that her Body should be laid before Bellingham's door, with a Charge from her Mouth, *That he was guilty of her Blood.*⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid., 325-26.

⁹⁶Hathorn [*sic*]: The ancestor (William Hathorne) whose actions later caused Nathaniel Hawthorne so much embarrassment and discomfort that he changed the spelling of the family name in an attempt to distance himself.

⁹⁷ Sewel, *History*, 326.

There is a component of sadism in these punishments that inclines the reader to see the perpetrators as little more than malicious thugs (one expects that is precisely what Sewel *wants* us to see). There is no hint of righteous indignation here, no mention of God or the reformed faith or even the suggestion of moral right, just the gleeful torture of the helpless. Sewel's *History* suggests that the Puritan excuse of record for the persecution of the Quakers—heresy—got lost along the way. In this version, by the time John Endecott and his cohorts heated the situation to flash point in the early 1660s, lust for power and the collaboration of disordered minds had eclipsed any original religious motive. The unstated justification, however, was always the disturbance of the peace, the disruption of social order, and the implicit threat to established authority.

Endecott is accused more than once in Sewel's chronicle of turning against those who had helped him in earlier, needier times. He is referred to as a man who had once been of a "mean condition," implying that Endecott had been poor, at the very least, and perhaps lower class and powerless as well.⁹⁸ Another Quaker historian, George Bishope, writing in 1665, refers to him "as *one* who formerly had some tenderness in *him*, who . . . degenerated into hardness and cruelty."⁹⁹ John Smith wrote the following personal letter to Endecott in 1662, shortly after the death of Mary Dyer:

O my Spirit is grieved for thee, because that the Love I did once see in thee, is departed from thee; and there remaineth in thee a Spirit of Cruelty, of Hard-heartedness to thy poor Neighbors, which formerly thou hast been much beholden to,

⁹⁸ Ibid., 329.

⁹⁹ Bishope, *New England Judged*, 123-24.

*and helped by in Times of Want, when thou hadst no Bread to eat. O consider of these Times, and forget them not, and of the Love thou didst find among poor People in thy Necessity, and how evil thou hast dealt with, and requited from them now; and how thou dost walk and all contrary to what thou didst formerly profess.*¹⁰⁰

Opportunistic, selfish, disloyal, hypocritical, cruel, megalomaniacal—the adjectives keep piling up. It is imperative that we keep an eye on the historical and literary machinations which enabled this enigma Endecott to be rendered acceptable as representative of the emerging American national identity, maneuvers which, in their schizophrenic qualities, allowed him simultaneously to be persecutor and champion of liberty, of “mean condition” and founder of American aristocracy.

Hawthorne’s reference to Endecott’s gruesome “death by rotteness”¹⁰¹ in 1665 is lifted directly from Sewel:

The last Act of Governor Endicot’s bloody part was the cruel Whipping of Edward Wharton at Boston [warrant dated June 30, 1664]: For the Time was now come that he must go off the Stage, to give an Account of his extravagant Severity before another Tribunal than that of his sanguinary Court. The Measure of his Iniquity was now filled up, and he was visited with a loathsome Disease, insomuch that he stunk alive, and so died with Rottenness, his Name being like to give a bad Savour thro’ Ages to come.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Sewel, *History*, 329.

¹⁰¹ Hawthorne, “The Gentle Boy,” 50.

¹⁰² Sewel, *History*, 332.

Sewel, of course, interprets Endecott's unnamed ghastly illness to be just punishment for the sins of his life; this is not surprising. George Bishope records a similar account of Endecott's death: "*He stunk alive, and his name doth rot, and for his works he knows his reward from the Hand of the Lord.*"¹⁰³ These are statements on the subject of theodicy (the justice of God in light of human suffering) with which all sects—Puritan, Quaker, Antinomian, and the rest—were familiar.

What *does* come as a surprise is the fact that Lawrence Shaw Mayo, Endecott's biographer, sidesteps his cause of death. Mayo tells us that in the spring of 1657, Endecott "fell ill and was obliged to give up work for a number of weeks,"¹⁰⁴ and that two years later, in 1659, he made a will.¹⁰⁵ In 1664, a comet appeared in the heavens, and Mayo shamelessly implies that the "celestial wonder" portended the passing of Endecott.¹⁰⁶ After some romanticizing about Endecott's life, the narrative leaps to an entry in the diary of John Hull, master of the mint, dated March 15, 1664/5, which documents the death of Endecott at age seventy-six.¹⁰⁷ There is, most oddly, no mention of his passing in the Court Records other than a dispensation made to his widow during the May 1665 session. For all practical purposes, end of story.

If Endecott's "last act" occurred around July 1664, and he died in March 1665, he might have been visibly ill for at least nine months, and possibly longer. Taking into account Mayo's silence about the nature of his disease, and Sewel's and Bishope's relish

¹⁰³ Bishope, *New England Judged*, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Mayo, *John Endecott*, 281.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 284.

in relating the symptoms of it, and the fact that disease in general was vastly misunderstood and misinterpreted and often attributed to the patient's moral state, the secrecy is still curious. There is no mention in any record of an outbreak of smallpox or other epidemic, or of a personal injury (nobly acquired) that could have become gangrenous, or any medical complaint familiar to that time and place that would, quite frankly, *stink*. One is reminded of the biblical plague of boils in Exodus 9:8-12 (the sixth plague of ten), which indeed *was* a curse, and was intended as a warning to the Egyptian pharaoh to allow the Israelites leave Egypt. (It is now suspected to have been a variety of skin anthrax that previously struck the livestock in plague number five.¹⁰⁸) In Endecott's day, a personal outbreak of deadly infection might have earned a different, more punishing diagnosis and have been a source of shame.

The *Memoir of John Endecott* (1847), one of several family-authored biographies, gives the following account: "In the quaint language of the day, we are told that 'old age and the infirmities thereof coming upon him, he fell asleep in the Lord of the 15th of March, 1665. . . and was with great honor and solemnity interred at Boston.' on the 23rd of the same month. His death was easy and tranquil."¹⁰⁹ There is, predictably, no mention of the "loathsome disease" referenced by Sewel and Bishope and borrowed by Hawthorne.

¹⁰⁸ *NIV Study Bible*, 10th ed., ed. Kenneth Barker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 125.

¹⁰⁹ Charles M. Endicott, A Descendant of the Seventh Generation, *Memoir of John Endecott, First Governor of Massachusetts Bay: Being Also a Succinct Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colony, From 1628 to 1665* (Salem: The Observer Office, 1847), 102. There is no citation given for the quoted account of Endecott's death.

One diagnostic possibility is late-onset diabetes, the terminal stages of which would have produced the kind of septic, malodorous infection described by Sewel, and the timing would have been credible as well; eight years (the span of time from Endecott's first recorded illness in 1657 until his death in 1665) from onset to death (assuming no effective treatment) is not uncommon. Interestingly, terminal diabetes can also cause hardening of the arteries and resulting dementia, which would go far toward explaining Endecott's documented personality change and late-life meltdown.¹¹⁰

Another, and perhaps stronger, possibility is syphilis. The progression of this disease matches the pace and events of John Endecott's life, and its presence would answer some biographical questions—the reason for his late marriage, for example, and the strange silence surrounding his death.

Known as the “great imitator,” syphilis is a bacteria that can masquerade as any disease.¹¹¹ It develops in four stages (primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary), each with a different set of symptoms, most of which are symptomatic of many common ailments. During the primary stage, a sore (chancre), which lasts for twenty-eight to forty-two days, develops at the site where the bacteria entered the body and heals without treatment. At that point, anyone without knowledge of the disease's progressive symptoms would assume that he/she had recovered.

Secondary syphilis is characterized by a rash that appears from four to ten weeks after the chancre develops and is often accompanied by other symptoms, such as a low-grade

¹¹⁰ Krista Westendorp, R.N. Personal Interview. 18 Feb. 2006.

¹¹¹ http://www.emedicinehealth.com/syphilis/page5_em.htm

fever, sore throat, weakness and body aches, swelling of the lymph nodes, and headaches—indications of the flu in any age.¹¹² Before antibiotics, seventeenth-century physicians (or quacks) treated the early, visible stages of syphilis with toxic mercury and arsenic (which had dreadful side effects if they didn't kill you outright) or with other desperate and draconian folk remedies, such as wrapping the endangered organ in a piece of cloth soaked in a decoction of wine, guaiac, flakes of copper, burnt horn of deer and other pharmaceutical delicacies, or by having intercourse with a healthy virgin.¹¹³ The second-stage rash heals on its own in two to twelve weeks, thus disappearing from the eye and providing false evidence of successful treatment while the disease enters the latent (hidden) stage.

The reader may understandably wonder why this much information about syphilis is relevant, but the next point will, I think, answer that question: Some patients will continue to carry the infection in their body *without symptoms* in this latent third stage, which can last anywhere from two to *fifty years*.¹¹⁴

The tertiary, final stage occurs even today in about a third of those who are not treated. One can only imagine the surprise and horror of the seventeenth-century patient as the fourth (tertiary), systemic stage of the disease developed, causing a variety of problems throughout the body that might include *gummata* (large sores inside the body or

¹¹² “Syphilis-Symptoms” <http://www.webmd.com/sexual-conditions/tc/syphilis-symptoms>

¹¹³ Deborah Hayden, *Genius, Madness and the Mysteries of Syphilis*, qtd. in “Sex, Secrets and Syphilis,” <http://www.theage.com.au/articles>

¹¹⁴ “Syphilis in Women: Causes, Symptoms, Diagnosis and Treatment,” http://www.medicinenet.com/syphilis_in_women/page2.htm

on the skin); blood vessel and heart problems; infection of the brain; insanity; blindness; or death.¹¹⁵

Before emigrating to New England, John Endecott was not a saint. Richard Drinnon suggests that Endecott's fanatical Puritanism contained a "trademark" conflict between the flesh and the spirit, manifested in the bastard son he left behind in England.¹¹⁶ He was ashamed of his lustful past, and although he financially supported the child he wrote to his agent, "'Onely I would not by any means have the boy sent over.' He made no mention, of course, of the person who had given birth to this shame, the boy's mother."¹¹⁷ Endecott's first marriage took place curiously late in life, just before he emigrated and as he was nearing the age of forty. His wife, Anna Gover (or Gower), a cousin of Matthew Craddock, died shortly after their arrival in Naumkeag (later Salem) in 1628. In 1630 he married Mrs. Elizabeth Gibson, a widow, who bore him two sons and outlived him. His elder son, John, suffered from ill health and had no children.¹¹⁸ His younger son, Zerubabel, fathered many children, and "took his substantial education and patrimony and play[ed] the role of gentlemen planter, entirely lacking his father's Puritan drive and ardor for public service."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ "Syphilis-Symptoms"; "Syphilis in Women"

¹¹⁶ Drinnon, "Maypole," 402.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ "John Endicott-The Preserved Puritan," 7. <http://www.endecott-endicott.com/ThePreservedPuritan.pdf> This "sketch," available through a link on this Endecott family website (there are two separate websites, maintained by different Endicotts), credits source information for the sketch to Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620-1633*, vols. 1-3 (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1995) and includes Anderson's bibliography. No author is listed for the sketch itself.

¹¹⁹ "John Endicott-The Preserved Puritan," 8.

There is much in the known personal data about Endecott that supports the hypothesis that he may have contracted syphilis earlier in his life; that he delayed marrying until he was apparently healthy; emigrated; took a second wife and had a family; and was then revisited by the latent disease which, as it systemically progressed unchecked through his body, caused the physical “rottenness” (*gummata*) and extreme personality changes that are suggested in the historical records cited in this study. In a nuncupative (oral) will dated January 1664/65, Endecott told his transcriber, “Tell the magistrates that I am not capable to make my will myself for reasons best known to myself I would willingly live that little time I have to live in peace which is not like to be long.” This death-bed will was intended to supersede his previous written will of 2 May 1659. The resulting conflict between the widow Elizabeth and eldest son John caused the General Court on 23 May 1666 to order that the estate be administered by the widow and sons, guided by the terms of the 1659 will.¹²⁰ There is more to this family conflict, which will be discussed in a later chapter. At present, it is important to note that at the time of the nuncupative will, John Endecott was secretive about the cause of his incapacitation or unwilling to put it in writing—for the record, it was owing to “reasons best known to [him]self.” He died while in office two months later.

Endecott’s behavior toward the end of his life, culminating in his rabid persecution of the Quakers, was so erratic and sadistic that even those chroniclers who sympathetically shared his Puritan ideology have found it necessary to make excuses or look away. Tertiary syphilis would also explain the profound silence from all quarters regarding Endecott’s

¹²⁰ “John Endicott-The Preserved Puritan,” 4.

final illness and death. Despite holding the office of governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for the previous ten years, his passing was not even mentioned in the *Records* of the colony.

We know that John Endecott had a sexual past, one perhaps not terribly scandalous to the modern mind, but certainly impossibly contradictory to the image of iron-clad Puritanism he later personified. We may never know whether Endecott's need for absolute control and his angry repression of anything that threatened the Puritan norm were responses generated by occurrences in his own past which he did not want to revisit. We may never know what kind of death he died, whether tranquil or horrible, whether the natural result of old age and a vigorous existence or from "rottenness," a literal wasting rendered darkly symbolic by some historians and fiction writers of the condition of his soul.

How was this dark devil of an Endecott whitened for purposes of history? First, this part of his career was ignored by the two major chroniclers of Puritan America because timing was on his side; Winthrop and Bradford ended their "histories" at the years 1649 and 1647, respectively. The first Quakers arrived in Salem in 1656, too late to have their reception and the subsequent persecution of their sect recorded by New England's first principal historians.

Anxiety over the definition of the new republic necessitated careful selection when it came to deciding what stories or "histories" or legends got written into the approved version of history being written (and rewritten). Winthrop's and Bradford's journals are good examples of what got edited or carefully whitewashed prior to the arrival of the

Quakers. It is not surprising that a mere handful of nineteenth-century fiction writers incorporated this particular era into their poems, stories, and novels. Records are few (the *Records of Massachusetts Bay* make voluminous and dull reading; unless one's search is guided by specific dates, the task is onerous). Few eye witnesses to the events kept journals or diaries which are extant. Moreover, that five-year period is embarrassing. Unlike the equally embarrassing Salem witchcraft trials of 1692, the Quaker persecutions of 1656-61 required the intervention of the English crown to put them to an end. In contrast, the witchcraft trials were declared unlawful by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1702; in crisis, under the leadership of Governor Sir William Phipps, the Colony pulled itself together and was able to police its own troops, as it were. In 1711, the restoration of rights and good names were made to the accused, and restitution of six hundred pounds was made to the heirs. In 1992, on the 300th anniversary of the trials, the Salem Village Witchcraft Victims' Memorial of Danvers, located across the street from the site of the original meeting house where many of the witch examinations took place, was dedicated before an audience of more than 3,000 people. No such efforts to make the unfortunate past "right" were attempted for the Quakers. Furthermore, "witches" never existed. The Quakers—the Society of Friends—are with us and active today. Perhaps fictionalizing the brutal ill-treatment of a religious sect that was by then legitimized and living in their midst was a less attractive idea for nineteenth-century fiction writers than exploring tidier parts of the Puritan past—extinct superstitions, for example, or nation-building deeds.

While most writers dodged this piece of history, Hawthorne did not. However, we must remember that in the three stories under consideration here, Hawthorne created three

fictional John Endecotts. Drawing on disparate snatches of historical record, he put Endecott into service as an all-purpose American character. The historical John Endecott has not existed since 1665, the year of his death, and even by then there were almost certainly three (or more) Endecotts existing simultaneously: one reluctant, one furious, and one fictional, already the stuff of legend.

“The Gentle Boy” (1832)

In “The Gentle Boy” Hawthorne exposes the darker side of fanatical Puritanism. This story, which is a study in ambivalence, was first published in 1832, again in 1837 in the collection *Twice-Told Tales*, and in a separate edition in 1839, which included an illustration by Sophia Peabody, Hawthorne’s future wife. Hawthorne’s obvious interest in keeping this particular story in print is explained in his preface to the 1839 edition. While he personally found this early work to be ill-wrought and imperfect, the opinions of others apparently swayed his judgment and compelled him to the conclusion “that Nature here led him deeper into the Universal heart, than Art has been able to follow.”¹²¹

Endecott is not named in “The Gentle Boy” but is referred to as the governor of Massachusetts Bay. As the story opens in 1659, two Quakers have been hanged.

An indelible stain of blood is upon the hands of all who consented to this act, but a large share of the awful responsibility must rest upon the person then at the head of the

¹²¹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Gentle Boy* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan & Co., 1839), preface.

government. He [Endecott] was a man of narrow mind and imperfect education, and his uncompromising bigotry was made but mischievous by violent and hasty passions; he exerted his influence indecorously and unjustifiably to compass the death of enthusiasts; his whole conduct, in respect to them, was marked by brutal cruelty. The Quakers, whose revengeful feelings were not less deep because they were inactive, remembered this man and his associates, in after times. The historian of the sect ¹²² affirms that, by the wrath of Heaven, a blight fell upon the land in the vicinity of the “bloody town” of Boston, so that no wheat would grow there; and he takes his stand, as it were, among the graves of the ancient persecutors, and triumphantly recounts the judgments that overtook them, in old age or at the parting hour. He tells us that they died suddenly, and violently, and in madness, but nothing can exceed the bitter mockery with which he records the loathsome disease, and “death by rottenness,” of the fierce and cruel governor.

Hawthorne’s primary source for this tale was surely William Sewel. However, compared to the vivid and disturbing details in Sewel’s *History* as well as its tight rhetorical focus, Hawthorne’s tale of Quaker persecution is palliated by generalization and a narrative lens which shifts constantly throughout the story, alternately falling on Puritan evil and on the parental failures of Quakers who put their own religious “enthusiasm, heightened almost to madness” above the welfare of their children.¹²³ It is difficult to know which list of character limitations irked Hawthorne more.

¹²² William Sewel.

¹²³ Hawthorne, “The Gentle Boy,” 50.

The Quakers esteemed persecution “as a divine call to the post of danger,” Hawthorne tells us.¹²⁴ The harsh treatment they received “produced actions contrary to the rules of decency, as well as rational religion.”¹²⁵ Their “indecorous exhibitions,” our narrator continues, “abstractly considered, well deserved the moderate chastisement of the rod.”¹²⁶ *Indecorous exhibitions, abstractly considered.* How could such “exhibitions” be considered in the abstract, conceptualized without regard to circumstances? Why *should* anyone consider them in the abstract, as if they occurred in some realm of Platonic ideas? Hawthorne, through his word choice, demonstrates deliberately perverse logic in making a theoretical judgment about the “indecorous” acts of the Quakers and following it with a call for temporal, fleshly *moderate chastisement*. “Chastisement” is, by definition, severe; the phrase is an oxymoron. Deconstructed, the sentence is absurd. It is a reminder to the reader how smoothly such absurdities can be delivered and unthinkingly absorbed. Furthermore, “moderate” punishment, as suggested by Hawthorne’s glib narrator, does not approximate what actually happened to the Quakers, who were immoderately whipped, maimed, and killed. In this tale, the judgment for inflicting severe punishments lies squarely at the feet of the Puritans. Their shallow rhetoric is exposed and no excuses are made for their excesses.

However, neither are excuses offered for Quakers who pursue martyrdom when they should be protecting their children. The plight of children was one of Hawthorne’s preoccupations throughout his career, especially after he became a father. In “The Gentle

¹²⁴ Ibid., 49.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 50.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Boy,” Ibrahim, the boy of the title, has been effectively orphaned through the hanging of his Quaker father and the banishment of his mother, “who like the rest of her sect, was a persecuted wanderer. She had been taken from the prison a short time before, carried into the uninhabited wilderness, and left to perish there by hunger or wild beasts. This was no uncommon method of disposing of the Quakers, and they were accustomed to boast, that the inhabitants of the desert were more hospitable to them than civilized man.”¹²⁷ Sewel cites several historical instances in which Quaker women were whipped and then left as prey for wild animals, a protracted form of execution that Hawthorne uses here to great effect.¹²⁸ In this fictional account, Ibrahim is rescued from his place of mourning on his father’s fresh grave by Tobias Pearson, a Puritan, who takes the six-year-old home to his wife, Dorothy, who has lost several children of her own and welcomes this waif into her heart.

The plot is anything but straightforward. The Pearsons are soon persecuted by the Puritan community, who also have the law on their side,¹²⁹ for adopting an “infant of the accursed sect.”¹³⁰ Ibrahim is persecuted by the adults for simply being alive and avoiding

¹²⁷ Ibid., 55.

¹²⁸ “1662: Being brought to the Court, they ordered her [Elizabeth]. . . to be whipt at three Towns, ten stripes each. So at Cambridge she was tied to the Whipping-post, and lash’d with ten stripes, with a three-string’d Whip, with three Knots at an End: At Watertown she had ten stripes more with Willow Rods; and to make up all, at Dedham, in a cold frosty morning, she received ten cruel Lashes at a Cart’s Tail. And being thus beaten, she was put on Horse-back, and carried many Miles into the Wilderness; and towards Night they left her there, where were many Wolves, Bears, and other wild Beasts, and many deep waters to pass through. But being preserved by an invisible Hand, she came in the Morning into a Town call’d Rehoboth, being neither weary nor faint. . . .” Sewel, 327.

¹²⁹ At a General Court held at Boston, 14 Oct. 1657, law was made that forbid “any person or persons within this jurisdiction [to] entertain and conceal any such Quaker or Quakers, or other blasphemous heretics.” The penalty was forty shillings “for every hour’s entertainment and concealment.” The harboring offender who was unable to pay was imprisoned until the fine was fully paid. *The Records of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*, vol. IV., Part I, 1650-1660, 308.

¹³⁰ Hawthorne, “The Gentle Boy,” 56.

the biblical visitation of the sins of the father upon the child (the Pearsons, of course, are complicit in this dodge as well for rescuing him), and he is reviled by the children because he is reviled by their parents. The Puritan minister, who learned the meaning of persecution from Archbishop Laud, that legendary bane of the Puritan cause, learned his lessons well and began preaching sermons on the danger of pity.¹³¹ Hawthorne forces the reader to consider numerous times in this tale (and others) the psychosocial effects of violence, that the evil associated with persecution is inherited almost organically, and that it contaminates and transforms all who come in contact with it, victim and persecutor alike. It is a multigenerational and multinational pandemic for which there is no antidote. This point is driven home like a poison pike at the end of the story.

Somewhat predictably, Ilbrahim's mother, Catharine, reenters the scene like the legendary Phoenix rising from the ashes, this one wearing sackcloth. She appears in church, at first muffled, but then decloaks as "inspiration" overtakes her. Hawthorne reserves his most unforgiving descriptions for this woman who had gone "to wander on a mistaken errand, neglectful of the holiest trust which can be committed to a woman."¹³² In her, "hatred and revenge now wrapped themselves in the garb of piety," as she delivers a hellishly bitter denunciation to the stunned congregation.¹³³ Her son recognizes her, of course, and an emotional scene follows between Dorothy, Ilbrahim's adoptive mother, and Catharine, his biological one, who has, in the opinion of the narrator, "violated the duties of the present life and the future, by fixing her attention wholly on the latter."¹³⁴ Her

¹³¹ Ibid., 58.

¹³² Ibid., 70.

¹³³ Ibid., 59.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 62.

imagination has become “hopelessly entangled with her reason”; in her wild and strange sorrows she has gone quite mad.¹³⁵

Her dementia foreshadows the perilous “enthusiasm” of the Great Awakening, which ministers like Charles Chauncy in Boston had warned and preached against when the major wave hit New England during 1740-43. Convinced that the “Awakening had deteriorated into something approaching mass hysteria, he began to consider the movement dangerous and threatening,” as did many “Old Lights” who understood the dangers of violent mental agitation unrestrained by steadying influences.¹³⁶ In “Dancing Around the Maypole, Ripping Up the Flag: The Merry Mount Caper and Issues in American History and Art,” Edward M. Griffin observes that Hawthorne, too, characteristically condemns extreme behavior; he is equally suspicious of systematic gloom or systematic gaiety.¹³⁷ Hawthorne had, of course, the advantage of perspective and of being a matchless researcher; writing in the 1800s, he could cast his authorial eye back over several centuries of religious immoderation and choose his own culprits. This section of “The Gentle Boy” constitutes a searing commentary on the religious excesses of the early Quakers and Puritans alike. It also recalls the excesses of both sides—Puritans and party lovers—in “The May-Pole of Merry Mount.”

True tragedy, however, is saved for the gentle boy, whose strange upbringing has left him painfully and unnaturally susceptible to cruelty, and whose mind was “wanting in the

¹³⁵ Ibid., 59.

¹³⁶ Edward M. Griffin, *Old Brick: Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705-1787* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 71.

¹³⁷ Edward M. Griffin, “Dancing Around the Maypole, Ripping Up the Flag: The Merry Mount Caper and Issues in American History and Art.” *Renascence*, spring 2005. <http://findarticles.com/p/articles>.

stamina for self-support.”¹³⁸ Ibrahim’s undoing arrives in the form of betrayal by a boy whom he loved and considered a friend. His constitution never recovers. On his deathbed, Catharine returns (one might say materializes), and he dies in her arms. Meanwhile, the vicious antics of the Puritans have driven Dorothy and Tobias Pearson so far afield, and have so consistently violated Tobias’s “inner voice”—the basis of the Quaker faith—that they have converted to Quakerism. Catherine, whose fanaticism has grown so distracted that no one bothers with her any more, comes to live with the Pearsons. Her death provokes a diluted, noncommittal response from those who used to revile her. Hawthorne implies that Ibrahim’s gentle spirit came down from heaven and taught her “a true religion,” but we are not told what that might be. Based on the unforgiving portrayal of fanaticism in this tale, we can, however, be sure of what it is *not*.

This story is not *about* John Endecott, but his presence as a character is indispensable. His repressive governorship, his “narrow mind,” and “uncompromising bigotry” created the culture which made cruelty on a grand scale possible.¹³⁹ Unlike the maypole and red cross incidents in which Hawthorne’s fictionalization gave Endecott considerably more importance than the historical record reflects, in the situation with the Quakers Endecott actually had great influence. It is interesting that in this story, Hawthorne reduces Endecott’s participation to one paragraph in which he is not even named, while at the same time making him absolutely necessary; his abuse of power creates the stage on which all subsequent events take place.

¹³⁸ Hawthorne, “The Gentle Boy,” 65.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

Conclusion

In “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” “Endicott and the Red Cross,” and “The Gentle Boy,” Hawthorne is writing literature but creating history. Utilizing the seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century historical records of Winthrop, Bradford, Sewel, and others, Hawthorne has selected disparate pieces of early American history, and of them made fictional historical moments which are apparently unforgettable. His creative management of the historical John Endecott makes perfect sense. Endecott was a chameleon, able to change moods in the blink of an eye; the records provide no consistent picture of who the man was or what engine drove him; he wrote almost nothing. It is precisely these qualities that made him a prime candidate for fictionalization: an early American whom few of his contemporaries commented on except to say how much he changed as time passed; unpredictable as lightning, he was ideal plot fodder.

Hawthorne’s fiction has had long-term effects on the construction of American national identity. His characterization of Endecott and his *created* historical moments have been adopted by later authors who have used his stories as critical starting points in the exploration of our national mythology and by Endecott descendants who have accepted Hawthorne’s tales as gospel and painstakingly—one might say obsessively—traced their proud but largely fictional inheritance from 1628 to the present day.

Chapter 2

HISTORY, LEGEND & FOLKLORE: THE SHADOWS OF JOHNSON AND HAWTHORNE FALL UPON THE NINETEENTH CENTURY HISTORIANS AND FOLKLORISTS

Introduction: Accountability and Erasure

The modern story of John Endecott is not borrowed from the histories written in the seventeenth-century colonies but from a great nineteenth-century writer of historical fiction, Nathaniel Hawthorne. Although fiction writers customarily borrow from historians, historians customarily borrow from each other but seldom (unless covertly) borrow from fiction writers or poets. In the case of the story of John Endecott, however, the Hawthorne sketch, because of its dramatic possibilities, captures the imaginations of its readers and thus substitutes for history. This interesting reversal of traditional literary practice reflects the political temper of the new republic at the time Hawthorne published “The May-Pole of Merry Mount”(1836) and “Endicott and the Red Cross”(1838). Hawthorne provides a nationalistic, sword-wielding hero in the form of the fictional Endecott, a man capable of damning the torpedoes in the interest of liberty, a character

sufficiently flawed to be believable and just crazy enough to inspire a cheering section. It is in essence Hawthorne's character who is carried forward in history, folklore, and the Endicott family's genealogical legend.

In order to demonstrate Hawthorne's influence on the historical record, it is necessary to methodically investigate the historiography of the American nineteenth century. Formal and informal histories reveal a dizzying trail of Hawthornian effects, which operated both top-down and covertly in different texts at different times.

Stephen Carl Arch, in *Authorizing the Past: The Rhetoric of History in Seventeenth-Century New England*, argues that because of "our insatiable need for myths about ourselves," writers of history in the seventeenth century invented various ways of establishing communal identity and purpose; moreover, because there will always be new events and ideas not experienced or comprehended by previous historians, historical reinterpretation is "even still and ever will be in progress, incomplete and ongoing."¹⁴⁰ "Cultures are constantly reinventing their stories, their myths, their sense of themselves," Arch asserts, and as cases in point he offers John Winthrop, Edward Johnson, Increase Mather, and Cotton Mather, who self-consciously struggled to shape the identity of their community by narrating stories about the past.¹⁴¹ Arch's thesis echoes that of Hayden White, who argued, long before it was fashionable to do so, that historical narratives are "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Carl Arch, *Authorizing the Past: The Rhetoric of History in Seventeenth-Century New England* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), xi.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vii.

which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences.”¹⁴²

Of particular interest to my investigation is Arch’s discussion of the dialectic between event and text—how a crisis demands either accountability or erasure—and the ways in which historical narratives meet that demand as “responses to the past, addressed to the future.”¹⁴³ Arch argues that crises helped to change the community’s sense of purpose “even as that sense of purpose was embedded in particular written texts whose meanings were themselves eventually revised, rethought, and reproduced in other texts that embodied a different and revised communal sense of purpose.”¹⁴⁴ While histories about crises tend to demand either accountability or erasure, the historical approach to John Endecott defies the norm.

Although Arch’s study deals exclusively with seventeenth-century historical writing, closely defined methodologically and temporally, the cultural process he describes is far more adaptive and widely relevant, a process perfectly elucidating the strange commingling of historical record and literary invention typified by the long, ongoing story of John Endecott. Prior to Hawthorne’s fictionalizing, the historical Endecott embodied the type of crisis Arch describes, but with a complicating difference. Endecott’s behavior engendered *both* critical responses, both accountability and erasure. This seeming paradox is grounded in the fact that Endecott was a walking event, a multifaceted, thirty-five-year-long, one-man crisis requiring a variety of responses at different times; some of his actions

¹⁴² Hayden White, “Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 82.

¹⁴³ Arch, *Authorizing the Past*, ix.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

could be adequately accounted for in the record and others needed to be erased or forgotten. As I have shown, the historical events involving Endecott were initially contained in both ways by seventeenth-century historians: some were explained (the red cross and Merry Mount incidents) and others were negated (the persecution of the Quakers).

Like Arch, John McWilliams also emphasizes moments of crisis. In *New England's Crises and Cultural Memory: Literature, Politics, History, Religion 1620-1860*, he demonstrates how New England's perceived crises figured in the process of historical self-definition (and, in his view, included Merry Mount). They followed three criteria:

The crisis occurred as a dateable historical event; it was perceived as a crisis, and constantly rewritten within the historiographical tradition as an important testimony to New England's self-definition; the crisis would prove to be readily shapable into a quasifictional narrative, with dramatic moments of confrontation, a narrative that would lend itself to recasting in important historical literature.¹⁴⁵

By the nineteenth century, the Puritan community's sense of its purpose, as exemplified by the writings of Winthrop, Johnson, and others, had not entirely vanished, but it had radically changed. When Hawthorne appropriated seventeenth-century histories for nineteenth-century plot fodder, he was effectively rewriting colonial history.

Endecott—and Massachusetts Bay—of past record were put to new use and given a new future. And once Hawthorne's tales were published, his Endicott was taken out of the

¹⁴⁵ John McWilliams, *New England's Crises and Cultural Memory: Literature, Politics, History, Religion 1620-1860* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13.

author's hands. It is doubtful that Hawthorne could have imagined a future in which the historical Endecott, the character created by seventeenth-century historians, metamorphosed into a mythical champion of American liberty—that Endecott would become what Joyce Appleby, in *Telling the Truth About History*, calls a “common reference point”¹⁴⁶ in the formation of an “imagined community.”¹⁴⁷

Appleby argues persuasively that in the closing years of the eighteenth century, “the aging witnesses of the [American] Revolution took up their pens” in order to supply the “deficiency of venerable traditions, religious uniformity, and common descent” that the written records lacked.¹⁴⁸ “A history of fresh beginnings and founders’ intentions quickly took shape as patriotic writers created a compelling historical narrative which interpreted the Declaration of Independence as the culmination of a long colonial gestation period.”¹⁴⁹ These original efforts served as a “template” for successive reworkings. The Hawthornian legends surrounding John Endecott—the red cross incident, the maypole—are part of this “long gestation period” (I might add, through no fault of the author’s). Hawthorne’s stories appeared in the 1830s and were energetically misinterpreted while the story of American nation-building was being aggressively reworked.

Hawthorne’s fiction also served to bring into focus a piece of the past that seventeenth-century historians and defenders of the Puritan mission generally would have liked to

¹⁴⁶ Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 101.

¹⁴⁷ A term coined by Benedict Anderson to describe the virtual construction of replacement communities to take the place of real ones left behind. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

¹⁴⁸ Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth*, 101.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

forget: the Quaker persecutions. This series of events represented, along with the Salem witchcraft trials, the kinds of crises that historians could not accommodate, revise or deny.¹⁵⁰ I suggest that John Endecott represented, to borrow Arch's phrase, an "unavoidable phenomenon whose meaning had somehow, in communal narratives, to be made consonant with the present-day community's larger purpose."¹⁵¹ Seventeenth-century historians all but ignored this particular crisis, but Hawthorne's "The Gentle Boy" brought this seamy slice of colonial history to the fore. Yet his other two Endecott tales served to divert, or at least diffuse, attention from that "unavoidable phenomenon" by the accidental glorification of the Puritan "iron man." It was the latter invention that enabled some writers in the nineteenth century to resolve the thorny issue of accountability or erasure faced by seventeenth-century historians: What to do with John Endecott?

A major point on which the endless fictional revisions turn is the question of whether Endecott cut the Cross of St. George from the British ensign because the cross symbolized Catholicism, or because it represented English sovereignty and thus, colonial dependence. An understanding of the Puritan position on the Church of England is necessary for interpreting the first possible motive for Endecott's rash act. The Puritans believed that the Church of England had not purified itself sufficiently of the heritage of medieval Catholicism. Cutting the cross is a logical extension of the fundamental Puritan thrust. After all, Massachusetts was not separatist. Endecott didn't hate the Anglicans for being

¹⁵⁰ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow identified these two crises in colonial culture—the Quaker persecutions and the Salem witchcraft trials—as *The New England Tragedies: I. John Endicott. II. Giles Corey of the Salem Farms* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868). See chapter 3, below.

¹⁵¹ Arch, *Authorizing the Past*, ix. To be clear: Arch uses this phrase in general terms and in relation to the Salem witchcraft crisis. He does not specifically mention John Endecott or the Quaker persecutions.

Anglican. He hated their continued resemblance to what he truly hated, which was the Catholic Church. Maintaining the Catholic cross—a symbol of idolatry—was, to Endecott, sinful. John Winthrop writes in his journal that Endecott “judg[ed] the cross. . . to be a sin,”¹⁵² and that his “rash” act laid blame upon the rest of the magistrates, “as if they would suffer idolatry.”¹⁵³ This evidence certainly indicates that Endecott’s inducement was faith-based insofar as the local magistrates understood his motive. That interpretation, however, does not carry the much broader, emotional appeal of a stout, reckless blow struck for American independence. The historical record does not provide that drama; Hawthorne’s fiction does.

The Problem with Historical Truth

Tradition dictates that it is customary and practical for the historians of one generation to draw upon and credit the work of previous generations of scholars. While one might not agree with every one of Perry Miller’s conclusions about the Puritans, for example, it would be madness to debunk his research for *The New England Mind*, and even more foolish to ignore his bibliography and start one’s own project from scratch. That said, there are inherent dangers in borrowing sources, no matter how respected those sources might be. In today’s global internet environment, we have faster access to more information than ever before and greater opportunity to vet that information before we accept it. Library databases, online indexes, and digitized documents, which heretofore existed only in the

¹⁵² John Winthrop, *History of New England 1630-1649*, vol. I, ed. James Kendall Hosmer (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 149. Elibron Classics Replica Edition, ed. J. Franklin Jameson.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 150.

form of wonderfully musty papers moldering in archives, are now available at a keystroke. The danger in any era is duplication of error.

Nineteenth-century writers, of course, did not possess high-tech luxuries, if luxuries they are. When perusing the footnotes of nearly any historian from that era one commonly finds cited as sources statements by most *other* historians from that era, and many from previous centuries. Buried in these various accounts of earlier times are embellishments, strong opinions, omissions, emphases, and outright mistakes which have been passed along from generation to generation like undetected computer viruses. Not that the present century is immune to inherited error, but at present there are vastly greater means of detection and communication, and perhaps greater motivation to avoid inherited error as well, since scholars can be humiliated at a keystroke.

Another issue shared by early and contemporary historians—another shared danger, if you will—is the ongoing question of what constitutes “historical truth.” In a 2008 *New Yorker* review of two new books on this topic, Jill Lepore contends that the establishment of the American Historical Association in 1884 signaled a major change in the history of history. The “cult of the fact” had achieved ascendancy, and thereafter “generations of historians have defined themselves by a set of standards that rest on the distinction between truth and invention.” Prior to that, historians like George Bancroft freely and unselfconsciously exhibited the influence of novelists like Sir Walter Scott. Regarding Bancroft’s ten-volume *History of the United States*, Lepore observes that “it is romantic and opinionated; it has a gritty voice and a passionate point of view. It’s a little . . . novel-

ish.”¹⁵⁴ She poses the question: Is “historical truth” truer than fictional truth?¹⁵⁵ “Every history is incomplete,” Lepore writes. “Every historian has a point of view; every historian relies on what is unreliable—documents written by people who were not under oath and cannot be cross-examined.”¹⁵⁶ Early nineteenth-century historians (and annalists and folklorists) did not agonize over the distinction between history and fiction with the sense of deadly urgency that historians and some fiction writers do today. Those previously fluid boundaries explain in part how the story of John Endecott found its way from the Massachusetts Bay Colony *Records* into the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne, thence to become a colonial legend, eventually to land in the twentieth century on the stage of the New York Metropolitan Opera in 1934 and in the twenty-first via a recording by the Seattle Symphony Orchestra.¹⁵⁷

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s historical fiction, rather than seventeenth-century history, provides the modern story of John Endecott. Endecott, who served as governor of the Bay Colony at various times a total of sixteen years between 1629 and 1665, the year of his death, received scant coverage by the three major chroniclers of the seventeenth-century Puritan experience.¹⁵⁸ The governors William Bradford and John Winthrop, whose

¹⁵⁴ Jill Lepore, “Just the Facts, Ma’am: Fake Memoirs, Factual Fictions, and the History of History.” *New Yorker*, 24 Mar. 2008, 80. The books under consideration in this review are: *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (Knopf: 2008) by John Burrow, and *The Purpose of the Past: Reflections on the Uses of History* (Penguin Press: 2008) by Gordon Wood.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Howard Hanson, *Merry Mount*, an opera. Libretto by Richard L. Stokes (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1932). *Merry Mount* premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 1934 and received a total of fifty curtain calls, still a house record. <http://www.usopera.com/composers/hanson.shtml>. The opera was revived in 2005 in a favorably-reviewed new recording by the Seattle Symphony. Chris Mullins, *Opera Today*, March 30, 2008. <http://www.operatoday.com/content/007629print.html>.

¹⁵⁸ John Endecott served as governor of the Bay Colony 1629-1630, 1644-1645, 1649-1650, 1651-1654 and 1655-1665.

histories ended in 1647 and 1649, respectively, before the arrival of the first Quakers in 1656, necessarily omitted as subject matter the most outrageous behavior of Endecott's career. Cotton Mather's gigantic folio, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, ends in 1698 but barely mentions Endecott. Mather did not connect him to the Quaker persecutions nor to any other significant events. In his chapter on Winthrop's successors, Mather dedicates one long sentence (that includes an obituary) to Endecott's years of service, giving other governors with less seniority and years of service, such as Henry Vane, Thomas Dudley and Richard Bellingham, the rest of the ink.¹⁵⁹ A minor early chronicler, Edward Johnson, who arrived in New England on the *Arbella* with John Winthrop in 1630, in 1654 published *The Wonder-working Providence of Sions Savior in New England*, a pro-Puritan, pre-Quaker history of the colonies which lauded Endecott.¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, the Quaker historians, writing in the early 1700s, demonized him. After that, he was largely ignored until the 1830s when Hawthorne's prose about his desecration of the flag of England moved him into a kind of limelight.

It might seem odd, then, that the legend of Endecott's slicing the red cross from the English flag lives on. I am aware of no historian in any era who thinks that this incident in itself was politically significant. In 1634, the moment triggered anxieties in New England for the unwanted attention the treasonous act might draw from the British crown, but even then the dreaded political repercussions—a tighter royal grip on the government and

¹⁵⁹ Cotton Mather. *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book II, 18.
http://galenet.galegroup.com/floyd.lib.umn.edu/servlet/ECCO?dd=0&locID=umn_wilson. Mather was born in 1663 and died in 1728.

¹⁶⁰ Edward Johnson, *Johnson's Wonder-working Providence of Sions Savior in New England 1628-1651*, ed. J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910). Reproduced under the auspices of the American Historical Association in *Original Narratives of Early American History*. www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/special/history/providence. Johnson's history ends in 1651.

religious practices of the colony—did not materialize at that time or in response to the red cross event. Endecott's real historical mark on New England occurred twenty years later, when he spearheaded the Quaker persecutions, but that *black* mark has received little publicity in the historical record or in creative prose. (The poetic exceptions, Longfellow and Whittier, will be discussed in another chapter.) It was the relatively obscure red cross incident, fictionally airbrushed and totally mythologized by Hawthorne, that metamorphosed into a major event in New England's history. Its popularity, I suggest, is almost entirely owing to Hawthorne's tale and the public's addiction to the myth of American independence. Prompted by Hawthorne's now widely-anthologized tale, Endecott's impulsive act—which, at that point, had nothing to do with a colonial dream of political autonomy and everything to do with Endecott's violent temper and hatred of Roman Catholicism—has been appropriated by all sorts of writers in subsequent centuries and obscured from its original context. The importance of the incident is not its place in history or in fiction, but in the demonstrated cultural need for an admirable myth of origin, wherein the grandest attributes of the prototypical American character—an unquenchable desire for freedom, for example—can find voice. From the first publication of "Endicott and the Red Cross" in 1838 to the present, all trails lead back to Hawthorne. And Hawthorne's trail leads back to the Salem Athenaeum.

**Colonial Historians Edward Johnson, Thomas Morton,
and Thomas Hutchinson on Endecott:
A Fit Instrument or Great Swelling Fellow?**

The major nineteenth-century historians—Francis Parkman, George Bancroft and John Lothrop Motley—who chronicled the lives of the Puritans drew from primary materials such as the first-hand-account histories written by Governors John Winthrop and William Bradford; from legal documents; correspondence; personal narratives; and other sources. Their “imaginative” style—which included flair, artistic license, and a narrative thread—enabled characters to come to life using techniques more commonly found today in historical fiction or biography. In the classic study of these historians, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman*, David Levin argues that however “scientific” the historian’s preoccupations or research, he must eventually select that evidence that merits preservation in his work, and that this process implies a quest for a coherent order and the choice of major themes. The historian must also find a convincing way of portraying human character, a search involving some *evaluation* of character.¹⁶¹ It is of no small importance that the most prominent historians of the nineteenth century, who carefully gleaned colonial records for noteworthy events—searching for who and what were *important* in the seventeenth century—all but ignored John Endecott. His

¹⁶¹ David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman* (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), ix.

public life apparently did not justify in-depth discussion, and his personality did not fire their imaginations.

Edward Johnson

Yet the first published history of New England does mention Endecott, calling him an appropriate “instrument” for wilderness work—a description that reappears often in historical writing about the period. Edward Johnson, the author of *Wonder-working Providence* (London, 1654), was a strict Puritan of a mind-set that would predispose him to admire someone like Endecott. In the 1650s, when Johnson wrote that “the much honoured Mr. John Indicat [Endecott] came over with them to governe, a fit instrument to begin this Wildernesse-worke, of courage bold undanted, yet sociable, and of a chearfull spirit, loving and austere, applying himselfe to either as occasion served,”¹⁶² he was preaching to the choir and from the choir. There is no extant record of Endecott’s being “much honoured” in England prior to his emigration—in fact, there is no certain evidence of Endecott’s movements at all prior to his association with the New England Company. Some twentieth-century historians have not been kind to Edward Johnson. Stephen Arch holds that *Wonder-working Providence* “represents the first of several histories in seventeenth-century New England that revise the past in order to appeal to the future.”¹⁶³ The editor of a 1910 reprint of Johnson’s work, J. Franklin Jameson (a Johnson descendant), takes a less flattering approach. He writes in his introduction that “we must admit that we have in him [Johnson] a striking example of the hot zealotry, the narrow

¹⁶² Johnson, *Wonder-working Providence*, ch. IX.

¹⁶³ Arch, *Authorizing the Past*, 59.

partisanship, the confident dogmatism, which characterized so much of Puritanism.”¹⁶⁴

Rumors exist, nonetheless. The *Dictionary of American Biography* states that Endecott was “*said to have* seen service against the Spaniards in the Low Countries; certainly he bore the title of “captain” even after he emigrated to Massachusetts” (my emphasis).¹⁶⁵

Presumably, the editors refer to the so-called (undeclared) Anglo-Spanish War (1585-1604), at the start of which John Endecott (1589-1665) was four years away from being born, and who had advanced to the ripe old age of fifteen by its end. It is unlikely that he saw “service” during those English losses to the Spanish in the “Low Countries” (the part of Europe that is now Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg), and even more unlikely that he emerged from the engagements with the rank of captain. In any event, Johnson’s “a fit instrument to begin this Wildernesse-worke” has managed to survive over time as a convenient catch-phrase in sympathetic accounts of Endecott.

Thomas Morton

Thomas Morton, who ridiculed Endecott in *New English Canaan* and who cannot be considered an impartial witness, nevertheless made a series of interesting observations regarding Endecott’s character. Morton was one of only four authors (along with Bradford, Winthrop and Johnson) who had first-hand knowledge of Endecott before writing about his life. Morton, who referred to Endecott as “Captain Littleworth” throughout his unconventional history of the Bay Colony, relentlessly satirized Endecott as a “great

¹⁶⁴ J. Franklin Jameson, Introduction, *Johnson’s Wonder-working Providence of Sions Savior in New England 1628-1651*. Since the late 1960s, Johnson’s work has enjoyed a critical revision. See Arch, *Authorizing the Past*, 58-59.

¹⁶⁵ Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. V (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1946), 155.

swelling fellow” given to “impostury.”¹⁶⁶ Morton repeatedly implied, sneered, and stated outright that Endecott was prone to self-invention and to overstepping his authority.¹⁶⁷ Endecott’s quarrel with Morton—it cannot be said that it was initially mutual—was grounded in Morton’s refusal to toe the Puritan line. It turned into a power struggle that the Puritan authority won, but that does not diminish the possibility that Morton was an astute judge of character. Perhaps his depiction of Endecott’s unsubstantiated strutting and bragging was at least in part an accurate portrayal of a civilian with a very cloudy military record who wanted to be called “captain.”

It appears, therefore, that Johnson, arriving in New England two years after Endecott, recorded hearsay about Endecott’s past and wrote with understandable bias about the Puritan community of which he was a devoted and enthusiastic member. At significant moments in his history, Johnson also had an unfortunate habit of “dropping into poetry,” much of it horrid, to commemorate important persons or events.¹⁶⁸ “Strong valiant John,” his tribute to Endecott begins, “wilt thou march on, and take up station first,/ Christ cal’d hath thee, his Souldier be, and faile not of thy trust,” and so forth.¹⁶⁹ As Jameson accurately points out, Johnson’s narrative is not in the class with Bradford’s and Winthrop’s—he assures us that it is the work of “a much inferior mind”—yet it gives us what neither Bradford nor Winthrop could supply: “the history, or at any rate the essential spirit, of the Massachusetts Colony depicted from the point of view of the rank and file.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan*, ed. Jack Dempsey (Scituate: Digital Scanning, 2000), 164.

¹⁶⁷ Morton, *New English Canaan*, 165.

¹⁶⁸ Jameson, *Wonder-working Providence*, Introduction.

¹⁶⁹ Johnson, *Wonder-working Providence*, ch. IX.

¹⁷⁰ Jameson, *Wonder-working Providence*, Introduction.

We shall see that when the language and observations from this awkwardly written testimonial resurface in the accounts of nineteenth-century historians and fiction writers, they perform a very different kind of cultural work from what Johnson originally intended.

Thomas Hutchinson

Hutchinson takes a different view of Endecott's character. In his *History of Massachusetts, from the first settlement thereof in 1628, until the year 1750* (1795), Hutchinson succinctly describes Endecott as being "among the most zealous undertakers [of the original settlers], and the most rigid in principles. . . . This disposition distinguished him more than his other mental accomplishments, or his outward condition in life."¹⁷¹ Hutchinson's *History* has been described, alternately, as "a critical and mainly unfriendly Tory account" that presents "a highly unsympathetic view [of the colonists]"¹⁷² and "the best history of the political crises of the 1760s and '70s."¹⁷³ If Johnson was predisposed to admire Endecott's Puritan zeal, Hutchinson may have been predisposed to consider him an uneducated upstart from the lower classes.

¹⁷¹ Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of Massachusetts, from the first settlement thereof in 1628, until the year 1750* (Salem: Thomas C. Cushing, 1795), 22. Readex Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans 28878, 28879.

¹⁷² Harold K. Bush Jr., "Re-Inventing the Puritan Fathers: George Bancroft, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the Birth of Endicott's Ghost," *ATQ* 9.2 (June 1995), 131, online source page 3, <http://search.ebscohost.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=keh&AN=950721823&site=ehost-live>.

¹⁷³ John Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 416.

The Imaginative Historians: Parkman, Bancroft, Motley

Francis Parkman

Endecott is conspicuously absent from most historical accounts written by major nineteenth-century scholars. Francis Parkman, in *France and England in North America*, mentions Endecott only peripherally in relation to French-English relations, specifically, the maneuvering of two Frenchmen, Charles de la Tour and Charles de Menou d'Aunay Charnisay, who became bitter rivals over strategic control of Acadia (what today is Quebec). At several points during this years-long, protracted power play, D'Aunay asked the government of Massachusetts Bay for support. The first time, Winthrop was governor; Endecott wrote to Winthrop that La Tour was not to be trusted.¹⁷⁴ The consensus of “several chief men of the colony” (including Simon Bradstreet and Richard Saltonstall) was that the territorial quarrel was for England and France, not for Massachusetts Bay.¹⁷⁵

The second appeal came about a year later, when Endecott was governor. Parkman writes, “The rugged bigot had before expressed his disapproval of ‘having anything to do with these idolatrous French,’” but he heard La Tour’s complaints, was allegedly moved to compassion by his “woeful tale,” and called a meeting of the magistrates, who nevertheless denied La Tour’s petition.¹⁷⁶ Other than one additional mention in passing, this minor incident represents the entire coverage of Endecott by Parkman in his 1500-

¹⁷⁴ Francis Parkman, *France and England in North America*, vol. I (New York: Library of America, 1983), 1089-91. The original edition was published in Boston in 1865.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1089.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1090.

page history. His account of the La Tour incident is significant, however, because it resembles Hawthorne's estimation of Endecott, written three decades earlier. Even in its brevity it portrays Endecott as changeable and unpredictable, a hater of French Catholics one moment and a man moved to compassion by one of them the next. Of course, in the absence of documentary evidence it is impossible to know if, or to what extent, Hawthorne's characterization of a mercurial Endecott influenced Parkman and other nineteenth-century historians when they sat down to compose their versions of the past.

George Bancroft

In George Bancroft's 1854 *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent to the Declaration of Independence*, Endecott is mentioned only twice: first, in relation to his part in the original settling of the colony, and second, in regard to a speech he made just before he died in 1665. Of the first, Bancroft writes: "Endicot [*sic*]*—*a man of dauntless courage; and that cheerfulness which accompanies courage; benevolent, though austere; firm, though choleric; of a rugged nature, which the sternest form of Puritanism had not served to mellow*—*was selected as 'a fit instrument to begin this wilderness work.' His wife and family were the companions of his voyage, the hostages of his fixed attachment to the New World."¹⁷⁷ There is no evidence that anyone other than Endecott's first wife accompanied the forty-year-old Puritan to New England. Bancroft's use of quotation marks within the previous passage indicates that he directly borrowed the popular "fit instrument" phrase from Johnson, whom he cites as a source.

¹⁷⁷ George Bancroft, *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent to the Declaration of Independence*, vol. 1 (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1854), 257.

Bancroft goes on to say that Endecott's band of one hundred settlers was "welcomed by Conant and his faithful associates to gloomy forests and unsubdued fields," implying that all was well from the start, but Conant's open arms are Bancroft's invention.¹⁷⁸ Conant and his wife and family had lived in various parts of what is now Massachusetts since 1623 as settlers for the Dorchester Company, which was bankrupt and no longer in possession of a patent by the time Endecott's colonists arrived in 1628. Conant's group had just spent two grueling years clearing land and building shelters at Naumkeag (later Salem) when Endecott appeared on the scene and claimed the territory. Despite instructions from the New England Company, the holder of the current patent, to accord the Conant and the "Old Planters" equal rights with the new, one of Endecott's first acts of authority was to disobey orders and appropriate their houses and garden lots for the new settlers. Conant had no authority by which to challenge Endecott, and he moved to the Bass River (now Beverly), supposedly an inferior location at that time and certainly a raw one.¹⁷⁹ It is therefore doubtful that Conant and his "faithful associates" welcomed Endecott. If there were "gloomy forests and unsubdued fields" about, it wasn't as if Endecott's people had to camp in them or rush to build homes before another New England winter set in. That task was comfortably deferred by evicting Conant's group from theirs. Endecott appears as a somewhat less fit "instrument" in this situation. Bancroft cites both Johnson and Thomas Hutchinson as his sources, although, curiously, neither one mentions this specific incident nor refers to Conant at all.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 257.

¹⁷⁹ Clifford K. Shipton, *Roger Conant: A Founder of Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), 69.

Bancroft had to make a decision: Would Johnson's account or Hutchinson's prevail in his own telling of the tale? Would Endecott become a hero or a dolt? Bancroft takes an interesting middle ground, combining portions of both accounts, a tactic resulting in a bipolar assessment, rife with contradiction. The reader is denied Hutchinson's unflattering assessment and is treated instead to Bancroft's more heroic language ("dauntless courage"), which echoes the "valiant" John Indicat of Johnson's awful poetry and also suspiciously resembles Hawthorne's fictional, tempestuous John Endicott of "Red Cross" fame.

Bancroft's second mention of Endecott situates him in 1665, the year of his death at the age of seventy-seven, a death preceded by a lengthy and nonspecific illness. (Quaker historian William Sewel tells us, gleefully, that Endecott "stunk alive, and so died with Rottenness."¹⁸⁰) Bancroft focuses on a speech Endecott gave in response to England's recently unstable politics and to the growing fear that the newly restored Stuart king, Charles II, would impose additional taxes on the colony. Bancroft alludes to a colonial hope of another revolution in England that would improve their liberties and to a rumor that "Massachusetts was to yield a revenue of five thousand pounds yearly for the king."¹⁸¹ Of course, colonial tempers and anxieties flared. "The inflexible Endecott," Bancroft writes, "just as the last sands of life were running out, addressed the people at their meeting-house in Boston. Charles II had written to the colony against Endicott, as a person not well affected, and desired that some other person might be chosen governor in his

¹⁸⁰ William Sewel, *The History of the rise, increase, and progress, of the Christian people called Quakers* (Philadelphia: Samuel Keimer. 1728), 332.

¹⁸¹ Bancroft, *History*, 410.

stead; but Endicott, who did not survive till the day of election, retained his office till the King of Kings summoned him from the world.”¹⁸² There is no evidence that Charles II’s dislike of Endecott in 1665 had anything to do with the historical red cross incident of 1634 of which so much has subsequently been made. More likely, Endecott’s leadership in the Quaker persecutions, beginning in 1656 and culminating in a royal edict to desist in 1661, was a cause of the king’s distaste. Or, perhaps his royal highness was irked because following the execution of Charles I, Governor Endecott provided safe harbor in Massachusetts for nearly a year to Cromwellians Edward Whalley and William Goffee, who were on the run for their part in the regicide.¹⁸³ In any case, Endecott’s late-life call for some version of colonial independence made perfect sense given the fact that his days of political influence were clearly over. To be dismissed—indeed, publicly disciplined and insulted—by the king (even though neither Endecott nor many Puritans held him in much regard) after thirty-seven years of service to the colony must have stung.

In “Re-Inventing the Puritan Fathers: George Bancroft, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the Birth of Endicott’s Ghost,” Harold K. Bush, Jr., employs Northrop Frye’s theory of a regnant “myth of concern” in arguing that Hawthorne wrote amidst a cultural debate regarding the nature and meaning of New England’s forebears.¹⁸⁴ According to Frye, “In every structured society the ascendent class attempts to take over the myth of concern and make it, or an essential part of it, a rationalization of its ascendancy.”¹⁸⁵ Bush argues that

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 375-76.

¹⁸⁴ Bush, “Re-Inventing the Puritan Fathers,” 1, <http://search.ebscohost.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=keh&AN=950721823&site=ehost-live>.

¹⁸⁵ Northrop Frye, *The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Contest of Literary Criticism* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1971), 49. Qtd. in Bush, “Re-Inventing the Puritan Fathers,” 1.

in “Endicott and the Red Cross” and “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” Hawthorne presents “historical challenges and corrections to the prominent and pervasive romantic constructions of Puritanism, most notably those of Bancroft.”¹⁸⁶ The “myth” under consideration in Bush’s essay (and under attack by Hawthorne in the aforementioned tales) is the vision of the Puritans as the “mythic fathers” of the American nation, an interpretation Bush believes was energetically fostered by Bancroft.¹⁸⁷ “The association of faith and republicanism as central tenets of the Puritans and as compatible and necessary ingredients of national political life in America,” Bush asserts, “was an essential feature of Bancroft’s historical project.”¹⁸⁸ John Burrow, in *A History of Histories*, while writing in more general terms, would nevertheless concur with Bush’s assessment of Bancroft’s approach, if not his specific agenda. Burrow describes Bancroft as an “enthusiastic democrat” and his history as an “uncritical celebration of America as the land of liberty and democracy.” Bancroft’s “naive, parochial and uncritical approach to American history,” Burrow says, ensured his nineteenth-century popularity.¹⁸⁹ For his part, Bush would argue that it was precisely those features which compelled Hawthorne to compose a counter-history.

If the association of faith and republicanism was essential to Bancroft, it certainly was not essential to Hawthorne, at least not as an affiliation to be lauded, remembered, and inserted into the new national consciousness. Hawthorne was painfully conscious of the sins of his Puritan forbears, those from whom he was biologically descended as well as

¹⁸⁶ Bush, “Re-Inventing the Puritan Fathers,” 2.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸⁹ Burrow, *History of Histories*, 417.

others in that questionable company of saints. Bush positions Hawthorne as a deliberate counterpoise to Bancroft, Hawthorne being acutely aware of the “two competing visions of America”¹⁹⁰ and critical of the Puritan fiction of liberty.¹⁹¹

Bush observes that the rhetorical device Hawthorne used to challenge that “mythic liberty” was John Endecott.¹⁹² Hawthorne’s Endecott “embodies two key features which form the ‘rock-foundation’ of America’s regnant myth of concern: 1) an insistent effort at cohesion, and 2) a powerful inclination to lash out and defend this myth against the subversive interventions of the agents of freedom.” “Endicott’s Ghost” is the continued working of these two features in American mythic discourse.¹⁹³

Bush’s strong argument contains several unarticulated ironies. He correctly resists an easy reading of Hawthorne’s “Red Cross” tale—a reading in which Endecott is the “typological precursor” of America’s move toward independence—but he does not notice the irony in the long history of misreading that same story.¹⁹⁴ The myriad ways in which Endecott has been fictionalized (without a trace of irony) in literature, history and biography as a living jeremiad and a “first omen”¹⁹⁵ of independence clearly demonstrate for the modern reader how history (or a historical personage) can be fictionalized and in the process become more convincingly historical than history itself.

¹⁹⁰ Bush, “Re-Inventing the Puritan Fathers,” 10.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Endicott and the Red Cross,” *Twice-Told Tales* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 345.

A second irony is that Bancroft hardly mentions Endecott in his *History*. Bush smoothly handles this inconvenience by first stating what he believes are Bancroft's personal goals for his history; second, by tying the Bancroft argument to Hawthorne (if A then B); then by portraying Hawthorne's Endecott as emblematic of the Puritan mission that Bancroft allegedly mythicizes (if B then C); and finally by arguing that Endecott symbolizes the Puritan ideal that Bancroft is attempting to fortify (if C then A), even though Bancroft largely ignores Endecott after borrowing Edward Johnson's "fit instrument" to identify him with the Puritan mission in New England. Bush's logic falters slightly, but despite this small problem he makes valid and important points about the intimate but sometimes ill-defined relationship between nineteenth-century historical writing and fiction. It is even more significant that he connects the writing of history and Hawthorne's Endecott. Bush's argument is a good example of the intellectual wrestling exercise that the *persistent presence* of John Endecott in American mythic discourse continues to provoke. If the historical John Endecott has been morphed beyond recognition into a vehicle for the "myth of concern" in the construction of American national identity, then I would argue that he has been put to more uses than just that one.

John Lothrop Motley

Although Bancroft may have known Hawthorne's tales about Endecott, John Lothrop Motley did certainly know them, but he earnestly contends in the preface to his *Merry-Mount; A Romance of The Massachusetts Colony* (1847) that Hawthorne exercised no influence on his romance. Although Motley says he was familiar with some of Hawthorne's "masterpieces" collected in *Twice-Told Tales*, he did not read Hawthorne's

“Merry-Mount” (included in the collection, along with “Endicott and the Red Cross”) either before or after he had written his own imaginative history.¹⁹⁶ Motley could hardly have avoided mentioning Endecott in *Merry-Mount*, but he does keep him off stage for the first 311 pages. The plot focuses primarily on Thomas Morton’s shenanigans and Sir Christopher Gardiner’s seduction attempts, all prior to Endecott’s arrival in New England in 1628. Both men are far more interesting characters than Endecott could ever be, even in Hawthorne’s skillful hands. It is a tale of political maneuvering and sexual enticement, energetically told, and is, by the author’s own description, a “romance.” Motley uses his training as a historian and his considerable gift as a satirist to create what today would be generically categorized a historical novel.

By the time the reader meets Endecott, three-quarters of the way into *Merry-Mount*, two months have passed since his arrival at Naumkeak (later Salem). Thomas Morton has long since been arrested at Merry-Mount by Miles Standish of Plymouth Colony and deported to England. (In Motley’s version of the incident, Standish’s success in capturing Morton is credited mostly to Morton’s “generous” reluctance to shoot Standish dead while he had him in his sights. This version closely resembles Morton’s own account in *New English Canaan*).¹⁹⁷ We learn that Endecott has made his foray to Merry-Mount and

¹⁹⁶ John Lothrop Motley, *Merry-Mount: A Romance of the Massachusetts Colony*, vol. 2, (Boston and Cambridge: James Munroe and Company, 1849), 5.

¹⁹⁷ Motley, *Merry-Mount*, 62. This version of Standish’s foray into Morton’s territory echoes Morton’s own account of the incident: “To save the effusion of so much worthy blood as would have issued out of the veins of these Nine Worthies of New Canaan [Standish and his eight soldiers], if Mine Host [Morton] should have played upon them out his portholes (for they came within danger like a flock of wild geese. . .)—Mine Host was content to yield upon quarter; and did capitulate with them in what manner it should be for more certainty, because he knew what Captain Shrimp [Standish] was.” Morton then surrendered, but in violation of the terms of his surrender he was physically restrained and his arms taken away. Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan*, ed. Jack Dempsey (Scituate, MA: Digital Scanning, 2000), 145-46. Governor William Bradford’s account of the incident is very different: “He {Morton} and his crew

chopped down the maypole, although Motley stages the telling in such a way that the reader is led to believe that Merry-Mount was “a den of infamy, and a rallying point for loose vagabonds and peace-breakers, for hundreds of miles around” at the time Endecott arrived, instead of a near-deserted settlement populated by only a half-dozen hangers-on.¹⁹⁸ “I have dispersed his [Morton’s] infamous crew, and have cut down the idolatrous Maypole,” Endecott declares, furthering the impression that his act was a daring feat.

In the scene where Endecott first enters the story, we find him conferring with Roger Conant and other settlers, whose party of immigrants had preceded Endecott’s by several years, regarding the future of the land claimed by the New England Company patent. Generally speaking, Endecott’s plan involves running off everyone not of his opinions. “This company shall lick up all that are round us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field,” Endecott threatens, borrowing liberally from scripture.¹⁹⁹ The image evoked goes further than slobbering cows: it is a picture of thoughtless consumption that could easily slide into destruction, and that is precisely the idea of the biblical reference from Numbers 22.4. In it, Moab is referring to the Israelites who had just destroyed the Amorites, leaving no survivors, and who were now camped at the Moabites’ doorstep. It is not a flattering reference. Endecott has substituted “company,” meaning the New England Company, for

came out, but not to yield but to shoot; but they were so steeled with drink as their pieces were too heavy for them. Himself [Morton] with a carbine, over-charged and almost half filled with powder and shot, as was after found, had thought to have shot Captain Standish; but he stepped to him and put by his piece and took him.” William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 210. Morton irritated the usually unflappable Bradford nearly beyond endurance. Bradford admits to “forgetting himself” in his detailed and unintentionally colorful account of Morton’s exploits.

¹⁹⁸ Motley, *Merry-Mount*, vol. 2, 10.

¹⁹⁹ Nu. 22.4: “The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, ‘This horde [the Israelites] is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.’” Moab is terrified of the Israelites, who had just destroyed the Amorites, leaving no survivors, and were now camped on the plains of Moab.

the original word “horde,” a derogatory term for a large group of nomadic and warlike people, in this case the Israelites. As cattle will graze a field bare if not controlled, so the Moabites expected the Israelites to continue their pattern of destruction. Motley cleverly implies a parallel between the careless consumption habits of largely brainless creatures and Endecott’s band of religious zealots.²⁰⁰

And the company’s position toward religious tolerance? ““May God, in his infinite mercy, forbid,’ thunder[s] Endicott, indignant at the very idea of toleration.” After several paragraphs of rant on the subject, Endecott commands, “Put the noses of all the recusants to the grindstone, and sharpen them, if you can, till they have a keener scent for the road which leadeth to heaven. If that will not serve their turn, why, even grind them off as soon as may be.”²⁰¹ Here Motley foreshadows Endecott’s future historical persecution of the Quakers, which did involve ear-lobbing and tongue-boring, and sets him up as a symbol—almost a caricature—of intolerance.²⁰² Motley initially presents Endecott as a buffoon, a man with more authority than sense, and a religious fanatic who knows the Bible but is incapable of applying that knowledge appropriately, either as bovine analogy or guidance for living.

Motley’s physical description of Endecott seems to have derived from a 1665 portrait by an unidentified artist, which, along with one of twenty-three extant copies, is currently

²⁰⁰ Motley, *Merry-Mount*, vol. 2, 111.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁰² See *Records of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay in New England*, vol. IV, Part I (Boston: William White, 1854), 308-09, for a list of punishments.

in the collections of the American Antiquarian Society (the copy is reproduced below).²⁰³ Endecott's clothing, skull cap, hair, moustache, and chin-beard in the portrait are perfectly described by Motley, although the actual portrait depicts Endecott at age seventy-seven, nearly forty years older than Motley's fortyish character. Other authorial modifications include reference to Endecott's hand resting "habitually and rather caressingly upon the iron handle of his long rapier," and to his physiognomy, which was indicative "rather of a



Figure 1: Portrait of John Endecott

man of action, than a profound thinker" but "earnest and imposing" nevertheless.²⁰⁴ Motley's satirical reference to Endecott's love affair with his sword fairly smacks of Hawthorne, and we can almost hear the echo of Thomas Hutchinson sniffing about Endecott's paltry "mental accomplishments."

Motley constructs numerous hilarious scenes involving Endecott's temper, sword, and megalomaniacal tendencies, but he is too adept a writer to create a necessarily dull, one-dimensional character. For instance, Motley gives Endecott a self-critical moment, although there is no recorded evidence that Endecott was prone to self-monitoring or indeed ever experienced such a moment in his life. In Motley's version of events, Endecott knocks a young man (Crowther) to the ground over a disagreement about the acceptable length of hair for men. "More had the flippant Crowther, perhaps, spoken. . . had not the

²⁰³ According to William Crowninshield Endicott, in 1924 there existed twenty-three copies of the sole original painting. *Memoir of Samuel Endicott with a Genealogy of the Descendants* (Boston: privately printed, 1924), 194. Some of the reproductions depict Endecott as considerably younger than seventy-seven. It is possible that Motley viewed one of these.

²⁰⁴ Motley, *Merry-Mount*, vol. 2, 108.

choleric governor, inflamed beyond all bearing by this last sally, suddenly dealt him a swinging box on the ear. The young man, stunned as well as surprised by this unexpected buffet, which the governor did not vouchsafe to accompany with a single word of explanation, measured his length upon the ground.” When Crowther recovers consciousness and “perpendicular position,” Endecott threatens him with the stocks. The governor then begins to “rebuke himself severely. He was a man of quick temper, accustomed to military command, requiring implicit obedience, bigoted in his religious opinions, but of indomitable courage and great sagacity. Such a man of iron, rigid, unyielding, incisive character was, perhaps, the true and only instrument by which the first foundations of the Puritan commonwealth could have been hewn out in that stern and rocky wilderness.”²⁰⁵ Even though Motley’s Endecott experiences a brief hiatus of clear thinking, the primary impression is that of a buffoon. Textual evidence suggests that either Motley, despite his statement to the contrary, was following Hawthorne’s lead in satirizing Endecott, or that Motley independently arrived at the same conclusion—even the same diction—as did Hawthorne. In “The May-Pole of Merry-Mount,” Hawthorne tells us that “the whole man [Endecott], visage, frame, and soul, seemed wrought of iron, gifted with life and thought, yet all of one substance with his head-piece and breast-plate. It was the Puritan of Puritans; it was Endicott himself!”²⁰⁶ Hawthorne’s description renders Endecott not quite human—more like a suit of armor with a voice—and Motley uses similar language in describing the “iron man” (Hawthorne’s original epithet) in a deliberate move to exaggerate and poke fun at Endecott’s notoriously inflexible yet explosive nature.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 122-23.

²⁰⁶ Hawthorne, “The May-Pole of Merry-Mount,” 44-45.

Moments after the scene described above, Endecott visits his dying wife, whose health had suffered irreparably in the wilderness. “A tear trickled down his iron cheek,” Motley tells us, giving the reader another confusing glimpse of Endecott’s emotional unpredictability, along with the threat of rust, while wisely not making him wholly unlikable. The word choice—“iron cheek”—further suggests Hawthornian influence.²⁰⁷ This is Johnson’s “fit instrument” coupled with Hawthorne’s “iron man.”

Motley, like Hawthorne, alludes to Endecott’s military experience, which was, as extant records show and both authors knew, nonexistent at this point in his checkered career. The fashioning of Endecott as the ideal “instrument” for “wilderness” work both echoes and mocks Johnson, a self-declared Endecott acolyte. To suggest, moreover, that a person with such a limited character was precisely what the Puritan mission required opens doors for criticism of the mission itself.

In contrast, Motley characterizes John Winthrop, who holds the office of Governor for much of the *Merry-Mount* story, as gentle yet decisive, soft-spoken and sensible, a man of “just and magnanimous mind” who “read the [harsh] sentences of the court, which he was obliged to deliver, with manifest repugnance.”²⁰⁸ Winthrop is Motley’s true counterforce to Endecott; the first man’s intelligence and restraint are poised against the other’s thoughtless bravado and impulsiveness.

Significantly, after Endecott’s late, brief appearance in the tale, he disappears from the story. Motley returns to his primary subjects—Morton, Gardiner, and the young lovers in

²⁰⁷ Motley, *Merry-Mount*, vol. 2, 123-24.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 187, 221, 179.

the romance, Esther Ludlow and Henry Maudsley. Like many other nineteenth-century writers, Motley is searching hard for a usable past amidst the scandals and achievements of Puritan history. Toward the end of *Merry-Mount*, the narrator speaks directly to the reader:

If this early chapter of New England annals has any meaning in it, it certainly illustrates the peculiar character of the Massachusetts settlement. . . . It was reserved for exalted, unflinching, self-sacrificing, iron-handed, despotic, stern, truculent, bigoted religious enthusiasts, men who were inspired by one idea, but that a great idea, and who were willing to go through fire and water, and to hew down with axes all material, animal, or human obstacles, in the path which led to the development of their idea. . . . It was a great movement, not a military, nor a philanthropic, nor a democratic movement, but a religious, perhaps a fanatical movement, but the movers were in earnest, and the result was an empire. The iron character of these early founders left an impression upon their wilderness-world . . . and the character of their institutions, containing much that is admirable, mingled with many objectionable features, has diffused an influence, upon the whole, healthy and conservative, throughout the length and breadth of the continent.²⁰⁹

If one were to summarize this statement, it might sound like this: *The Puritans were fanatics; many of their leaders were overzealous and cruel, but they had one great idea and a lot of grit. If we are to look back over the past—well, maybe some people suffered at their hands but over time their influence has proved to have been positive.* This end-justifies-the-means argument, combined with Endecott's minor appearance in (and rapid

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 235-36.

exit from) the romance, serves to maintain a light narrative tone that reinforces the equally lightweight plot. The author chose to make the focus of his Romance a pair of sweet young lovers set against a pair of very naughty rakes; the story ignores the majority of political machinations and other aspects of daily life in the colony except as they serve to move the plot forward and contextualize the romance between Esther and Henry. It was clearly not Motley's intention to write a critical or philosophical history, and he cannot be criticized for not doing so. In the process, however, he has given us yet another rendition of John Endecott's story that draws heavily upon fiction and undercuts, rather than highlights, the seriousness of mixing literature with the historical record.

**The Anthologists as Historians:
Griswold and the Duyckink Brothers
to the American Literature Survey**

The first anthologies of American literature appeared in the mid-1800s. At this point in American literary history, the power of an anthology's editor to influence the reading public's taste and opinions about literature resembled that of a modern college professor who selects texts for an English course. That shortlist of works may be the only text the public or student ever reads in the genre. Additionally, the simple selection of one work over another implies worth (or lack of it), an implication that may be untrue but which the

recipient of the anthology or assigned reading list may perceive and believe nevertheless. One might even trace the origins of the “canon” of American literature to the judgments made by the nineteenth-century anthologists. In “America Discovers Its Literary Past: The Anthology as Literary History in the Nineteenth Century,” Rose Marie Cutting ably demonstrates the profound influence of Rufus W. Griswold’s *The Poets and Poetry of America* (1842) and *The Prose Writers of America* (1846) and Evert and George Duyckinck’s *Cyclopedia of American Literature* (1855). Griswold and the Ducykinck brothers competed with each other, and their volumes served as “the first important histories of American literature and the chief means by which it reached the reading public.”²¹⁰

These first rival anthologies had a great deal in common. Both Griswold and the Duyckinck brothers stressed biography as much (or more) than literary works. With the goal of making their anthologies as exciting as possible, they demonstrated a perhaps excessive fondness for the picturesque, which led them on tangents they found interesting. Hence, minor figures were often slipped into articles on major figures,²¹¹ a habit leading to the inclusion of a lot of very minor players in these early literary histories. As Cutting observes, “They are crammed with forgotten and better-forgotten writers.”²¹²

Cutting concludes, however, that the weaknesses of the anthologists are frequently balanced by their strengths, especially in the case of the Duyckincks. She finds their efforts

²¹⁰ Rose Marie Cutting, “America Discovers Its Literary Past: The Anthology as Literary History in the Nineteenth Century” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1972), 5.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 375. The question of “major” and “minor” status, of course, has come under severe scrutiny since Cutting’s research in the early 1970s.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 378.

at inclusiveness commendable: their breadth of historical interest included “descriptions of nature, travel accounts, memoirs, diaries, letters, the political literature and oratory of the Revolution” and other types of literature frequently ignored by critics and literary historians.²¹³

As these first attempts to identify a distinctly American literature took shape, Hawthorne was included.²¹⁴ Griswold’s *Prose Writers of America* included four stories by Hawthorne, and the Duyckincks’ *Cyclopedia* included two²¹⁵; none of the selections included “Endicott and the Red Cross” or “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” but that is not surprising. At the time Griswold was making his choices, the work that would secure Hawthorne’s reputation, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) had not yet been published. Even in 1855, five years after the appearance of the novel, Hawthorne had not acquired his later (and present) status as a critic of New England’s seamier historical moments. Part of the reason was simply timing. Another contributing factor was Hawthorne’s intermittent writer’s block and very irregular production: “He and his work vanished for long periods.”²¹⁶ At one point the editor Evert Duyckinck asked Henry Longfellow, ““Does Mr. Hawthorne ever write now?””²¹⁷ Duyckinck, a friend of Hawthorne’s, greeted *The Scarlet Letter* warmly. He published part of “The Custom House” in his new magazine, the

²¹³ Ibid., 379.

²¹⁴ Griswold did not include the writing of William Bradford, John Winthrop, Edward Johnson, or any of the other early chroniclers of the Puritan experience in *Prose Writers of America* (1846). The Duyckincks’ *Cyclopedia of American Literature*, published nine years later, included selections from Bradford, Winthrop, Johnson, Thomas Morton and Thomas Hutchinson.

²¹⁵ *The Prose Writers of America* included Hawthorne’s tales “A Rill from the Town Pump,” “David Swan—A Fantasy,” “The Celestial Railroad” and “Spring.” *Cyclopedia of American Literature* offered “The Grey Champion” and “Sights from a Steeple.”

²¹⁶ Brenda Wineapple, *Hawthorne: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 135.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

Literary World, as soon as the controversial but widely acclaimed Romance appeared.²¹⁸

Within two weeks, the first edition of twenty-five hundred copies of *The Scarlet Letter* had sold out, and another two thousand were being printed. Fifteen hundred copies of the second edition sold in three days.²¹⁹ Hawthorne, as ambivalent in his own life as he was in his fiction, worried. Hawthorne's most recent biographer, Brenda Wineapple, sums up the conflict: "Too much popularity and an increased demand for his work made Hawthorne anxious that he couldn't compete with himself or produce anything resembling what he'd already written. Or write at all."²²⁰

Regardless of his erratic output, Hawthorne's work became increasingly popular and anthologized (or anthologized and popular). From 1846 to the present time, his work has been included in every major anthology of American literature. By the time *The Chief American Prose Writers* appeared in 1916,²²¹ "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" had become a frequent selection; after that, it became a staple, appearing (typically along with between seven and thirteen of Hawthorne's other tales and excerpts) in major anthologies in 1940, 1948, 1949, 1951, 1952, 1955 (2), 1956, 1962, 1966, 1970, 1974, 1987, 1979, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2004, 2006 (2), and 2008. As "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" became part of the canon, so did one characterization of John Endecott. "Endicott and the Red Cross," perhaps more attractive for its nationalistic symbolism than for its strength as a

²¹⁸ Ibid., 217.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 216.

²²⁰ Ibid., 134.

²²¹ Norman Foerster, ed., *The Chief American Prose Writers* (New York: Riverside Press, 1916), contents. <http://www.uta.edu/english/roemer/ctt/foerstertoc1.jpg>.

story, appeared in anthologies in 1952, 1955 (2), 1966, and 2008.²²² Today, the Pearson Custom Library of American Literature, a system whereby a teacher can assemble online his/her own anthology for classroom use, offers both “Merry Mount” and “Red Cross.”²²³

Endecott in Legends, Annals, & Folklore:

Drake, Felt, Hawkes, the Flag, and the U.S. Congress

Samuel Adams Drake declared in his 1884 collection, *A Book of New England Legends and Folklore*, “I am of the opinion that history and fiction, like oil and water, do not readily mix, or, in other words, that fiction and fable have no place in history. In that conviction, I have omitted purely fictitious tales from this collection of, for the most part, historical legends.”²²⁴ His attempt to differentiate between slippery terms is admirable but ultimately unsuccessful. To suggest that “history” is not fictitious or even fabulous in the mythical (or myth-making) sense, and that somehow “legend” falls into a more scholastically respectable category (perhaps being closer to the purity of history) is rather like saying, “I’m not going to deceive you. I’m just going to lie to you a little bit.” We see in play here Drake’s desire to legitimize and elevate, through categorization, the status of

²²² This partial list, and the one preceding it, were gleaned at random from 44 anthologies and college readers published from 1846 to 2008. They do not represent every appearance of “Merry Mount” and “Red Cross” in all anthologies in print during those years.

²²³ Pearson Custom Library of American Literature.

<http://form3.amesondemand.com/Pearson/amlit.results.aspx> This site specifies the various anthologies.

²²⁴ Samuel Adams Drake, *A Book of New England Legends and Folklore* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1971), xix.

legend to something nicely close to actual “history.” The “truth” of legend and folklore is “authentic,” he asserts.²²⁵ In Drake’s view, a scrap of “truth” gives a legend or folk tale the credentials to be included in his collection.

My point here is not to denigrate Drake’s methodology, developed long before the acknowledgment of “emotional” truth, or the identification of “imagined communities” and “invented” history, but to demonstrate the ongoing difficulty in separating history, legend, folklore, and fiction from one another, either as sources or literary products. Drake voiced his anxiety about the quicksilver qualities of historical narratives nearly a hundred years before Hayden White and Benedict Anderson addressed the problem by admitting that history as a narrative form was flawed for all the reasons that made Drake nervous.²²⁶

Drake was an enormously prolific writer of military histories, travel literature, local history and regional histories. He read widely, and his knowledge and store of sources were voluminous. He painstakingly created the rules by which his book of legends would evolve. Finally, however, he had to write from his own theoretical and historical base and therefore apparently felt pressed to justify the unpredictable transitions from “history” to “creative prose” that danced on the pages of so many nineteenth-century authors operating in diverse genres. From John L. Motley and Benjamin Trumbull to Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Drake and his contemporaries confronted a mix of methods and motives. The index to Drake’s *A Book of New England Legends and Folklore* reflects this complexity; his citations credit a broad range of sources, which include the

²²⁵ Ibid., xx.

²²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991); Hayden White, “Historical Texts as Literary Artifact,” *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

names of familiar poets and historians, a few now-obscure informants, but more often, no one at all. We cannot know which histories Drake read in addition to the ones he credits, or which fiction writers and poets he drew upon who are not listed among his declared sources, or which legal records he consulted—but the contents of his folk tales display tell-tale signs of those undeclared sources.

In the section “Salem Legends,” Drake includes a short chapter simply entitled “Salem,” in which he declares that “the two most noteworthy things that have happened in Salem are the Witchcraft Persecution. . . and the birth of Nathaniel Hawthorne.”²²⁷ Somewhat predictably, the chapter is mostly about Hawthorne and the locales used in his fiction: the actual Custom House, Gallows Hill, the model for *The House of the Seven Gables*, the town square, and the Hawthorne home on Union Street, where the author was born and where he wrote many of his tales. In Drake’s account, Salem is inextricably bound to, and defined by, Hawthorne; the town does not have an independent reality apart from Hawthorne’s descriptions of it. It is important to note Drake’s willingness to conflate the historical, physical village of Salem and Hawthorne’s fictional recreation of it. Drake offers the fiction to the reader and invites him to believe in its existence. Similarly, in today’s technology a virtual-reality computer program creates a simulated but convincing environment, perhaps visual, but increasingly often accompanied by other sensory inputs such as pressure and gravitational forces. Most of us “know” that virtual reality is not “real,” and we don’t make major decisions—such as whom to vote for as President of the United States—based on virtual input. The convincing conflation of fiction and history in

²²⁷ Drake, *New England Legends*, 169.

the hands of a writer—a nineteenth-century virtual virtuoso—is more subtle and more dangerous. It is impossible to know the logic behind Drake’s process here, particularly after his “oil and water” disclaimer, but we can tease out the rationale: since Hawthorne *sometimes* used authentic locations in his fiction, and because he had personal, genealogical ties to Salem and New England which he *sometimes* used as a basis for invented characters or controversies, then his fictional creations are, in Drake’s mind, raised out of the mire of “purely fictitious tales” and deposited into the more enlightened category of “historical legends.”²²⁸ The flaw in this reasoning, however, derives from the fact that Hawthorne is best known for the ambivalence and moral dilemmas of his plots. Along with Drake’s vague and somewhat fluid methodology, this combination presents a serious problem of authenticity, and it underscores the ongoing concern of this study: the power of literature to distort the historical record.

In “Endicott and the Red Cross” (a title lifted directly from Hawthorne’s tale but used to describe a historical event), Drake retells the story of the flag-slashing with attention to historically accurate chronology: In September 1634, the Massachusetts Colony received a royal commission from King Charles I announcing the imposition of a new royal governor, and Endecott took his sword to the English ensign two months later, in November. The aftermath of the event—events which included a temporary change in the colony’s “colors” to permanently eliminate the red cross and replace it with the King’s arms—made clear, in Drake’s view, that “the fathers of the Colony were making rapid strides toward independence.”²²⁹ This conclusion—which underplays the colony’s nervous

²²⁸ Ibid., xix.

²²⁹ Ibid., 183.

apologies to England, and the disciplining of the offending Endecott—is pure Hawthorne. In other words, it is pure fiction. After his own preamble, Drake quotes several pages of Hawthorne’s “Endicott and the Red Cross” to provide the conclusion to his account, thereby giving the reader a crystal-clear, fabricated version of a historical event—a version having no counterpart in any historical record.

Drake, like other writers before and after him, succumbed to an American myth of incipient colonial independence by misreading Hawthorne’s satire as serious observation about the American character and then projecting that happy mistake *backward* two hundred years, thus giving Endecott’s impulsive and politically inconvenient action glamor and mythical significance it did not possess. As David McCullough makes clear in *1776*, even as events moved toward the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War, the colonies were still not thinking in terms of independence from England. As late as September 1775, if asked what they were fighting for, “most of the army—officers and men in the ranks—would have said it was the defense of their country and of their rightful liberties as freeborn Englishmen.”²³⁰ General George Washington wrote during that time that the object was “‘neither glory nor extent of territory, but a defense of all that is dear and valuable in life.’ Independence was not mentioned. . . . He had been quite specific in assuring the New York Provincial Congress that ‘every exertion of my worthy colleagues and myself will be equally extended to the reestablishment of

²³⁰ David McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 54. These opinions, of course, are not original with McCullough. They also represent the general view of most academic historians.

peace and harmony between the mother country and the colonies.”²³¹ That position changed, of course, but not in 1634 and not because of John Endecott.

In “Cassandra Southwick,” Drake tackles the “dark day of Quaker persecution.” In John Greenleaf Whittier’s poem by the same name, John Endecott plays a diabolical role, as he did in the historical record. Drake begins by questioning whether Whittier’s “poetic justice” in applying the “lash unsparingly to the memory of those who acted prominent parts in commencing these barbarities” was justified. Drake opines—perhaps in an attempt to balance Whittier’s “righteous indignation” or to present the illusion of authorial impartiality—that “the sins of the rulers were those of a majority of the people, who, by first making the laws against the Quakers, and then consenting to their enforcement. . . are the really guilty objects of this posthumous arraignment. Endicott, Norton, Rawson, and the others were but the agents.”²³² This is disingenuous at best. Drake knew well that the power of the average, lower class citizen in Massachusetts Bay was limited, and that the chances of successfully interfering with the actions of a fanatical governor such as John Endecott were not only slim, but dangerous. The Quaker sympathizer could end up behind the cart’s tail himself, whipped from town to town. By 1658, the Bay Colony had enacted additional laws forbidding association (including speaking or writing) with Quakers, in order “that their pestilent errors and practices may be speedily prevented.” The convicted sympathizer could expect similar punishments, such as fines, scourging, whipping, and work in “the house of correction”²³³ Drake’s move here is to give this ugly chapter in

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

²³² Drake, *New England Legends*, 184.

²³³ *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, vol. IV, Part I, 321.

American history a little coat of whitewash by acknowledging the brutality and then diffusing responsibility in Nixon-like fashion. “Mistakes were made,” Drake implies, but declines to say exactly by whom.

Citing Boston General Court records to provide backstory, Drake then turns the account over to Whittier, a poet and a Quaker, once again merging historical record and creative prose. Whittier’s poem provides a harsh last word despite Drake’s efforts at damage-control. The poetic context is Endecott’s thwarted attempt to sell Cassandra Southwick into slavery; no ship’s captain would take her aboard:

I looked on haughty Endicott; with weapon half-way drawn,
Swept round the throng his lion glare of bitter hate and scorn;
Fiercely he drew his bridle-rein, and turned in silence back,
And sneering priest and baffled clerk rode murmuring in his track.²³⁴

Drake’s reliance on literary sources for his historical legends makes for interesting reading but tends toward historical inaccuracy. By accepting Hawthorne’s fiction of Endecott’s political significance, Drake participates in perpetuating the myth of the red cross incident as a positive, *self-conscious* foreshadowing of American independence. Even his choice of a stanza from “Cassandra Southwick,” however negative in reference to Endecott’s character, refers to his “weapon half-way drawn,” thus reinforcing the image of the ever-present sword and its mythical trappings.

Another loosely constructed, but important, history of Salem and the Puritan experience can be found in Joseph B. Felt’s *The Annals Of Salem From Its First*

²³⁴ John Greenleaf Whittier, “Cassandra Southwick.” <http://www.kimooopress.com/whittier2.html>.

Settlement (1827). This descriptive account provides an edited chronicle of events in the history of Salem intermixed with Felt's own religious sentiments and predispositions. Felt was trained as a minister and took up historical research only after ill health required his early retirement.²³⁵ Later historians suggest that Felt, who "occasionally gave offense by his outspoken orthodoxy," may be remembered "rather as a diligent annalist than as a philosophical historian."²³⁶ Yet Felt read extensively in the colonial sources, drawing upon a wide variety, including the journal of John Winthrop, the Massachusetts Bay Colony *Records*, letters, and numerous newspapers.

From the first, Felt refers to Endecott as "Captain," that mysterious title raising yet again the question of where it originated. Like some other chroniclers of the Puritan experience, Felt displays unabashed admiration for Endecott and sympathy for what he had to contend with. By the time he arrives at the 1634 red cross incident, six years after Endecott's arrival in New England, Felt has dropped all pretenses of objectivity. One feels that if Felt could have reasonably left the whole story out, he would have done so, although, given his later and more important omissions, the inclusion of this particular example of Endecott's bad temper and judgment might have seemed the lesser evil. Writing in 1827, Felt did not have the benefit of Hawthorne's spin on the subject ("Endicott and the Red Cross" appeared in 1838) and therefore had to take at face value the event as described in the records of the colony.

²³⁵ *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. V, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), 316.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

Hawthorne, however, had read Felt, or at least had *The Annals of Salem* twice in his possession before he published “Red Cross.” In *Hawthorne’s Reading*, Marion L. Kesselring documents every book checked out of the Salem Athenaeum between 1828 and 1850 by Hawthorne or his aunt, Mary Manning, who often borrowed books for him. Hawthorne himself signed out Felt’s *Annals of Salem* three times, in 1833, 1834 and 1849.²³⁷ Hawthorne also borrowed hundreds of other texts from the library, including dozens of “historical collections” (collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society); *Massachusetts State Papers*;²³⁸ Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702); Nathaniel Morton’s *New England’s Memorial* (1826); *Laws & Charter of Mass Bay*;²³⁹ volumes of poetry and drama; ancient and medieval classics; histories and biographies galore; Boston newspapers; *Biographica Britannia*; sermons; and one hundred thirty issues of *Gentlemen’s Magazine*, to name but a few. Hawthorne read widely and conducted research extensively, and that scope makes it difficult for a contemporary scholar to establish precise connections between Hawthorne’s sources and his creative work.

The temptation, of course, is enormous. For example, in 1837, the year before the publication of “Red Cross,” Hawthorne borrowed fifty-five books and magazines from the Salem Athenaeum. While George Bancroft’s *History of the United States* and Samuel Gardner Drake’s *Indian Biography* (1832) might seem to provide insight into what ideas

²³⁷ Marion L. Kesselring, *Hawthorne’s Reading 1828-1850* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1949) 50, note #166.

²³⁸ Alden Bradford, ed., *Speeches of the Governors of Massachusetts, from 1765 to 1772. . . And other Public Papers, relating to the Dispute between this Country and Great Britain* (Boston: 1818). Ibid., note #49.

²³⁹ *Act and Laws, Of His Majesty’s Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England* (Boston: 1726). Ibid., note #293.

relative to “Endicott and the Red Cross” were perking in Hawthorne’s mind that year, *Essais de Montaigne*, Wordsworth’s poems, and Prior’s *Life of Goldsmith* clearly do not. Based solely on his library list, Hawthorne’s reading was simply too extensive for the modern scholar to pin him down as being influenced by one text more than another, much less establish a timetable of those alleged influences. That fact, combined with Hawthorne’s well-documented, protracted creative process (he often gathered notes and drafted for years before releasing a finished product)²⁴⁰ make it impossible to tie Felt’s pro-Endecott history to Hawthorne’s later creation of the red cross tale in any absolutely certain way, or to tie it more securely than any of the rest of his myriad sources.

Hawthorne’s anxious procrastination and writer’s block have become legendary. In 1839, after the successful reception of *Twice Told Tales* and the promise of another collection of historical sketches, Hawthorne once again froze. He wrote to his wife, Sophia, ““I have a note to write to Mr. Capen [Hawthorne’s publisher] who torments me every now-and-then about a book he wants me to manufacture.””²⁴¹ Fortunately for literary posterity, Hawthorne’s journals and extensive correspondence provide insight into both his brilliance and his creative struggles, but I am unaware of any direct commentary on the content or construction of this particular tale. However, we do know that Hawthorne was aware of Felt’s sympathetic take on Endecott, and it is therefore possible that Hawthorne, the grand master of ambivalence, mined Felt’s generous interpretation for his own satirical

²⁴⁰ Wineapple, *Hawthorne*.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 135. Capen had already begun advertising the promised collection, *New-England Historical Sketches*.

creation. My point here is that it is a more viable task to trace Hawthorne's influence on other writers than to accomplish the reverse.

Felt vehemently defends Endecott's behavior in the flag slashing: "Had most of the principal men, and many others in Massachusetts, been judged according to their opinion, as to retaining the cross in their ensigns, they would have fared no better than Mr. Endicott. They thought as he did on the subject [that the cross was a mark of Catholic idolatry]. The difference between them and him was, that he manifested his opinion in deed, and they retained theirs in secret." After his action was reported in England and construed as rebellion, the General Court was constrained to notice what he had done and "bring in some sentence against him, as an ostensible sign of their loyalty [to the crown]. He was made the victim to pacify the displeasure of His Majesty's Council. . . ." ²⁴² Felt, writing pre-Hawthorne, apparently did not understand that this was a founding moment of American independence. A direct contradiction to Felt's interpretation can be found in the journal of John Winthrop, who wrote on 26 May 1635, "The matter of altering the cross in the ensign was referred to the next meeting, . . . it being propounded to turn it to the red and white rose, etc. [the royal coat of arms] ²⁴³, and every man to deal with his neighbors, to still their minds, who stood so stiff for the cross, until we should fully agree about it. . . and to write to England, to have the judgments of the most wise and godly there." ²⁴⁴

Clearly, the "principal men" and "many others" did *not* at that time agree with Endecott's

²⁴² Joseph B. Felt, *The Annals of Salem From Its First Settlement* (Salem: W. & S.B. Ives, 1827), 77. Kessinger Publishing's Legacy Reprints.

²⁴³ The red and white rose on the coat of arms was known as the Tudor Rose, symbolizing the end of the War of the Roses (1450-1485) and the merging of the Houses of York and Lancaster in the reign of King Henry VII, the first Tudor king, who was a Lancaster by blood and a York by marriage. http://www.knowledgesclan.org/coat_of_arms.htm

²⁴⁴ Winthrop, *History of New England*, vol. I, 151.

action, and the general public—every man’s “neighbors”—was upset enough by the act to require official pacification by the members of the General Court. Felt begins early to establish Endecott as a victim—an astonishing claim, given Endecott’s record of victimization.

The story of the flag-slashing, however, seems to remain perennially popular in the nineteenth century and able to inspire history buffs to revisit the event. In an 1890 article in *New England Magazine* entitled “How John Endicott Cut the Red Cross from the Flag,” Nathan M. Hawkes asserts that “there was a deep prophetic motive underlying this seemingly impetuous act of a hot-headed Puritan.”²⁴⁵ This statement is yet another incarnation of Hawthorne’s “first omen” of independence. Despite the fact that John Winthrop wrote to his son in London about the event, saying that those responsible “are like to be punished for their indiscreet zeal, for the people are offended with it,”²⁴⁶ Hawkes shifts the focus of his essay to whether it was “lawful” to have the Cross of St. George (a symbol of the Anglican Church, although Hawkes minimizes this point) on the flag at all. Hawkes chooses to gloss the event as primarily representing Endecott’s violent objection to the monarchy, rather than to the church. He does not mention that the new symbol,

²⁴⁵ Nathan M. Hawkes, “How John Endicott Cut the Red Cross from the Flag,” *New England Magazine*, New Series vol. 2 (March and August 1890), 465.

²⁴⁶ John Winthrop, letter dated November 6, 1634, written to his son, John, at Inner Temple Lane, London. Qtd. in Hawkes, “How John Endicott,” 465.

which temporarily replaced the red cross, was the king’s coat of arms.²⁴⁷ This choice does not signify a separation from the monarchy, but a connection to it.

In order for the modern reader to understand the implications—political, religious, or otherwise—of John Endecott’s 1634 defacement of the colonial flag, some background is necessary. On 26 May 1635, John Winthrop indicated in his journal that the General Court would seek judgment from England about how to proceed in the disagreement over the ensign, for clearly there *was* a disagreement that included more people than just John Endecott. When the Court next addressed the issue on February 1, 1636, nine months later, “it was referred to the military commissioners to appoint colors for every



Figure 2: The British Union Jack and the flag of England



Figure 3: 1600 flag of the British East India Company



Figure 4: Flag of the British Virgin Islands



Figure 5: English Red Ensign

²⁴⁷ John Winthrop wrote in his journal on 26 May 1635, “The matter of altering the cross in the ensign was referred to the next meeting, . . . it being propounded to turn it to the red and white rose, etc. [the royal coat of arms], and every man to deal with his neighbors, to still their minds, who stood so stiff for the cross, until we should fully agree about it. . . and to write to England, to have the judgments of the most wise and godly there.” On 1 February 1636, the general court referred to the military commissioners to appoint colors for every company; “who did accordingly, and left out the cross in all of them.” Winthrop, *History of New England*, vol. 1, 151, 174. An entry in the *Records* of the colony dated 25 May 1636 “ordered, that, in all the aforesaid places of judicature [the county courts], the kings armes shalbe erected soe sone as they can be hadd.” *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, vol I, 175.



Figure 6: Flag of New Zealand



Figure 7: Flag of Scotland

company; who did accordingly, and left out the cross in all of them.”²⁴⁸ It seems likely that a reply was received from England during that nine-month period, and that the Court proceeded according to the advice it received. It is not clear to whom in England the Court applied for guidance on this issue, and thus we cannot know if the advice received was official or unofficial. In any case, the decision was undoubtedly not controversial or the Court would not have adopted it, having just gone to great lengths to defuse the situation with the mother country.

Another aspect of this confusing series of political maneuvers that needs to be thoroughly grounded in 1634 is the significance of the Cross of St. George flag, or English flag, itself. It was not the flag of Great Britain—the Union Flag, or what was commonly called the Union Jack by the late seventeenth century—that Endecott defaced, but the flag of England, consisting of a white field with a red cross, which was flown in a “constituent unit” of the United Kingdom such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony, subordinate to the Union Jack. The origin of the flag, its association with St. George (the patron saint of England), and its adoption by England all lack thorough and clear documentation. English Crusaders might have used a red flag with a white cross about 1189. The troops of King Edward I, around 1277, flew a white pennant with a red cross that was referred to as the Banner of Victory; it was early shown in artistic representations of Christ. The flag was

²⁴⁸ Winthrop, *History of New England*, vol. 1, 174.

only later attributed to St. George in his role as patron saint of soldiers. A flag of this design may have flown on English ships in the late thirteenth century.²⁴⁹ In any case, the red, white, and blue flag of Great Britain was developed in 1606 and used during the reigns of James I (1603-25) and Charles I (1625-49). It displayed the red cross of England superimposed on the white cross of Scotland, with the blue field of the latter.²⁵⁰ The *cross design* was also used in other color combinations. Richard Henry Dana, Jr., in his seafaring memoir, *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), reports spotting an English man-of-war sailing near Cape Horn with the “feudal-looking banner of St. George—the cross in a blood-red field—waving from the mizzen.”²⁵¹

Unlike the United States flag, the Union Jack may, in certain authorized military, naval, royal, and other uses, be incorporated into another flag design. The flag designs of many former British colonies contain representations of the Union Jack still today. The same practice was true in colonial New England for the English flag. In Massachusetts in 1686, for example, a pine tree was added to the Cross of St. George (English) flag to create a special local flag that was also used in other parts of New England.²⁵² The marked difference in approach between England and the United States toward their flags is reflected in a United States Senate Committee Report in 2004 that, astonishingly, cites the case of bad boy John Endecott as an example of “a domestic defacer of the flag in 1634”

²⁴⁹ Whitney Smith, “England, flag of.” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9105896>.

²⁵⁰ Whitney Smith, “United Kingdom, flag of.” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9074268>

²⁵¹ Richard Henry Dana, Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast* (New York: Signet Classic, 1964), 318. Dana’s book was first published in 1840. In 1869, the copyright reverted to him, and he brought out the first “author’s edition.”

²⁵² Whitney Smith, “Massachusetts, flag of.” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, <http://www.search.eb.com/article-9103954>

who was convicted of rebellion. The drafters of this odd report, entitled “Founding Fathers Equated the American Flag with the Sovereignty of the Nation,” apparently forgot that America was, at the time, British. “*Endecott’s Case* establishes a key historic point,” the report states. “From the earliest days of the legal system in America, the law deemed an individual to be engaging in a punishable act for defacing a flag. . . . At the time, the colonists saw the need to punish the act in clear sovereignty terms: defacing the flag would be taken as an act of rebellion, even when unaccompanied by danger of violence or general revolt.”²⁵³ This tidy interpretation ignores the entire historical context of the case, but it demonstrates a number of interesting points: the ongoing utilitarian nature of the Endecott story; how the flag is freighted with significance for Americans; how that contemporary meaning continues to be misapplied in the “Endecott Case”; and that this Congressional record provides another indication of the influence of Nathaniel Hawthorne. It is difficult to imagine that our current elected officials scoured the records of the Massachusetts Bay Colony searching for flag-defacement material. It is much more likely that Hawthorne’s fiction moved the Endecott story into public view—the “kind of limelight” to which I referred earlier.

John Winthrop, a man known for choosing his words carefully, writes in his journal, first that Endecott “defac[ed] the cross in the ensign”²⁵⁴ (as opposed to defacing the entire flag, or desecrating any part of it), and later that Endecott “alter[ed] the cross in the

²⁵³ U.S. Congress, “Founding Fathers Equated the American Flag with the Sovereignty of the Nation,” Senate Report 105-298 - S.J. 40 AND H.J. RES. 54: “Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States,” <http://www.congress.gov>. Senate Report 108-334: “The Constitutional Amendment to Prohibit Physical Desecration of the U.S. Flag was filed, under the authority of the order of the Senate of July 22, 2004,” <http://thomas.loc.gov/beta/bill>.

²⁵⁴ Winthrop, *History of New England*, vol. 1, 149.

ensign,” reinforcing the idea that it was accepted practice to “deface” the English flag, not in the modern connotation of “spoil” or “destroy,” but rather “alter” under specific circumstances. There was clearly protocol for effecting such a change, and Endecott did not follow it. The General Court’s admonition that he acted “rash and without discretion, taking upon him more authority than he had,”²⁵⁵ makes perfect sense in this expanded context. Endecott, the proverbial loose cannon, had assumed “authority” to “alter” the ensign by cutting it to ribbons with his sword, thus offending many local people, perhaps as much by his impudence and audacity as for any other reason. His brashness was also a slap to the authority of the local government, which they could not overlook.

There are at least two ways to interpret the events which occurred in the aftermath of Endecott’s defacement of the English flag. The first and perhaps simplest is to assume that the decisions of the military commissioners to remove the red cross from future military flags represented an achievement for Endecott. It might appear that his alleged rage against the English crown was shared, and that the vote reflected that. Perhaps it did.

But the second and more complex interpretation takes into account that the military commissioners were a small, select group probably inclined to support one of their own, namely Endecott, and welcomed this opportunity to assert their individuality. They all chose a symbol other than the red cross for their new flags, and whether the adaptations included a pine tree, a passive Native American, or a dead horse is not important.

Winthrop makes it clear that the majority of the colony was deeply put off by Endecott’s behavior, and that many stood “stiff for the cross.”²⁵⁶ In the end, the trainbands each had

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 151.

individual colors, Endecott was disciplined, England was pacified, and the flag of the colony itself was not changed. It was, in effect, much ado about nothing until Hawthorne inadvertently infused the event with mythical significance.

In addition to seizing and misinterpreting Hawthorne's satirical rendition of the red cross affair, Hawkes also clearly borrows from Felt, with whom he shares a sentiment toward Endecott akin to hero-worship. Hawkes insists that Endecott "simply did an act which all earnest men approved in their hearts."²⁵⁷ This point is uniquely Felt's, engendered years before Hawthorne instilled heroism into Endecott's foolish act. (Felt assures us that the only difference between Endecott and those who kept their weapons sheathed was that "he manifested his opinion in deed, and they retained theirs in secret."²⁵⁸) Hawkes declares that "Endicott's bold act, from the earnest Puritan standpoint, was a blazing torch, which pointed the way in the heroic age when, under the God of Moses, England's best and bravest tore away forever the illusions from pinchbeck royalty and formalistic prelacy."²⁵⁹ Painfully purple prose notwithstanding, Hawkes's laudatory little essay is a prime example of how the historical record and literary fiction have been deployed and blended to create a product unrecognizable as either one: a national drama starring John Endecott.

Regarding Endecott's botched 1636 mission against the Pequots, Felt insists that the "commander" (Endecott) and men did all which "prudence and courage could do for accomplishing the object of their expedition." Public and possibly official sentiment at the

²⁵⁷ Hawkes, "How John Endicott," 467.

²⁵⁸ Felt, *Annals*, 77.

²⁵⁹ Hawkes, "How John Endicott," 468.

time did not concur with that generous assessment. Regrettably, only one record of the post-mission fallout exists, although Felt's comment as well as others suggest that criticism came from many quarters. Lion Gardner, who was commander of the settlement at Saybrook at the time of Endecott's mission, wrote his account of the fiasco in 1660; it was printed much later in *History of the Pequot War* (1897). In it, Gardner angrily accuses Endecott of stirring up a "wasp's nest" (the Pequot tribe) and then "flee[ing] away."²⁶⁰ Felt, however, haughtily asserts, "Then, as at all other times, when the public expectation of brilliant success is not realized, unfavorable suspicions and reflections were expressed."²⁶¹

Felt then avoids mention of Endecott until 1649, when as governor he forbade the wearing of long hair by men. Endecott latched onto the notion of long hair as being forbidden by scripture; somehow, he gained the assent of the Deputy and Assistants and had the ban voted into law, a rule that he then enthusiastically enforced. This move was apparently unpopular and made Endecott look ridiculous. Felt, of course, excuses him by saying that the idea did not originate with Endecott although he was blamed for it, but it was a view long expressed and "cherished" in the Colony and England.²⁶² If this relatively insignificant Endecott obsession gets undue attention from the author, perhaps it does so to detract from the significant omissions in the remainder of the history.

Felt steadfastly avoids connecting Endecott with the Quakers. In his account of the tumultuous years between 1656, which saw the arrival of the first Quakers in the colony,

²⁶⁰ Gardner, "Relation of the Pequot War," 126.

²⁶¹ Felt, *Annals*, 100.

²⁶² Felt, *Annals*, 181.

and 1665, the year of Endecott's death, Felt does not even mention John Endecott's name. This silence is even more startling given that Endecott served as governor for the entire nine years.²⁶³ Felt's obituary of Endecott occupies more than a page in length and defensively refers to the "severe reflections cast upon him"²⁶⁴ by those who were, in effect, unworthy to polish his sword. There is no mention of any illness reminiscent of the ghastly rottenness cited in the Quaker histories, but that is not surprising since Felt assiduously refrains from mentioning his hero for the embarrassing decade preceding his death.²⁶⁵

Both Drake and Felt bring conservative biases to their reconstructions of the Puritan experience. It is important, however, to recognize the solid research which forms the basis of their interpretations, even while maintaining an awareness of their predispositions. And while "legends," "annals" and "folklore" carry one set of literary expectations, there exists some commonality between this more relaxed form of historical story-telling and the nineteenth-century imaginative histories of Parkman, Bancroft and Motley. Reflected in the efforts of these historians (and, I suggest, in those of Drake and Felt) is what David Levin calls "progressive ideology"—the celebration of historical experience through the very conventions that we often find limited and narrow. Levin contends that their histories deserve to survive "for the same reason as the fiction of Hawthorne and Melville, as expressions of historical imagination that use some of the best language of their time to speak truths we can still affirm from what we know to be a

²⁶³ Ibid., 195-223; Endecott was governor 1655-65.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 224.

²⁶⁵ See chapter 1 for more on Endecott's final illness.

more enlightened perspective and in a different rhetoric.”²⁶⁶ These various forms contributed to an amalgam that became a national literary narrative composed by historians, such as Bancroft, Parkman and Motley; creative writers, such as Hawthorne, Longfellow and Whittier; Evert A. Duyckinck, George L. Duyckinck and Rufus Griswold, editors of literary anthologies; and biographers-cum-genealogists, a large and amorphous group that included such personages as Hawthorne and the Endecotts who were descendants of the early colonists and felt a genealogical imperative to successfully integrate the dubious past with the progressive present.

²⁶⁶ David Levin, Preface to the 1995 Hypertext Edition of *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman*. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/LEVIN/levhyp.html>.

Chapter 3

ENDECOTT 'S TEMPTATION: WHITTIER, LONGFELLOW & THE QUAKERS

Introduction

Hawthorne's story "The Gentle Boy" (1832) has attained classic status in American literary history as the paradigmatic exposé of Puritan animosity towards the Quakers. When the subject of "The Gentle Boy" arises in scholarly discussions, however, the next question typically is, "What about Longfellow and Whittier?" These three authors seem inextricably tied together by the "Quaker" theme, although when considered alongside three lifetimes of literary production, the writings of Hawthorne, Whittier, and Longfellow about the Quakers represent minuscule proportions of their respective accomplishments. What makes the Quaker theme endure is not the story of persecution of a religious sect, but the fictionally reincarnated, arch-villain-cum-American idol of the collective outrage, John Endecott.

In the works of Whittier and Longfellow, Endecott is a natural choice for the role of head oppressor, because he was governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony during the peak of the historical persecutions. By the time Endecott's literary persona lands on the desks of Whittier and Longfellow, however, it is already a complex amalgam, created by no single author. To be sure, the persona has evolved in part from the portrait created in "The Gentle Boy"—a dour, grasping, cruel man, referred to only as "the governor"—but the persona is equally a product of Hawthorne's other characterizations of Endecott in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" (1836) and "Endicott and the Red Cross" (1838), both of which were published and in circulation before Whittier began using the Quakers thematically in 1840 and before Longfellow began work in 1856 on what would eventually become *The New England Tragedies*.²⁶⁷ After Hawthorne showcased the sword-wielding Endecott in "Red Cross" and "Merry Mount," the governor was lifted from his life of satire in Hawthorne's tales and deployed not only by Whittier and Longfellow, but also by other writers, both professional and amateur—historians, literary theorists, storytellers, poets, dramatists, novelists—all of whom have continued to reinvent his character. One image, however, remains intact throughout four hundred years of reincarnations: Endecott and his sword.

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)

Encyclopedia writers, anthologists, and scholars have attempted to categorize Whittier's literary output neatly into four periods or to ascertain a clear pattern of topics

²⁶⁷ Whittier first wrote about the Quaker persecutions in "The Exiles" (1840); the subject matter did not include John Endecott. In "Cassandra Southwick" (1842-43), however, Whittier draws on the historical record, changing a number of details but preserving John Endecott's involvement in the near-disaster of selling free Quakers into slavery. Whittier spares no bile in his characterization of Endecott.

and themes. Whittier's body of work can, indeed, provoke this type of tidiness, as he shifted major gears several times during his writing life, but it is not my purpose to conduct this kind of analysis. I am interested primarily in those of Whittier's "Quaker" poems involving John Endecott as a character and in the timetable and motivations surrounding those efforts.²⁶⁸ It is a common error to assume that because Whittier was raised in a Quaker household, he harbored resentment toward the Puritans who oppressed his sect, and that as soon as he could write, he began to castigate John Endecott and his ilk. On the contrary, Whittier came to Quaker themes mid-career, and then only after the subject had been tackled by Hawthorne. Whittier's early reluctance to expose the history of persecutions of the Quakers to aggressive satirical attack exemplifies the tug-of-war between erasure and accountability, with accountability winning out in the 1840s for Whittier—quite plausibly because a *school* of writing holding the Puritan ancestors accountable—with Nathaniel Hawthorne as preeminent—emerged in the 1820s and 1830s.

Whittier spent about six years working as a journalist and newspaper poet between 1826 and 1832; he published a poem in the Haverhill, Massachusetts, *Gazette* almost every week throughout 1827 and 1828.²⁶⁹ His themes involved a romantic nostalgia for "the vanished past" and for picturesque aspects of nature, such as Indian legends and the supernatural. In 1831, he published *Legends of New England*, a collection of eleven poems and prose sketches. In the Preface, Whittier writes, "I have in many instances

²⁶⁸ Whittier's poems on Quaker themes include "The Exiles" (1840); "Cassandra Southwick (1842-43); "The King's Missive" (1880); and "How the Women Went from Dover" (1883).

²⁶⁹ Louis C. Schaedler, "Whittier's Attitude toward Colonial Puritanism." *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Sep., 1948): 350.

alluded to the superstition and bigotry of our ancestors—the rare and bold race who laid the foundation of this republic; but no one can accuse me of having done injustice to their memories. A son of New England, and proud of my birth-place, I would not willingly cast dishonor upon its founders.”²⁷⁰ Whittier plays it safe in his choice of “legends,” skirting those historical events, which, by 1831, were historical embarrassments. The collection includes one sketch about witchcraft, but “The Weird Gathering” is a deliberately spooky, gothic rendering bearing no relation or reference to the Salem witch trials of 1692. This generically scary story about superstition is as close as Whittier tiptoes toward a potentially controversial subject. The rest of the selections are about Indians (whose annihilation was lamented but not an embarrassment), strange deaths, specters, and the like. He does not mention the Quakers, but perhaps the exclusion isn’t that astonishing, given his opening disclaimer. If he were burning to write about the persecution of his sect, this would have been the obvious starting place. The publication of *Legends* and its lukewarm reception coincided with Whittier’s general discouragement over his lack of literary recognition, which in 1831 still meant being known, read, and liked. Perhaps the last objective on his mind was to inspire controversy or to draw adverse attention.

In 1832, Whittier published “Moll Pitcher,” a long poem about a fortune teller, and “Powow Hill,” a prose sketch about spectral Indians. In his study of Whittier’s attitude toward colonial Puritanism, Louis C. Schaedler concludes from Whittier’s publication

²⁷⁰ John Greenleaf Whittier, *Legends of New England*, 1831. Reprint: (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1992), Preface.

record at this point that his “interest in the ancestral superstitions was still romantic.”²⁷¹

That would change.

In 1832, *The Token* printed Hawthorne’s story “The Gentle Boy.” Hawthorne’s exposé of Puritan cruelty toward the Quakers was *not* subtle and *not* generic, specifically setting the tale during the time of John Endecott’s tenure as governor and drawing brutal scenes from the historical record—scenes that uniquely involve Endecott. Schaedler groups this story with other fiction of the 1820s-30s²⁷² in what he terms the “anti-Puritan movement,” a reaction to the “pro-Puritan forces who had taken over the field of historical writing.”²⁷³ Exemplified by George Bancroft, those “pro-Puritan forces” often wrote in an unrestrained, passionate style that Jill Lepore has recently described as “novel-ish,” an approach more consistent with the novels of Sir Walter Scott than with a historical struggle about the distinction between truth and invention²⁷⁴ or accountability and erasure. Schaedler’s theory would explain John Endecott’s curious historical invisibility regarding the Quaker persecutions and also suggest why the trumped-up red cross incident, unimportant historically but placed in the public eye through Hawthorne’s fiction, attracted positive notice: *That* was the piece of the Endecott story with the politically correct message.

²⁷¹ Schaedler, “Whittier’s Attitude,” 352.

²⁷² Schaedler cites Catherine Maria Sedgwick as leading “the attack” with *A New England Tale* (1822), followed by Lydia Maria Child’s *Hobomok* (1824); *A Peep at the Puritans* by Harriet Cheney (1824); the play, *Superstition*, by J.N. Barker (1824); Sarah Josepha Hale’s *Northwood* (1827); and *Rachel Dyer* (1828) by John Neal. Only Sedgwick and Child have emerged in the twenty-first century as part of the early American literary canon.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 354.

²⁷⁴ Jill Lepore, “Just the Facts, Ma’am: Fake Memoirs, Factual Fictions, and the History of History,” *New Yorker*, March 24, 2008, 80. The books under consideration in this review are: *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (Knopf: 2008) by John Burrow, and *The Purpose of the Past: Reflections on the Uses of History* (Penguin Press: 2008) by Gordon Wood.

Timing strongly suggests that “The Gentle Boy” started Whittier thinking about the Puritans in the context of religious conflict. The publication of this story could have given Whittier the freedom and courage—permission, if you will—to show the Puritans in an unfavorable light. There is no other obvious explanation for why he waited so long to address a subject that, to an observer, would seem the logical primary subject for a Quaker poet seeking material about the colonial past.

In 1833, Whittier stepped tentatively away from safe subjects, but still in a roundabout and noncommittal fashion. “Passaconaway” introduced the conflict between Puritans and Familists, a topic Whittier would later pursue with something of a vengeance.²⁷⁵ For the next five years, however, Whittier threw his energies into the anti-slavery movement, actively dedicating his pen from 1833-1838 to the abolitionist cause. By his own description, this work turned him from a poet into a politician:

I have put the veto upon poetry [he wrote to Caleb Cushing]; read all I can find, politics, history, rhyme, reason, etc., and am happy---at least I believe I am. I have written some considerable upon slavery, and have been pretty roughly handled by the Southerners. But so long as I can intrench myself behind my Quakerism, as a tortoise does under his shell, I am perfectly safe. . . . As to your suggestion about

²⁷⁵ The Familists, or “Family of Love,” was a mystic religious sect, which advocated giving up all contention over religious dogma in a great fellowship of peace. Of Dutch origin, it was based on a Christian idea derived from the writings of Paul, which said that there is a part of God in every person. The Familists were in England about 1580, but apparently died out in 1660 with the restoration of the monarchy. The members of the sect were known for their gentle spirits and meditative temperaments; they showed respect for authority and operated in the background. According to the Quaker historian George Fox, some of the remaining Familists (after 1660) later became Quakers.

poetry, I must decline attending to it. I have knocked Pegasus on the head, as a tanner does his bark-mill donkey, when he is past service.²⁷⁶

When, in 1838, Whittier returned to writing poetry and to the Puritans as subjects, he “singled out” the clergy for “special abuse.”²⁷⁷ “The Familist’s Hymn” (1838) returns to the subject matter of “Passaconaway” (1838) but in this poem he openly attacks the Puritans, thus beginning a series of bitterly anti-Puritan poems.²⁷⁸ With “The Exiles” (1840), he turned his lens squarely on the persecution of the Quakers, adapting a theme reminiscent of Hawthorne’s “The Gentle Boy” (1832). Whittier borrows a major piece of plot structure from Hawthorne’s story—the persecution and subsequent defiance of Quaker sympathizers— and creates a similar scenario in which a decent man and his wife are punished by Puritan authorities for their compassion and humanity. In the poem, Whittier dramatizes the historical self-exile to Nantucket Island of Thomas Macy, who is pursued by the authorities for sheltering a banished Quaker in his cottage.²⁷⁹ Hounded and finally confronted by the parish priest and sheriff, Macy refuses to turn out his elderly guest. The old man is taken to jail, but Macy and his wife escape in a boat,

²⁷⁶ Samuel T. Pickard, *The Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, vol. I (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1894), 171. <http://books.google.com>.

²⁷⁷ Schaedler, “Whittier’s Attitude,” 357.

²⁷⁸ Whittier’s major anti-Puritan poems with Quaker themes are: “The Exiles (1840), “Cassandra Southwick” (1842-43), “The King’s Missive” (1880), and “How the Women Went from Dover”(1883).

²⁷⁹ The character Thomas Macy is based upon the historical person who was several times arrested and punished for harboring Quakers. See *Records of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, vol. IV, Part I, 1650-1660 (Boston: William White, 1854,) 407. In 1658, Massachusetts Bay Colony had enacted a new law targeting Quaker sympathizers—“the accursed heretics arising amongst ourselves”—such as Macy. See *Records of the Colony*, 348, and James S. Pike, *The New Puritan: New England Two Hundred Years Ago: Some Account of the Life of Robert Pike who Defended the Quakers, Resisted Clerical Domination, and Opposed the Witchcraft Persecution* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1879), 55. <http://books.google.com>. In 1659, Macy went into voluntary exile on the island of Nantucket as its “first and only [white] settler of 1659.” Nantucket had been purchased as a potential refuge by Macy and several others that same year.

successfully defying the threats of Puritan officials. Macy taunts, “Whip women, on the village green,/ But meddle not with men.” Not a Quaker himself, Macy is a spirited character not the least bit interested in martyrdom. “‘Vile scoffer!’ cried the baffled priest,/ ‘Thou ‘lt yet the gallows see.’/ ‘Who’s born to be hanged will not be drowned,’/ Quoth Macy, merrily.”²⁸⁰ The timing and thematic similarities between Hawthorne’s seminal story and Whittier’s sudden foray into anti-Puritan, Quaker subjects strongly suggest that Whittier did indeed feel a kind of liberation after Hawthorne broke the thematic ice on the subject. “The Gentle Boy” had gained popularity and become widely read, thus smoothing the way for other literature depicting the plight of the Quakers at the hands of the Puritans. Hawthorne’s story, even today, is heart-wrenching. By focusing on the tragic betrayal of an innocent and helpless child, and by challenging the priorities of the lad’s Quaker parents, Hawthorne secured a positive reception for his tale, even from pro-Puritan readers.

Timing was also on Whittier’s side. Francis J. Bremer, in “Remembering—and Forgetting—John Winthrop,” argues that by 1830, two hundred years after the landing of John Winthrop at Salem, public opinion had begun to turn against the Puritans. “Over the years between the two hundred fiftieth and three hundredth anniversaries of Massachusetts’s settlement this tide of criticism grew. Authors not only heaped blame on the puritan fathers for their intolerance of dissent—persecution of Baptists, Quakers, and others, and the execution of witches—they also held puritans responsible for everything

²⁸⁰ John Greenleaf Whittier, “The Exiles.” <http://myweb.northshore.edu/users/sherman/whittier>.

distasteful in Victorian culture.”²⁸¹ Bremer cites the striking example of the now-famous characterization of H.L. Mencken, who described puritans as people “haunted by the fear that someone, somewhere may be happy.”²⁸² Bremer concludes that a change was afoot in the public memory of the past.²⁸³

In addition to Hawthorne’s comforting literary presence and the turning tide of public memory, Whittier’s correspondence suggests that he also acquired strength from his experience as an abolitionist. His letters reveal that his famously thin skin was growing thicker.²⁸⁴ It seems that for his own emotional comfort, Whittier needed some distance between his identity as a Quaker and his public advocacy for a cause, and that the anti-slavery movement provided that crucial distance. Apparently, he felt he could play the “tortoise” in safety²⁸⁵ while advocating for the abolitionist movement—a cause other than his own—but to lead the initial charge against the Puritan oppressors of the Quakers was beyond him.

Whittier had stout company, and plenty of it, in the abolitionist movement. The sheer scope of the cause enabled Whittier to work both individually and as part of a group, thereby avoiding an uncomfortable spotlight. His anti-slavery poetry was widely appropriated for political purposes, but so was the work of many other writers. An undated tract featuring three anti-slavery poems by Longfellow and Whittier appeared in Scotland sometime after 1843, and it was probably printed for sale at abolitionist

²⁸¹ Francis J. Bremer, “Remembering—and Forgetting—John Winthrop and the Puritan Founders.” *The Massachusetts Historical Review*, vol. 6: 11-12. <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/mhr/6/bremer.html>.

²⁸² Mencken qtd. in Bremer, 12.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁸⁴ See Note 10, this chapter.

²⁸⁵ Samuel T. Pickard, *The Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, vol. I (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1894), 171. <http://books.google.com>.

meetings in Great Britain. A note that this was the “Seventh Thousand” printing evidences the tract’s popularity.²⁸⁶

It is impossible to say exactly how much of Whittier’s anti-Puritan sentiment, and his resentment toward the clergy in particular, resulted from his work in the anti-slavery movement, but the resulting transformation is undeniable. Whittier was certainly aware of clergy who were pro-slavery or who were pointedly detached from the conflict and used their offices and the Bible to justify their positions. Similarly, the murky hypocrisy of Quaker slave holders and slave traders further complicated an already ethically obfuscated issue.

There is no evidence of a single precipitating incident that emboldened Whittier to turn his pen against the Puritans. Hawthorne’s example of literary fearlessness, Whittier’s own experience with unpopularity as an abolitionist, and a transforming public view of the Puritan past were three influences in a combination of forces that contributed to the change.

Whittier’s Endicott

In 2009 Whittier is not widely read, but when he is, it is often in the context of his Quaker poems rather than the works that enhanced his reputation during his lifetime, such as “Snowbound: A Winter Idyl” (1865). In Whittier’s texts on history, legend, and folklore under discussion in this project, his literary attack on John Endecott is the most

²⁸⁶ Joe Lockard, <http://antislavery.eserver.org/poetry/longfellowwhittier>. <http://www.asu.edu/clas/english/who/lockard.htm>. The poems contained in the tract are Longfellow’s “The Witnesses” (1842) and “The Quadroon Girl” (1842), and Whittier’s “The Christian Slave” (1843). The undated tract was published in Paisley, Scotland by J. and R. Parlance.

frequently cited, although the actual poems employing Endecott as a character are few and far between in Whittier's career.

“Cassandra Southwick” (1842-43)²⁸⁷ uses a historical event in which the Quaker Southwicks were ordered by the court to be sold into slavery in Virginia or Barbados when they could not pay a fine imposed for non-attendance at the Puritan church. The order was unenforced because no ship captain was willing to take them.²⁸⁸ Whittier works the dramatic potential of this event to the fullest, while omitting the brother from the story and substituting the mother's name for the daughter.²⁸⁹ “Dark and haughty Endicott” is cast as the arch villain. Rawson, “his cruel clerk [is] at/ hand . . . / And poisoning with his evil words the ruler's ready ear, / The priest leaned o'er his saddle, with laugh and/ scoff and jeer.”²⁹⁰ With his “wine-empurpled cheek,” Rawson is a drunk as well as a scoundrel. When the sea captain refuses to take Cassandra aboard, Endecott and his minions are temporarily defeated. In this brief encounter, “dark and haughty” Endecott is portrayed as malevolent—the physical incarnation of the sin of pride, steeped in moral darkness. But in this rendition, Endecott is also “poisoned” in his spiritually vulnerable state by the “priest” (the usual Quaker nomenclature for a Puritan minister), adding fuel to the evolving fictional fire in which Endecott assumes an air of

²⁸⁷ Samuel Adams Drake, in *A Book Of New England Legends and Folklore* (1884), utilizes Whittier's poem in his discussion of the “dark day of Quaker persecution.” Drake questions Whittier's demonization of John Endecott.

²⁸⁸ Susan Herman, “Whittier as Quaker: ‘Cassandra Southwick.’”
http://myweb.northshore.edu/users/sherman/whittier/quaker/ft_cassandra_southwick.html.

²⁸⁹ The actual Quakers involved were Daniel and Provided Southwick, son and daughter of Lawrence and Cassandra.

http://myweb.northshore.edu/users/sherman/whittier/quaker/ft_cassandra_southwick.html.

²⁹⁰ John Greenleaf Whittier, “Cassandra Southwick.”
http://myweb.northshore.edu/users/sherman/whittier/quaker/ft_cassandra_southwick.html.

tragedy, thus becoming a more complex character.²⁹¹ In “Cassandra Southwick,” as Endecott rides away defeated, sweeping “round the throng his lion glare of bitter hate/ and scorn,” he has his “weapon half-way drawn”—God only knows why—thus reinforcing the Hawthornian image of a volatile man inordinately attached to his weapon.

“The King’s Missive,” the second poem in which Whittier casts Endecott in a major role, was originally commissioned as a ballad by James R. Osgood for *The Memorial History of Boston* in 1880.²⁹² In it, Whittier revisits the historical event of 1661 in which a group of Quakers, condemned to death, is granted a pardon from King Charles II, a document brought from England by a Quaker, Samuel Shattuck, to Governor Endicott.²⁹³ The ballad opens with Endicott in a foul mood, soon to become worse, bemoaning the number of “pestilent Quakers” underfoot.

He had shorn with his sword the cross from out
 The flag, and cloven the May-pole down,
 Harried the heathen round about,
 And whipped the Quakers from town to town.
 Earnest and honest, a man at need

²⁹¹ This idea, which has some longevity, is reconstructed in Longfellow’s *The New England Tragedies: I. John Endicott* (1868), and in Robert Lowell’s twentieth-century play, *Endecott and the Red Cross* (1965 and 1968). Robert Lowell, *The Old Glory: Three Plays* (New York: Noonday Press, 1965). Revised edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968).

²⁹² Susan Herman, “Whittier as Quaker: ‘The King’s Missive.’” For the information contained on this website, Herman relies upon Roland H. Woodwell, *John Greenleaf Whittier: A Biography* (Haverhill, MA: John Greenleaf Whittier Homestead, 1985).
<http://myweb.northshore.edu/users/sherman/whittier/quaker/kingsmissive.html>.

²⁹³ November 27, 1661. Acknowledgment of the Quakers’ pardon from King Charles II and a statement of the colony’s intention to obey his orders can be found in *The Records of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay in New England*, vol. IV, Part II (Boston: William White, 1854), 34.

To burn like a torch for his own harsh creed . . . ²⁹⁴

Then Shattuck appears with the *mandamus*, Endicott obeys it, the doors of the prison are thrown open, and Quakers of all ages pour out, many of them having been whipped within an inch of their lives. It's a touching scene, set on a lovely autumn day that provides tangible proof of God's grace. The ballad is a long backward look at, and justification of, the Quaker way.

It is not, however, an overtly angry poem. Thirty-eight years had passed since Whittier wrote "Cassandra Southwick." The intervening time may have mellowed his views, but Whittier's elusive, passive/aggressive style makes it difficult to pin him down as being definitively of one position or another. In 1878, two years before "The King's Missive," he received the first of two odd invitations from the Essex Institute. In the first, Whittier was invited to deliver the commemorative address at the Institute's celebration of the fifth half-century of the landing of John Endecott at Salem. It is a move in which the inheritors of Puritan bloodlines and ideology seem to be indirectly asking for public forgiveness by inviting Whittier to sanitize Puritan history with his presence. Whittier graciously declined to dignify the event and sent a bewildering letter that revisited Endecott's wretched history with the Quakers, but also suggested that Endecott's mistakes were the mistakes of the Puritan way: "I am not unmindful of the otherwise noble qualities and worthy record of the great Puritan [Endecott], whose misfortune it was to live in an age which regarded religious toleration as a crime. He was the victim of the merciless logic of his creed." Whittier lauds the endurance and

²⁹⁴ John Greenleaf Whittier, "The King's Missive."
http://myweb.northshore.edu/users/sherman/whittier/quaker/ft_kingsmissive.html.

durability of the Quakers and quietly mocks their persecutors: The Quakers' "pertinacious defiance of laws enacted against them, and their fierce denunciations of priests and magistrates, must have been particularly aggravating to a man as proud and high tempered as John Endecott." Whittier cannot resist reflecting that although Endecott had Edward Wharton smartly whipped at the cart-tail once a month, the governor's ears suffered as much under Wharton's biting sarcasm and "free speech" as "the latter's back did from the magisterial whip." Whittier writes in conclusion: "Time has proved that the Quakers had the best of the controversy; and their descendants can well afford to forget and forgive an error which the Puritan governor shared with the generation in which he lived."²⁹⁵ Whittier's subtext is clear: "Nevertheless, I am not coming to your damned party."

Two years later, in 1880, Whittier was again approached by the Essex Institute, this time to write a poem for the anniversary of John Winthrop's landing in Salem. Whittier again declined, and wrote another letter containing a deeply mixed message:

It was a happy thought of the Institute to select for its first meeting of the season the day and the place of the landing of the great and good governor [John Winthrop], and . . . that its choice for orator [William C. Endicott], of the son of him whose genius, statesmanship, and eloquence honored the place of his birth, has been equally happy.

As I look over the list of the excellent worthies of the first emigrations, I find no one

²⁹⁵ John Greenleaf Whittier, "Governor Endecott," *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute*. <http://readbooksonline.net/readOnline/8405>. See also "Fifth Half Century of the Landing of John Endecott at Salem, Massachusetts, Commemorative Exercises by the Essex Institute," *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute* (Salem: printed for the Essex Institute, 1879).

who, in all respects, occupies a nobler place in the early colonial history of Massachusetts than John Winthrop.

That might not be saying very much. Whittier acknowledges that Winthrop was the best of the lot, but the basis for comparison was dismal: “It was not under his [Winthrop’s] long and wise chief magistracy that religious bigotry and intolerance hung and tortured their victims, and the terrible delusion of witchcraft darkened the sun at noonday over Essex.” Whittier writes, surely with a satirical pen as sharp as Hawthorne’s, that he is sorry to miss an occasion “of so much interest.”²⁹⁶

Francis J. Bremer argues that Whittier’s 1880 letter “hinted at a change in the public memory of the past. His combination of praise for Winthrop with a reminder of the bigotry and intolerance of Winthrop’s contemporaries typified a growing awareness of the dark side of the early colonists.”²⁹⁷ Indeed, Whittier’s two refusals, taken together, perform subtle rhetorical work. In them, the acknowledgment of Winthrop’s relative decency leaves Endecott and his ilk damned by faint praise.

Whittier’s letters to the Essex Institute forecast his equally mixed treatment of Endecott in “The King’s Missive.” Whittier attempts to balance his Endicott character in this poem; the governor is guilty of cruelty but his motives are pure though misguided. Hawthorne’s influence is evident in Whittier’s transparent allusions to the red cross and maypole events as the occasions which define Endecott. Whittier draws upon these fictionally dramatized character-builders to provide backstory and balance for his

²⁹⁶ John Greenleaf Whittier, “John Winthrop,” *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute*. <http://readbookonline.net/readOnline/8404>.

²⁹⁷ Francis J. Bremer, “Remembering—and Forgetting,” 11.

modified picture of the raging bigot. Since “The King’s Missive” was commissioned for the public, it is also possible that Whittier deliberately decided to make the tale palatable for general readers.

More important for my purposes than any closer reading of Whittier’s work is to establish the clear influence of Hawthorne on Whittier’s art. This influence is apparent, first in Hawthorne’s frontal treatment of the Quaker persecutions in “The Gentle Boy,” which boldly goes where Whittier feared to go first, and then through Hawthorne’s creation of an obsessively religious and entirely unpredictable Endecott whose mercurial character Whittier openly appropriates for “The King’s Missive.” Whittier’s artistic process mirrors Hawthorne’s as representative of the generational story of erasure and accountability.²⁹⁸

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

The Construction of Longfellow’s Endicott

Like Whittier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was concerned with great American themes. He very deliberately planned and wrote a number of works with distinctly American characters and settings, among them *The Song of Hiawatha*, *Poems on Slavery*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish* and *Giles Corey of the Salem Farms*. Owing to Longfellow’s extant journals and early drafts of many of his works, it is possible to track the evolution of his compositions and to understand something of his artistic process. Of particular interest to this study is his selection of John Endecott, from a cast of dozens of

²⁹⁸ See chapter 2 of this study, and Stephen Carl Arch, *Authorizing the Past: The Rhetoric of History in Seventeenth-Century New England* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994).

notable or notorious Puritans, to play the lead role in a drama about the early Quakers.²⁹⁹

It was not a straightforward choice.

In 1856, at the suggestion of his friend Emmanuel Scherb, Longfellow first considered writing a poem about the Puritans and the Quakers.³⁰⁰ Longfellow wrote in his journal that he thought it was “a good subject for a Tragedy,” and he became intensely interested in the project.³⁰¹ By August 1857 he had finished the first rough draft of *Wenlock Christison*. This draft was one of two early versions of the work, the other being *The New England Tragedy*. They eventually became *John Endicott*. The work found its final form sixteen years later, in 1872, in his trilogy entitled *Christus*. Edward Tucker, whose textual history, *The Shaping of Longfellow’s John Endicott*, follows Longfellow’s artistic process through multiple manuscripts, reports that “during this time Longfellow studied background materials, selected, then changed his mind, even went from prose to poetry,”³⁰² and always had several projects simultaneously on his desk and in his head.³⁰³ On 4 February 1868, Longfellow recorded in his journal that *John Endicott* was “finished” because he had “worked steadily on it.” He wrote that during this work he felt under the influence of a “kind of demoniacal possession.”³⁰⁴

Longfellow himself was descended from an old New England family, the son and grandson of Harvard graduates; his father was a “pillar” of Portland society and a

²⁹⁹ Edward L. Tucker, *The Shaping of Longfellow’s John Endicott: A Textual History Including Two Early Versions* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), xi.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Longfellow qtd. in Tucker, xii.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, xi.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, xxxiv.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Longfellow qtd. in Tucker, xxxv.

member of Congress.³⁰⁵ He was certainly familiar with New England history, and as a distinguished professor at Harvard had ready access to the scholarly repositories throughout New England when he conducted research for this particular play—as it was originally conceived in prose. Longfellow’s initial field of five candidates for the role of official and metaphorical representative of the Bay Colony’s repressive practices included Edward Butter, Richard Davenport, Humphrey Atherton (or Adderton), Edward Rawson, and Richard Bellingham. Butter had been repeatedly condemned by the Quaker historian George Bishop for being a “wicked and cruel man.” Davenport arrived in America with Endecott in 1628³⁰⁶; ultimately he appears in the play as only a name on the list of those who suffered unusual deaths as a result of the presumed vengeance of the Lord upon the Puritans. Atherton was a major general of the military forces of the colony in 1652, and in 1654 he is listed as a magistrate. Longfellow casts him in the role of judge in just one sequence. Rawson, better known to history than are the rest of the candidates, was secretary of the colony for thirty-six years and was, according to Bishop, “a chief instigator of all this cruelty [toward the Quakers].”³⁰⁷ Rawson was also Endecott’s right-hand man for all of his seventeen years as governor. The fifth candidate was Richard Bellingham, a former member of Parliament and a patentee of the charter, who numerous times served as deputy governor and governor of the colony.³⁰⁸ Upon consideration, Longfellow discarded all of these choices.

³⁰⁵ Rita K. Gollin, “‘My Dear Longfellow’: The Collegiality of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,” <http://hawthorneinsalem.org/ScholarsForum/MMD2657.html>, 1.

³⁰⁶ Endecott died in March, 1665, and Davenport in July, 1665.

³⁰⁷ George Bishop, *New England Judged by the Spirit of the Lord* (London: T. Sowle, 1703), 59, 92, 249, 250. Qtd. in Tucker, *Shaping of Longfellow’s Endicott*, xx.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, xx. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne appropriates Bellingham for the role of Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Instead, he placed the weight of representing the Puritan side on two men: John Endecott and John Norton. Tucker's assessment of Longfellow's final choice to make Endecott the driving force behind the story of the Quaker persecutions is generous, gentlemanly, and a bit thin. He contends that Longfellow used Endecott as a plot device (although he does not use that term) in two ways: to express the basic Puritan belief that the Quakers were dangerous heretics, and as an "instrument of punishment."³⁰⁹ It is true that the historical Endecott proved himself a "fit instrument" for both tasks, and Longfellow's creation shares that aptitude. Unfortunately, Tucker then positions himself inside Longfellow's mind—always risky business—and deduces that "for Longfellow this picture of a bloodthirsty, cruel man [Endecott] was too one-sided"; that Endecott's historical deeds involving the red cross and the maypole were merely "a few sensational events" which subsequently overshadowed Endecott's "dedicated but monotonous routine of doing the best he could for the colony"; and that "Longfellow felt that he must present this other, very human side."³¹⁰ Those two "sensational events," which historically were not sensational at all, have monopolized the *story* of Endecott's life, which is largely a creation of Hawthorne's fiction on the positive side and of Endecott's disastrous behavior against the Quakers on the negative. Tucker does not differentiate between the Endecott of historical record and the Endecott character who emerges from Hawthorne's tales or Longfellow's prose, and he is not the first to fail to do so. Tucker cites no source for his confidence about Longfellow's "feelings"; one assumes that he is extrapolating from textual evidence, namely that Longfellow did in fact create a partially

³⁰⁹ Ibid., xxi.

³¹⁰ Ibid., xxi-xxii.

balanced character in his rendition of John Endecott. Tucker also assures the reader that Longfellow possessed “sympathy and respect” for Endecott, conflating Longfellow’s personal opinions with his creative prose. Longfellow, however, was a professional writer—by 1854, a full-time author and the first American to make a living as a poet³¹¹—who knew that a one-dimensional character, such as a unilaterally evil Endecott, could not carry a major work.

Tucker’s primary goal, however, is to produce a textual history, not a textual analysis, and his conscientious perusal of Longfellow’s manuscripts, journals, and other primary texts leads to interesting questions that are not Tucker’s purpose to address.

For example, why did Longfellow discard his first five candidates for the position of chief villain? At first glance, John Endecott appears to have been an obvious choice based on Longfellow’s research. His two chief sources for this work were Joseph Besse and George Bishop,³¹² both Quaker historians who spared no amount of outrage, gory details, or name-calling when it came to recording the persecution of their sect; both considered Endecott evil incarnate. But Longfellow did not merely read Besse and Bishop and then impulsively choose Endecott—his selection process was methodical, meticulous and protracted. Longfellow, of course, was familiar with his friend Hawthorne’s rendering of the Endecott character in three different tales—“The Gentle Boy,” “Endicott and the Red Cross” and “The May-Pole of Merry Mount.” Longfellow’s final, multifaceted version of Endecott reflects all the unpredictability and rashness of

³¹¹ Corydon Ireland, “The Many Lives of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,” *Harvard University Gazette*, Feb. 1, 2007, 2. <http://www.hno.harvard.edu/gazette/2007/02.2/18-longfellow.html>.

³¹² Tucker, *Shaping of Longfellow’s Endicott*, xxi.

the historical record, but he has conjointly created an Endecott who personifies the ambivalence and moral quagmires created by Hawthorne in his tales—a mercurial character able to be read diverse ways.

Even Tucker, when seeking a character description of Endecott for his own work, does not turn to the Quaker histories or to any other records. He turns to Hawthorne’s tale “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” for his description of Endecott, the man “wrought of iron” who had “degenerated into hardness and cruelty.”³¹³

Longfellow and Hawthorne

Longfellow and Hawthorne were undergraduates together at Bowdoin College, Maine, a coincidence which, at the time, meant next to nothing. Near the end of his life, Hawthorne told friends that he had not properly “appreciated” Longfellow during their undergraduate years.³¹⁴ Longfellow, three years younger than Hawthorne, was only fifteen when he joined Bowdoin’s class of 1825 as a sophomore, but more than years separated the two young men. Longfellow “never had to confront such financial problems as unpaid tuition fees, but Hawthorne did. And Longfellow never incurred fines for cutting classes or playing cards or skipping compulsory prayers, but Hawthorne did.”³¹⁵

Hawthorne’s late-life reflection on the distance between Longfellow and himself during their youth was undoubtedly prompted by the contrast to their intimate and

³¹³ Ibid., xxi.

³¹⁴ Gollin, “My Dear Longfellow,” 1.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 1.

collegial friendship that began a dozen years after their graduation in 1825. Manning Hawthorne relates the circumstances of their renewed acquaintance: “In 1837 Hawthorne published *Twice Told Tales*. Upon the advice of Horatio Bridge [Hawthorne’s editor] he had a copy sent to Longfellow in the hope that he would review it. He did so in the July number of the *North American [Review]*. There began a friendship that was to last until Hawthorne’s death.”³¹⁶ When both men were single and living in Boston, they saw each other frequently; they dined together and read each other’s work. Later, when both were married and they could not meet as often, they corresponded and continued to collaborate on many levels. Hawthorne gave Longfellow the story (which Hawthorne had been told by his Salem friend, Horace Conolly) that would become Longfellow’s full-length narrative poem, *Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie*, based on the historical expulsion of thousands of French-speaking Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755. Hawthorne later reviewed Longfellow’s successful poem in the *Salem Advertiser* and praised it highly.³¹⁷

Hawthorne and Longfellow enjoyed what has become a famous literary friendship. Numerous scholars have pointed out similarities between the two men in an attempt to explain their extraordinary camaraderie. Lawrence Buell observes that both were “nativizers” of European literary models; that they were among the first generation of Americans for whom authorship served as a viable profession; they shared aspirations for a national literature; and both men exhibit “feminized voices” in their writing,

³¹⁶ Manning Hawthorne, “The Friendship Between Hawthorne and Longfellow,” *The English Journal*, vol. 28, no. 3 (Mar. 1939): 221-223. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/806413>.

³¹⁷ Gollin, “My Dear Longfellow,” 4.

creating strong female figures.³¹⁸ There were also differences, including their disparate social and economic backgrounds, and the fact that Longfellow was already well established in the New England literary world by the time Hawthorne appeared on the scene.

The most significant commonality for purposes of this study is their shared interest in crafting prose fiction based on historical events. Neither writer was satisfied with interpreting occurrences on a surface level, and neither was interested in being a conventional historian. Their purpose was to find, and create, *tension* in history—to prowl in the psyches of their created characters, dig into the documented disasters—the crises—provided by the historical record and to make *their version* of the historical event one that would challenge the preconceptions of their readers and perhaps even provide the opportunity for a moral keelhauling.

When Hawthorne died in 1864, at the age of sixty, Longfellow composed a mournful poem expressing despair at Hawthorne’s “wizard hand” lying cold and leaving “the tale half told”—a play on “twice-told tales,” surely. Hawthorne’s wizardry with language was irreplaceable, Longfellow concludes:

Ah! Who shall lift that wand of magic power,

And the lost clew regain?

The unfinished windows in Aladdin’s tower

³¹⁸ Lawrence Buell, lecture, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Institute, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, July 19, 2006. Qtd. in John W. Stuart, *Hawthorne and Longfellow: A Literary Friendship*. Brunswick: Report from a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Institute at Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, July 17-Aug. 4, 2006. <http://www.hawthorneinsalem.org/page/12238/>. See also Manning Hawthorne and Rita Gollin for more details of the Hawthorne-Longfellow friendship.

Unfinished must remain!³¹⁹

A deep, respectful and sustained level of artistic communication existed between Longfellow and Hawthorne. Both men were well aware of their differences, personally and artistically, but their ongoing dialogue necessarily heightened awareness of, and influenced, one another's creative processes. Their representations of John Endecott illustrate that influence.

The New-England Tragedies: I. John Endicott³²⁰

The scene is Boston, 1665. The set-up for *John Endicott* is deceptively simple. In the Prologue, Longfellow advises the reader not to expect chronological or historical accuracy because that is not his goal; it is, rather, to bring “into the light of day/ The errors of an age long passed away/ . . . For the lesson that they teach; / The tolerance of opinion and of speech.”³²¹ Longfellow's declared purpose is to influence the future by reminding readers of the intolerant errors of the past. Gleaning wisdom from those mistakes is important, the author implies; recognition of those costly mistakes should teach respect for the beliefs and practices of others—“mercy, not sacrifice,” as John Endicott's son articulates later in the play. Readers who know a bit about the plot assume that the “tragedy” of the title refers to persecuted Quakers.

But under that seemingly simple declaration of intent, the workings of the play are complicated. The larger question that Longfellow silently poses is: How did such

³¹⁹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Hawthorne.” <http://ibiblio.org/eldritch/nh/nhlong.html>.

³²⁰ Longfellow recreates two events from New England history in his two-part play, *The New-England Tragedies: I. John Endicott. II Giles Corey of the Salem Farms*: the Quaker persecutions and the Salem witchcraft crisis. I will consider only Part I of the work: *John Endicott*.

³²¹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The New-England Tragedies: I. John Endicott. II. Giles Corey of the Salem Farms* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868), Prologue.

mistakes get made? How and why did a community of supposedly godly people participate in creating such a wretched piece of history? In reply, Longfellow tells a tale of seduction, a pathetic and frightening story of how a fundamentally decent man is led astray by evil performed in the name of God. *John Endicott* is a dance—a five-act minuet between the Puritan ideal and the power of darkness. Endecott doesn't *cause* the tragedy; he *is* the tragedy.

As the play opens, Governor Endicott³²² and Reverend John Norton are in church with Norton in the pulpit, reporting “horror in the air,”³²³ hoofbeats of horsemen (presumably the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse),³²⁴ falling stars, “drums at midnight,” and other biblical signs foretelling Armageddon or end-time, plus a few that Norton makes up. And if that isn't enough to scare the congregation into compliance, there is heresy in their midst. Clearly, Norton threatens, the end is just over the horizon. At this point, Edith, a Quaker woman, disrupts the worship service and enters into verbal sparring with Norton, whose last weapon in a losing debate is to have Edith and her

³²² Longfellow uses the surname spelling used by the Endecott family at the time in which the play is set: 1665.

³²³ “Horror in the air” and “falling stars”: See Rev. 8:12-13 and 12:4. In 8:12-13, John writes that as the fourth angel sounded his trumpet, a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of day was without lights, and also a third of the night. 12:4 tells of a dragon that appeared in heaven whose tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. Norton's congregation would have been aware of the symbolism of these various disasters which were believed to foretell end-time. Longfellow must have borrowed these symbolic references directly from the Bible or from a source other than Norton's tract denouncing the Quakers. Norton's tract does not contain these specific references. See John Norton, *The Heart of New England Rent at the Blasphemies of the present Generation, or a brief Tractate Concerning the Doctrine of the Quakers, Demonstrating the destructive nature thereof, to Religion, the Churches, and the State, with consideration of the Remedy against it* (London: J.H. for John Allen, 1660), http://gateway.proquest.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:170550.

³²⁴ The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: see Rev. 6:1-8. During his imprisonment by Rome on the Greek island of Patmos, John wrote the Book of Revelation. He interpreted his vision as follows: The white horse symbolizes the spirit of conquest; the red horse, bloodshed and war; the black horse, famine; and the pale horse, death.

companions thrown out of church. After the congregation disperses in confusion, Norton tells Endicott that the “omens and wonders of the time, / Famine, and fire, and shipwreck, and disease, / The blast of corn, the death of our young men” are all signs of God’s displeasure with New England. There is nothing theologically new or startling in that; it is the Puritan jeremiad. Norton’s next assertion—that the Quakers are “the scourge of God, sent to chastise his people”³²⁵—is an idea taken from numerous biblical sources as well as from Norton’s writing on the Quakers.³²⁶ The phrase also sounds familiar for another reason: the Puritans said the same thing about the Native Americans.

Endicott is strangely passive and easily led from the start. Norton demands that Endicott act against the Quakers: “Do not neglect the holy tactics of the civil sword.” Endicott demurs: “What more can be done?” he asks, and admits that he shrinks from shedding more blood. Four Quakers have already been hanged. “The people murmur at our severity,” Endicott worries.

Norton pulls out a trump card by calling on Hawthorne’s accidental hero of “Red Cross” fame, that fictional savior with a sword instead of a cape:

The hand that cut

The Red Cross from the colors of the king

Can cut the red heart from this heresy.

Fear not. All blasphemies immediate

³²⁵ Longfellow, *John Endicott*, I.1.

³²⁶ John Norton, *The Heart of New England Rent at the Blasphemies of the present Generation, or a brief Tractate Concerning the Doctrine of the Quakers, Demonstrating the destructive nature thereof, to Religion, the Churches, and the State, with consideration of the Remedy against it* (London: J.H. for John Allen, 1660), http://gateway.proquest.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:170550.

And heresies turbulent must be suppressed

By civil power.³²⁷

There is nothing biblical about this exchange. The historical red cross incident of 1634, having been inadvertently mythologized by Hawthorne in his fiction as representative of a prototypically courageous act, is resurrected again in this drama set in 1665. This scene contains one of the play's major themes: temptation. Norton is a snake in a minister's garb. Longfellow taps into Hawthorne's invention of an invincible, daring Endecott at this moment in the dramatic action, and in doing so creates a situation seething with danger. Endicott is in a lose-lose scenario. In this particular fictional recreation he can deny his heroic past, which includes loyalty to the Puritan ideal and to God, and refuse Norton; or, he can succumb to Norton's insidious logic. Apple, anyone?

This scene is a fine example of *the character* Endecott functioning beyond history *or* fiction, of coming to life as a creature made of many parts; a melding of history, historical invention, and deliberate fiction; an amalgam of impulses and actions and regret, partly disgraced and partly canonized; of the myth taking on a life of its own.

You were a big man then, Norton says. What kind of a man are you now?

The play's plot is familiar to many readers. The community is divided among devout Puritans, Quaker sympathizers, the Quakers themselves, and two decidedly secular sea captains, one of whom brought the Quakers from Barbados.³²⁸ Endicott is in spiritual crisis from the beginning. His son, also named John, is cast as the second-generation

³²⁷ Longfellow, *John Endicott*, I.1.

³²⁸ The actual arrival in New England of the first Quakers from Barbadoes took place in 1654. Longfellow conflates occurrences which took place over a span of more than ten years. He also substitutes well-known Quakers, such as Wenlock Christison, Edith Wharton and Edward Wharton, who actually arrived in the colony later, for the relatively unknown individuals who arrived in the first ship.

conscience of his father. Haunted in his dreams by the hangings, he hears a voice, perhaps that of Christ, declaring Boston to be “Aceldama, the field of blood,”³²⁹ and demanding “mercy, not sacrifice.”³³⁰ Throughout the play, Longfellow maintains narrative tension by juxtaposing punishing rhetoric from the Old Testament, voiced by Norton, and the living of New Testament compassion, personified by John Endicott the younger. The “sacrifice” in the call for “mercy, not sacrifice,” refers to the Israelites’ custom of sacrificing living animals or dedicating other valuable commodities to God. It also refers to pagan tribes which offered blood sacrifices, sometimes human, to their gods. Longfellow correlates the hanging of the Quakers with these practices, which under the New Covenant with Christ was forbidden and, more important, unnecessary. This biblical reference demonstrates how far afield Endicott and his Puritans have strayed in their interpretation of the scriptures.

The inevitable showdown between father and son occurs in Act II, with John the younger pleading the Quakers’ case and the Governor casting his son out, despite the fact that the boy tenderly reminds Endicott of his dead wife.³³¹ The Governor is devastated by his own actions: “This will drag me into my grave,”³³² he confesses after

³²⁹ Aceldama: also Akeldama. A place in Jerusalem called Potter’s Field or “field of blood” associated with Judas Iscariot. There are two biblical references: Mt 27:7 and Ac 1:19. Although the accounts differ, both associate the place with Judas’s betrayal of Christ for money.

³³⁰ Longfellow, *John Endicott*, II.1. For biblical references see Hos 6:6 and Mt 12:7.

³³¹ Here, Longfellow again tinkers with the historical record. In fact, Endecott’s first wife died childless. His son, John, was born of his second wife, who outlived him. Robert Lowell picks this idea up in his play, *Endecott & the Red Cross*, although he credits only Hawthorne and Thomas Morton as sources. In Lowell’s version, Endecott’s wife and child died twenty-five years before the dramatic action begins; Endecott never remarries. Robert Lowell, *The Old Glory: Three Plays: Endecott and the Red Cross, My Kinsman, Major Molineux, and Benito Cereno* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 53. See chapter 5, below.

³³² Longfellow, *John Endicott*, II.3.

his son is gone. The boy later declares, “There is no pity in his iron heart!”³³³ echoing, yet again, Hawthorne’s original epithet.

Also inevitably, young John and Edith, the Quaker girl, fall in love. Edith³³⁴ and John are both second-generation sufferers of the fallout from radical religious practices, made even more insufferable by the tenacity and inflexibility of the first generation. John is ready to break ranks, but Edith will not abandon her condemned father. John chooses to stay with Edith. Governor Endicott has his son arrested.³³⁵

Governor Endicott’s *coup de grace* arrives in the form of a royal edict from the newly-installed King of England, forbidding all future punishment of Quakers. “That takes from us all power,” Endicott declares. “With a ruthless hand he strips from me/ All that which makes me what I am.”³³⁶ This Endicott lacks a center; he *is* his job, and his self-respect, and the respect of others, is tied to his authority.³³⁷ The edict is his death-warrant.

Events tumble to a catastrophic denouement. One by one, and very quickly, those who led the persecution of the Quakers meet sudden deaths. John Norton dies standing up by his fireplace; Humphrey Atherton is thrown from his horse and his head split open on the spot where Quakers were scourged; Richard Davenport is struck by lightning. Endicott, hearing the reports about the others, drops dead mourning for his estranged son. Longfellow follows the record to the extent that Norton, Atherton and Davenport

³³³ Ibid., III.3.

³³⁴ Longfellow borrows the name of the young bride in Hawthorne’s Endecott tale “The May-Pole of Merry Mount.”

³³⁵ Longfellow, *John Endicott*, IV.2.

³³⁶ Ibid., IV.3.

³³⁷ Ibid.

died within four years of one another and in more or less in the manners described, but not in rapid succession over a period of days as the poem suggests.³³⁸ Endicott, however, may have suffered a nastier fate, namely the one attributed to him by the Quaker historians: death by “rottenness.”³³⁹ The record and the Endecott family are suspiciously silent on the subject, and to my knowledge no one other than Quaker historians has ever addressed, or even alluded to, the Quaker diagnosis. In any case, the unusual dispatch of the Quakers’ four main nemeses was interpreted by many, Quaker and Puritan alike, as evidence of God’s displeasure. Longfellow’s Endicott shares this concern, and recants: “Now I would that I had taken no part/ In all that bloody work.”³⁴⁰

Longfellow carefully constructs the action of the play in pyramid fashion: events build upon one another, forming the foundation of ultimate tragedy. At any point, John Endicott could have reversed the course of events, but the reader knows from the start that he is incapable of sorting through the conflict in his soul; Endicott is paradoxically and disastrously attached to both power and the Puritan ideal, and he cannot resist Norton’s satin-tongued devilry.

Endicott, in death, resembles “one who has been hanged,” as observed by Bellingham, further reinforcing the notion that the deaths of the four persecutors mirrored their actions against the Quakers. Bellingham has the final lines in the play, and they do, indeed, declare the tragic fall of John Endicott: “Only the acrid spirit of the times/ Corroded this true steel. O rest in peace, / Courageous heart!”³⁴¹ Longfellow’s

³³⁸ Atherton died in 1661, Norton in April 1663, Endecott in March 1665, and Davenport in July 1665. In Longfellow’s poem, Endecott is the last to go.

³³⁹ See Chapter 1 for a discussion of Endecott’s mysterious illness, which may have been syphilis.

³⁴⁰ Longfellow, *John Endicott*, V.3.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

language here—“acrid spirit of the times”—echoes Whittier’s claim that Endecott had the misfortune to live in an age which regarded religious toleration as a crime and that Endecott was “the victim of the merciless logic of his creed.”³⁴² Longfellow’s Endicott, then, is Hawthorne’s “iron man” gone wrong—the mythical steel corroded by intolerance, presented fully blown to the point of sadism in the character of John Norton. Endicott, as representative of the vulnerabilities inherent in the Puritan ideal, is the tragedy of Longfellow’s drama.

Conclusion

The works of Hawthorne, Whittier, and Longfellow discussed in this chapter represent part of an unwitting trend in the humanization of John Endecott. While Hawthorne’s “The Gentle Boy” presents Endecott as a cold, hard character, “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” and “Endicott and the Red Cross” offer another possibility, now familiar, that Hawthorne never intended: Endecott as an early American hero whose rash actions foretold American independence from Great Britain. These seemingly incompatible personas are nevertheless integral parts of an ongoing search for American national identity as manifested in the works of nineteenth-century fiction writers and poets. The Endecott of “Red Cross” fame was imminently useable for this end; Endecott, the persecutor of Quakers, was not. As Joyce Appleby persuasively argues, post-American Revolution writers inherited the task of supplying a story about venerable traditions grounded in commonality and uniformity that written records did not support.³⁴³ The works of Hawthorne, Whittier, and Longfellow which feature John

³⁴² Whittier, “Governor Endecott.”

³⁴³ Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, 101-02.

Endecott are evidence of the ongoing construction of the “compelling historical narrative” to which Appleby refers.³⁴⁴ In efforts which reflect a desire to make literary sense of the historical past, Endecott becomes a character worthy of our understanding and compassion. An accommodation has been reached, it seems, between accountability and erasure. This image of a painfully unconfident Endecott, burdened with first-hand knowledge of good and evil, is the impression that is carried forward to the literature of the twentieth century and appropriated by such authors as Richard Stokes and Robert Lowell.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 102.

Chapter 4

THE LURE OF GENEALOGY



GOV. JOHN ENDICOTT,
THE ORIGINAL GRANTEE OF MASSACHUSETTS.

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Story as Primogeniture

Nathaniel Hawthorne's John Endecott has been appropriated, in whole or in part, by annalists, historians, elected government officials, poets, dramatists, and other fiction writers, to name but some of those seduced by Hawthorne's blazing, if satirical, depiction of the origin of American nationalism. The story of John Endecott as it evolved

through Hawthorne's fiction is, oddly, also a story about the creation of American aristocracy. When Endecott emigrated to New England in 1628 at the age of forty, he could not have foreseen the pride his descendants would later demonstrate at their status as one of America's "first" families. The surprising number of biographical pieces—a "memoir," a "memorial," a full length biography, short histories, historical commemorations, and, most recently, two websites—written about John Endecott by his descendants and various family loyalists are evidence of the collective interest in the Endecott bloodline which flows, documented to a fare-thee-well, from John himself to Endecotts living in the present day. Unfortunately for the descendants, evidence shows that the family attachment to genealogy and their reverence for their ancestor have more to do with the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne than with the historical record. John Endecott would not recognize himself.

As the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Endecott provides an aristocratic point of origin for his descendants, wherein genealogy and ancestor worship, story and legend, history and myth, are inextricably entwined. There is nothing remarkable about this amalgam of influences. The histories of many old American families, as retold amongst its members over martinis, contain exaggerations and elements of pure invention. For example, some people on my father's side of the family, myself included, enjoy hearing how Mother's uncle Edgar sometimes ran naked through the woods of upstate New York in winter.³⁴⁵ The fascination of the Endecott genealogy nicely illustrates John

³⁴⁵ Edgar's winter excursions in the buff were not, alas, invented, but more than a few family members, both then and now, wish they had been. No one is certain of Edgar's motive. There is speculation that Edgar, a Mayflower descendant, was practicing for his Native American coming-out party.

McWilliams's contention that the descendants of the Puritans have faced a genealogical imperative to fashion a family history consonant with American history in its most favorable dimensions. Doing so involves erasing some historical episodes and celebrating others. McWilliams finds that later New England generations drew "near to the spirit of the forefathers by reading—and revising—the words of their community and regional histories."³⁴⁶ The Endecott family history, however, is distinctive because it derives more from the imagination of an 1830s fiction writer than from family genealogy, the historical record, oral history, or distilled spirits. It is impossible at present to separate the historical John Endecott from the character who developed independently and with such gusto through the vehicle of Hawthorne's stories. Details from Hawthorne's fictional creations are repeated in the family biographies as if they originated in documents of history (Hawthorne is never acknowledged as the inventor of those ever-so-useable details). The fifteen Endecott biographies or "memoirs" published between 1847 and 2002, and the two Endecott/Endicott Family Association websites in existence in 2008—which contain links to information as disparate as photos from recent reunions of Endecott "cousins" to the Massachusetts Historical Society's Guide to the Collection of the Endecott Family Papers³⁴⁷—reveal that the many members of the Endecott family are entranced by the myth

³⁴⁶ John McWilliams, *New England's Crises and Cultural Memory: Literature, Politics, History, Religion 1620-1860* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1,4. McWilliams argues that "tenth generation descendants of the founding families of 1620 and 1630 needed to make sense of their heritage." See chapter 2 of this study.

³⁴⁷ <http://www.endecott-endicott.com> ; <http://www.angelfire.com/ky/Endicott>. There are also links to Endicott materials on the Winthrop Society website, <http://www.winthropsociety.org>, which include *The Endicott Family History: 22 Generations* (2002) by Gordon S. Harmon, an 11th generation grandson of John Endecott.

about their ancestor. In the case of the Endecotts, story and legend, more than genealogy, function as a kind of primogeniture.

Quite apart from the lineal relationship to John Endecott, however, there is reason for the satisfaction in Endecott kinship demonstrated by later generations. Some of the distinguished members of the family include Endicott Peabody (combining the Endecott and Hawthorne/Peabody lines),³⁴⁸ the governor of Massachusetts in the 1960s. Peabody, who died in 1977, was a liberal democrat long-remembered for recommending the commutation of every death sentence he reviewed while serving as governor between 1963 and 1965. His family had a history of civil rights activism. In 1964, his 72-year-old mother, Mary, was arrested in St. Augustine, Florida, while seeking service for a party of whites and blacks in a segregated dining room. Mr. Peabody expressed admiration for her “courage, sincerity and determination.”³⁴⁹

This Endicott Peabody was the grandson of another Endicott Peabody who, after graduating Cambridge and being ordained in the Episcopal Church, in 1844 founded the Groton School for Boys, a preparatory school still thriving today as a coeducational, residential school of about 350 girls and boys.³⁵⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt, himself a student at Groton, later recalled, “as long as I live, the influence of Dr. and Mrs. Peabody means and will mean more to me than that of any other people next to my mother and father.”³⁵¹

These Peabodys, grandfather and grandson, are but two examples of many Endecott

³⁴⁸ Nathaniel Hawthorne married Sophia Peabody July 9, 1842.

³⁴⁹ Irvin Molotsky, “Endicott Peabody, 77, Dies; Governor of Massachusetts in 60’s,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 4, 1977. <http://query.nytimes.com>

³⁵⁰ <http://www.groton.org>

³⁵¹ “Endicott Peabody (1857-1944)” <http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/glossary/peabody-endicott.html>. See also Otis L. Graham, Jr., and Meghan Robinson, “Peabody, Endecott” in *Franklin D. Roosevelt, His Life and Times* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 316.

descendants who have distinguished themselves in politics and public service during the nearly four hundred years since their lone progenitor, John Endecott, arrived in New England.

The Irony of John Endecott's Offspring

It is not known exactly when John Endecott's illegitimate, English-born son, John Endecott, Jr. (the first), began to make long-distance chaos of his father's world, except that it happened before or around 1628 because Endecott never returned to Europe after his emigration to New England. In 1635, however, the child was clearly on his mind. With the assistance of Dr. Samuel Read in London, Endecott arranged for the boy's support for life with a collier named Roger Dandey, an understanding that included sending the boy to school until he was ready for an apprenticeship and then placing him in "some good trade to the liking of the said Samuel Read."³⁵² A letter to Read from Endecott in 1636 alludes to the arrangements required by the embarrassing "business," which Endecott said he was "ashamed to write of."³⁵³ There is no mention, here or elsewhere, of the boy's mother. Endecott apparently had no personal contact with the child, nor did he want any; the money for upkeep was paid through several layers of mediation. Endecott was demonstrably nervous about this piece of his past. "I would not by any means have the boy sent over [to New England]," Endecott wrote to Read in the 1636 missive, in which he all but begged Read to please "end that business," meaning get the child out of his life for

³⁵² Lawrence Shaw Mayo, *John Endecott: A Biography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 70.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 68. Mayo's Note states, "The original [letter] is in the possession of William Crowninshield Endicott, of Danvers. It was given to his father by Robert C. Winthrop in 1865." Mayo used a copy that is in box 13 of the Endicott Family Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

good. By this time, Endecott had reinvented himself in New England as a staunch Puritan. One can only imagine what a bastard son (and news about the boy's heretofore anonymous mother) would have done to his image and credibility. Endecott's first wife, Anne Gower, whom he married in 1628 just before emigrating to New England, had died shortly after her arrival.³⁵⁴ In 1636, Endecott was married to his second wife, Elizabeth Gibson,³⁵⁵ who was twenty-six years his junior,³⁵⁶ and was the father of two young, legitimate sons. In March 1650/51, a man named John Endecott died in Barbados.³⁵⁷ Lawrence Shaw Mayo, Endecott's biographer, conjectures that he may have been Endecott's estranged son, who would have been about twenty-two years old.³⁵⁸

Except for this reference in the Mayo biography, I am aware of no other mention of Endecott's first child in any record. As for family interest, the many generations of Endecotts descended from John the elder's legitimate offspring have apparently been successful in restraining their curiosity.

Endecott's first legitimate son, also named John, born about 1632, to whom Endecott refers in his will of 1664/5 as "the son of my strent [strength]," was "sickly," and

³⁵⁴ Anne Gower was a cousin of Matthew Craddock, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company in England.

³⁵⁵ Married probably Boston, 18 August 1630. Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620-1633*, vol. 1 (Boston: New England Genealogical Society, 1995), 642.

³⁵⁶ Their relative ages are ascertained by Mrs. Endecott's deposition in the action of Endecott vs. Nurse, taken the 15th of April, 1674, in which she states she is aged "about sixty yeares." Had Gov. Endecott lived, he would have been eighty-six years old at this time. See Charles M. Endicott, *Memoir of John Endecott, First Governor of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, Being Also a Succinct Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colony* (Salem: Observer Office, 1847), 38, Note.

³⁵⁷ *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, LXVII, 369. Qtd. in Mayo, *John Endecott*, 70.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

supposedly as a result of those unspecified health problems, never had children.³⁵⁹

Endecott's second son, Zerubbabel, born about 1635 (the same year Endecott made the financial arrangements for his bastard), had ten children with his wife, Elizabeth Winthrop Newman.³⁶⁰ The irony is palpable: this son, representing the second generation of Puritan austerity, "seems to have been content to take his substantial education and patrimony and play the role of gentleman planter, entirely lacking his father's Puritan drive and ardor for public service."³⁶¹ Perry Miller could have been describing Zerubbabel Endecott when he writes that Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* "is full of lamentation over the declension of children, who appear, page after page, in contrast to their mighty progenitors, about a profligate a lot as ever squandered a great inheritance."³⁶² This sole procreating son of John Endecott, the "iron man" of the Puritans, utterly lacked the Puritan ethics of simplicity and self-denial, and it was this son, and no other, who would found the Endecott line in America.

³⁵⁹ "John Endicott-The Preserved Puritan," 7, <http://www.endecott-endicott.com/ThePreservedPuritan>. .

³⁶⁰ Elizabeth was the daughter of Governor John Winthrop and the widow of Reverend Antipas Newman. "The Preserved Puritan," 6.

³⁶¹ "The Preserved Puritan," 8.

³⁶² Perry Miller, *Errand Into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1956) 15. Biblical reference: Zerubbabel was the descendant of David (1Ch 3:19; Mt 1:3) who is said to have led the Jews' return from exile in Babylonian captivity (Ezr 2:2; Ne 7:7). He was later governor of Israel, and helped rebuild the alter and temple (Ezr 3; Hag 1-2; Zec 4).

Biography, Glory & Honor

The fifteen texts under consideration in this chapter vary greatly in length, purpose, and literary style. They include commemorative speeches, which were later printed (and reprinted); a few amateur genealogies; a full-length biography by Lawrence Shaw Mayo; several “memoirs” and “memorials” (loose forms of biography common in the 1800s); pamphlets or chapbooks; and, in 2002, *The Endicott Family History with Harmon Lineage’s [sic]: 22 Generations*, by Gordon Stewart Harmon, who refers to himself in every imaginable circumstance as “an eleventh generation grandson of Governor John Endecott,” and who cites himself as a scholarly source for his own work.³⁶³ Harmon’s genealogy includes accounts of nine generations of John Endecott’s ancestors in England, a connection that has, in fact, never been definitively established. All but three of the remaining texts are written by Endecott descendants. Each of the documents, without exception, stresses John’s many accomplishments but also acknowledges that there were problems. If these memorials attempt to explain away his less laudable, sometimes downright embarrassing actions, they still must be given credit for not evading the subject.

The authorial tones of these pieces range from scholarly to proud-yet-apologetic to angry. Most were written long before the current trend in spill-all literature that places a premium on shocking revelations and unrepentant positionality. The Endecott memorials (which is what I shall term this body of work for purposes of this chapter) stand apart,

³⁶³ <http://www.winthropsociety.org/harmon.php> This site advertises Harmon’s *The Endicott Family History: With Harmon Lineage’s[sic]: 22 Generations from 1327 to the Present: Nine Generations in England (1327-1627) and Beyond in America*. (unknown binding, 2002).

immune to the trend, largely written during eras and centuries when bad behavior seemed to necessitate explanation. From a present-day literary historian's point of view, it would be fascinating to read a current Endecott biography written by a scholar with no connections to the Endecott family—perhaps composed in a modern, damn-the-torpedoes fashion that showcased, rather than disguised, Endecott's erratic behavior. One can only imagine the secrets which could be revealed and the plot fodder that might fly out by throwing open the thirty-seven boxes of Endecott family correspondence, written primarily by everyone except John, archived at the Massachusetts Historical Society. Approached from a markedly different perspective from previous inspections—this one being a search for the reasons behind John's behavioral quirks instead of a means to whitewash them—the family papers might tell an important story that has been systematically obscured for four centuries.³⁶⁴

For the present, however, we have a collective editorial approach to the historical John Endecott which is both laudatory and apologetic in tone and function. I will not analyze each of the fifteen texts in detail in this study. Rather, I have identified three areas of thematic commonality in this group of works: the red cross incident; Endecott's destruction of the maypole at Merry Mount; and his dedication, yet severity, as a ruler, including his moves against the Quakers. The ever-present subtext is Endecott's sword. These three events surface repeatedly in this group of varied biographical and historical

³⁶⁴ See John Sedgwick, *In My Blood: Six Generations of Madness and Desire in an American Family* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007) for a splendid example of the contemporary trend in genealogical truth-telling. See also in this chapter, "The Myth, Blasted."

writings as being the most deserving of praise and attention—and the most in need of explanation.

The Foundational Text: 1847

The first of the John Endecott memorials appeared in 1847, a part of the larger effort of many descendants in the nineteenth century to make culturally acceptable sense of their ancestors. *Memoir of John Endecott, First Governor of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, Being Also a Succinct Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colony*, by Charles M. Endicott, “A Descendant of the Seventh Generation,” was written “only for the partial eye of his descendants, merely as a private family record.”³⁶⁵ That may have been the author’s intention, but this family record was incorporated into the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* the same year that it was published, hence making the transition from family lore to historical record in one swift move. The *Memoir* becomes the basis for many later writings; the information in it is taken to be indisputable fact by subsequent authors of the many lives of John Endecott. Yet, the *Memoir* also supplies misinformation. It includes reference to Endecott’s early career as a surgeon, of which there is no evidence whatever except a single unsigned bill for medical services rendered, allegedly (but never confirmed) in Endecott’s handwriting,³⁶⁶ and Charles Endicott’s assurance that “there can be no doubt whatever that at some time previous to [John Endecott’s] emigration to this country he had held a commission in the army.” Scant evidence for this claim is the title of “captain” used liberally by Endecott, and his subsequent involvement with the colony’s

³⁶⁵ Charles M. Endicott, *Memoir of John Endecott, First Governor of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, Being Also a Succinct Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colony* (Salem: Observer Office, 1847), 7.

³⁶⁶ The bill was discovered by Joseph B. Felt in the State House in Boston. *Ibid.*, 12.

militia,³⁶⁷ which was anything but picky—every able-bodied man over the age of sixteen was expected to serve. Like George Bancroft and John Lothrop Motley, Charles Endicott relies heavily on Edward Johnson’s *Wonder-Working Providence* (1654) for his information about his ancestor’s early years in New England, a reliance necessarily providing a sympathetic bias, for Johnson was a strict Puritan and a great admirer of Endecott. Charles Endicott also quotes Johnson’s poetry, which is doubly unfortunate.³⁶⁸ An even more frequent resource is Joseph B. Felt, author of *The Annals of Salem* (1827), who, as we have noticed, was an ardent Endecott apologist.

“There was a fortitude exhibited in his actions on all occasions,” Charles Endicott writes of John, “which shew him formed for great emergencies.” The “emergency” in this case was the now-familiar series of oppressive moves by the British crown in September 1634, which included recall of the colony’s charter, the imposition of a royal governor, and the establishment and oversight of the Anglican Church in New England. “Probably under the influence of the feelings produced by this intelligence, and excited by that ardent zeal which marked his character through life, he shortly after cut the Red Cross from the King’s colors, deeming it a relic of Popish idolatry.”³⁶⁹ The influence of his feelings must have lasted several months, because Endecott did not commit his “bold and daring act” until November. Charles Endicott acknowledges the diplomatic problem his ancestor created for the colony, the government of which in turn disciplined Endecott with a “pusillanimous and temporizing policy” that forbade him to hold public office for one

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 14.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 52.

year, but, like Felt, reads that problem as testimony of the governor's forthrightness.³⁷⁰

The only difference between John Endecott and everybody else in the colony was that he "manifested his opinions by his acts" while they "retained theirs in secret."³⁷¹ How this foolhardy predilection prepared him for "great emergencies" is not clear, unless it was to create them.

At this point in his defense, Charles Endicott makes an interesting maneuver. He asserts that because the "boldness" of John's action was made known in England and looked upon there as rebellion, that the action constituted "the first blow struck in this country in defiance of the royalty of England."³⁷² The only thing that saved John's head, Endicott contends, was that King Charles I was about to lose his. In this statement, the *meaning* of Endecott's action is suddenly broadened to include resistance to the *monarchy*, and in this move, the influence of Hawthorne's "Endicott and the Red Cross"(1838) is evident once again. For it was Hawthorne who, tongue-in-cheek, first proposed the flag-slashing as "one of the boldest exploits which our history records" and "the first omen of deliverance" of the American nation.³⁷³ It is obvious how irresistibly attractive this idea is to Charles Endicott and to the subsequent dozen-odd biographers of John Endecott's life who embrace the notion with reverence. One would think the concept had been delivered from the oracle at Delphi, or had emerged from the historical record, instead of from Hawthorne's attic.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 53.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 54.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Hawthorne, "Endicott and the Red Cross," 345.

Endicott closes his discussion of the red cross event with reference to the iconic sword with which the deed was allegedly committed. The sword, he tells us, has “been preserved, and is now in the possession of one of the family, to whom it has descended, in direct line, by right of primogeniture. It is a plain, unornamented rapier, emblematical of the puritan simplicity of our forefathers.”³⁷⁴ This “precious heirloom”³⁷⁵ will be discussed in another chapter.

To his credit, Charles Endicott struggles to provide posterity with a balanced view of John Endecott’s persecution of the Quakers. He succeeds as well as any Endecott could in weighing family loyalty against the desire to provide an accurate account of a historical mess. Charles admits that he would “fain draw a veil over the proceedings of this period, which were dictated . . . by a pious but mistaken zeal [referring to the zeal of the Puritans], did not justice forbid it.”³⁷⁶ Nevertheless, John Endecott was sorely provoked. In Charles Endicott’s view, the Quakers of John Endecott’s day “exhibited a perverseness in the very outset.”³⁷⁷ They were “miserably deluded and misguided fanatics” bearing no resemblance to the “unostentatious, orderly, and peace-loving sect of the present day [1847].”³⁷⁸ His ancestor’s actions, Endicott contends, “were based upon principle.” The colonists’ dread of unlimited toleration was part of their religious fervor and “solicitude for the purity of the faith.” They may have overreacted, but to “their apprehensions and distorted visions, this sect [the Quakers] appeared like a hydra in embryo, which if allowed to attain a full

³⁷⁴ Endicott, *Memoir of John Endecott*, 54.

³⁷⁵ Stephen Salisbury, *A Memorial of Governor John Endecott* (Worcester: Charles Hamilton, 1874), 43.

³⁷⁶ Endicott, *Memoir of John Endecott*, 88.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 88

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

stature, would assuredly overthrow both Church and State.”³⁷⁹ Put like that, the situation sounds terrifying. Unlikely as it may seem that a handful of “fanatics” with no political power could accomplish the overthrow of the colony, nevertheless there was fear that they would give revolutionary ideas and impetus to a discontented populace, in which case the colonists would overthrow their leaders. Endicott asserts that the 1661 order from Charles II, which put a stop to all proceedings against the Quakers, came as a great “relief” to Governor Endecott and the colony.³⁸⁰ Hangings and tongue-borings at an end, Endecott and the Assistants were delighted to get back to the business of running the colony.

It is precisely the running of the colony that occupies much of this memoir. Details of daily life abound: trade agreements, land sales and allotments, mining, and the establishment of a mint are but a few of the issues that occupy John Endecott’s mind. Ever-present is anxiety about the colony’s relationship with England.

Charles Endicott provides little-known information concerning John Endecott’s involvement with English regicides Whalley and Goffe, who fled to the Bay Colony in 1660 after the execution of Charles I. In his *History*, Thomas Hutchinson records that Whalley and Goffe left London before King Charles II was proclaimed, but that they received news of the restoration while in the [English] channel. They were not among “the most obnoxious³⁸¹ of the judges, but as it was expected vengeance would be taken of some of them, and a great many had fled, they did not think it safe to remain.”³⁸² When they

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 91.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 92.

³⁸¹ Obnoxious: in this case, the most offensive and most likely to be beheaded.

³⁸² Thomas Hutchinson, *The history of the province of Massachusetts-Bay from the charter of King William and Queen Mary, in 1691, until the year 1750* (Cornhill, UK: Thomas & John Fleet, 1767), 213-14. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu> Hutchinson was in possession of Goffe’s papers: “Goffe kept a journal or diary from the day he left Westminster, May 4 [1659] until the year 1667, which

arrived at Boston [on July 27, 1660], they did not conceal themselves or disguise their identities, but went immediately to Governor Endecott “who received them very courteously.”³⁸³ Correspondence and messages from England were necessarily slow to arrive in the colonies, but Endecott was surely aware of their roles in the death of King Charles I. News of The Act of Indemnity and Oblivion, initially pardoning all but seven of the regicide judges, did not arrive until four months later, at the end of November.³⁸⁴ Whalley and Goffe learned that they were not among those excepted. Endecott summoned a court of assistants on February 22, 1660/61 to “consult about securing [arresting] them,” but the court did not agree. Whalley and Goffe fled Massachusetts on February 26th for New Haven, Connecticut, just slightly ahead of Charles II’s order for their arrest.³⁸⁵

A bit of folklore has arisen around Endecott’s involvement in the regicide drama. Lewis Sprague Mills writes in *The Story of Connecticut* (1932) that “Governor Endicott was having a party for the two regicides [the] very evening at the State House” when the ship’s captain bearing the royal writ for their arrest arrived at the door. “The captain, still dressed in his seaman’s clothes, refused to be turned away from the door, arguing his case at length. Governor Endicott overheard the discussion and listened to the captain’s message. Realizing that Goffe and Whalley were facing apprehension, the governor ended

together with several other papers belonging to him I have in my possession.”

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 214.

³⁸⁴ Andrew Browning, “An Act of Free and General Pardon, Indemnity and Oblivion, 1660 (act of the Convention Parliament),” *English Historical Documents, 1660-1714* (Routledge, 1996), 164. <http://www.routledge.com/0415143713>

³⁸⁵ The order for their arrest dated March 5, 1660/61 arrived by way of a ship from Barbados on May 6, 1661. “One Capt. Breedan who had seen them at Boston gave information thereof upon his arrival in England.” Hutchinson, *History*, 215. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu>.

the reception and sent the two men out of Boston that very night.”³⁸⁶ This story suggests the conflation of several historical events. The dramatic and apocryphal detail about the untimely arrival of the loyalist ship’s captain at Endecott’s dinner party is probably an embellishment from Hutchinson, who recorded that “one Capt. Breedan who had seen [Whalley and Goffe] at Boston gave information thereof upon his arrival in England.”³⁸⁷ Hutchinson confirms that Whalley and Goffe fled on February 26, 1660/61. “A few days after their removal,” he writes, “an hue and cry, as they term it in their diary, was brought by way of Barbados, and thereupon a warrant to secure them issued, the 8th of March, from the governor and assistants, which was sent to Springfield and the other towns in the western parts of the colony, but they [Whalley and Goffe] were beyond the reach it.”³⁸⁸

There is evidence, however, of Endecott’s sympathy for the regicides. In addition to Hutchinson’s statement that Whalley and Goffe were graciously received by Endecott, Charles Endicott writes that the governor authorized horses and a guide for their escape to New Haven.³⁸⁹

After the royal mandate arrived ordering that Whalley and Goffe be “secured,” however, Endecott had no choice but to comply. He sent two “zealous royalists” to scour

³⁸⁶ This story may be apocryphal. I have found no other reference to this particular event. Lewis Sprague Mills, *The Story of Connecticut* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932). <http://www.bio.umass.edu/biology/conn.river/hadley.html>. See also Sylvester Judd, *History of Hadley* (Springfield: HR Hunting & Co., 1905) for more on the escape of the regicides.

³⁸⁷ Hutchinson, *History*, 215.

³⁸⁸ Hutchinson, *History*, 215. There is some confusion regarding the date that the *mandamus* actually arrived in Boston. If it was dated in England March 5, 166/61, it is impossible that it could have arrived in the colonies by March 8, 1660/61, the date given by Hutchinson for the issuance of the arrest warrant by the governor and assistants. The timetable given by Charles M. Endicott in the *Memoir of John Endecott* makes more sense. Endicott states that the *mandamus* arrived on May 6, 1661, meaning that it took two months (instead of three days) for the edict to make its way across the Atlantic.

³⁸⁹ Endicott, *Memoir of John Endecott*, 96-100.

the colonies for the two men,³⁹⁰ who nevertheless eluded capture due to the efforts of loyal friends and clergymen. One of their supposed retreats was a cave outside of New Haven, where they were covertly supplied with food by local people. The rock formation, known as Judge's Cave, is now a local landmark.³⁹¹ In 1664, Whalley and Goffe arrived in



Figure 4: Judge's Cave, New Haven, CT

Hadley, Massachusetts, a frontier settlement about one hundred miles from New Haven, where they were hidden by the minister who had previously arranged to receive them, and where they remained hidden for fifteen or sixteen years.³⁹²

Earlier, in 1661, just after Whalley and Goffe's clandestine departure from Massachusetts, Endecott wrote to the Earl of Clarendon, Lord High Chancellor for the crown, declaring his loyalty to the king and saying that all means would be taken to apprehend the fugitives; as a matter of fact, he had heard that they were recently seen in New Haven, and he had written to alert the governor there. Even today, one can smell desperation in Endecott's three-page letter, which is loaded with protestations of loyalty, multiple declarations of allegiance, and "God save the King."³⁹³

³⁹⁰ Hutchinson, *History*, 215, note. The searchers were Thomas Kellond and Thomas Kirke. See their written report to Governor Endecott dated May 29, 1661, outlining their movements, methods, the diligence of their search, and ultimate failure. See Thomas Hutchinson, "Copy of a Report made to Governor Endecott by Thomas Kellond and Thomas Kirke," *A Collection of original papers relative to The history of the colony of Massachusetts-Bay* (New England: Thomas & John Fleet, 1769), 334-38. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu>.

³⁹¹ <http://www.skyweb.net/~channy/Judgespage.html>.

³⁹² Hutchinson, *History*, 216, note. The last account of Goffe is from a letter dated April 2, 1679. "Whalley had been dead some time before." Goffe's wife, who remained in England, was Whalley's daughter. Tradition in Hadley has it that two persons unknown were buried in the minister's cellar.

³⁹³ Endicott, *Memoir of John Endecott*, 96-100. The mandamus for the apprehension of the regicides was dated March 5, 1660-61 and was received by the colony on May 6, 1661. John Endecott's letter is in the Massachusetts Historical Collection. It is reproduced in its entirety in the *Memoir*.

Hutchinson records that Endecott wrote to the Earl of Manchester “that he supposes they [Whalley and Goffe] went toward the Dutch at Manhadoes [now New York City] and took shipping for Holland.” Simon Bradstreet, when governor in 1684, wrote to Edward Randolph “that after their being at New Haven he could never hear what became of them.”³⁹⁴ Indeed, Whalley and Goffe were secreted so successfully that even English spies could not obtain knowledge of their whereabouts.³⁹⁵

Nineteenth-century cultural uses of this seventeenth-century regicide tale are explored by Margaret Reid in *Cultural Secrets as Narrative Form: Storytelling in Nineteenth-Century America*. In her investigation of the symbolic context for Ezra Stiles’s *History of Three of the Judges of King Charles I* (1794),³⁹⁶ Reid argues that Stiles’s interpretation is put to work “in the service of a new cultural truth rather than as Old Puritan propaganda.” For Stiles, New England’s tacit agreement to shelter the judges [Whalley and Goffe] from British law “becomes an issue of local communal loyalty as well as a demonstration of early, protonational, independence.”³⁹⁷ In post-revolutionary America, the progress of the legend of the regicides ensures “that they are quickly disassociated from England’s failed revolution and recast quite specifically as omens of future glory.”³⁹⁸ This cultural use of the regicide tale is identical to the function of the red cross tale: both intimate future American sovereignty.

³⁹⁴ Hutchinson, *History*, 218.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ Margaret Reid, *Cultural Secrets as Narrative Form: Storytelling in Nineteenth-Century America* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), 93-94. Reid finds that Stiles’s *History of Three of the Judges of King Charles I* (1794) is still the most extensive treatment of the “fugitive pilgrims” and that which “figures most prominently in the establishment of cultural uses of the judges’ lives in the American imagination.”

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

In this context, it is surprising that no Endecott family historian has specifically suggested that John Endecott's dangerous move in the regicide escape represented a blow struck for American independence. If Charles Endicott's account of his ancestor's involvement is true, or even if it is not, the Whalley-Goffe escape saga is a significantly more compelling, high-stakes story than the red cross incident could ever be. The existence of the regicide tale, and its relative scarcity in the Endecott family apocrypha, is further evidence that the elevated status of the red cross commotion is owing to the attention awarded to the event by Hawthorne's fiction, and not because of the merits, meaning, or nationalistic allusions inherent in the commotion itself. The fact that Hawthorne did not immortalize the Whalley-Goffe drama in one of his tales can account for the historical and literary neglect of this genuinely dicey John Endecott story.

Following Charles Endicott's Lead

In *A Memorial of Governor John Endecott* (1874), Stephen Salisbury II, who is descended from a very old, wealthy merchant family in Worcester, Massachusetts, shows himself to be an unabashed admirer of Endecott. At the time he published the *Memorial* in 1874, he served as President of the American Antiquarian Society. The text of his memorial was originally delivered as a speech to that society on October 21, 1873, commemorating the donation, by Judge William C. Endicott (Massachusetts Supreme Court), of a new portrait of John Endecott created from a damaged original.³⁹⁹ Naturally, the speech played to the strengths and accomplishments of Endecott on that august occasion.

³⁹⁹ See Figure 3. Image used with permission of the American Antiquarian Society.

Salisbury's prose necessarily but reluctantly reveals the unavoidable contradictions in Endecott's history and, indeed, in his personality. Salisbury's description takes into full account Endecott's known history (in his position at AAS, how could he avoid it?) but for each of Endecott's shortcomings, Salisbury records a strength; Endecott is called "quick tempered" and "self controlled" in the same sentence.⁴⁰⁰ We are assured that he was not a "cold bigot" and that he had "kind eyes" and "personal beauty" (which cannot be verified from existing copies of the one original portrait of Endecott, which was painted in 1665 at age seventy-seven, the year of his death) as if those physical traits were reflective proof of the inner man.⁴⁰¹

Salisbury consistently echoes Charles Endicott's 1847 *Memoir*, but with additional interpretive spin, interpretations taken both at the time and later for historical truth. He tells us that there is no record of "habitual occupation" for Endecott—in other words, no record of a formal career, vocation, or training in England or elsewhere prior to his emigration. One wonders what he did for the first forty years of his life. Yet Endecott called *himself* a "chirurgion"—loosely, a physician or surgeon who was studied in herbal remedies.⁴⁰² There is, however, no record of Endecott's performing the duties of a physician or healer while in New England except for a single unsigned bill, supposedly "in

⁴⁰⁰ Salisbury, *Memorial of John Endecott*, 4.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 4, 5.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 7. It is possible that Salisbury confused Governor Endecott with his grandson, John Endecott (born in Salem about 1657). According to a later family memoir, this John Endecott was a surgeon in the British Navy and lived in London for some years where his two children, Anne and Robert, were baptized. After the death of their father about 1693-4, their mother Anne came to the Colony with the children. See William Crowninshield Endicott The Younger, *Memoir of Samuel Endicott with a Genealogy of His Descendants* (Boston: privately printed, 1924), 4. Sons of multiple generations were all named John Endecott (the first five generations without a break), and the confusion is understandable.

Mr. Endicott's handwriting," for a cure rendered.⁴⁰³ In fact, during an epidemic of an "infectious feavore" in 1629 (the same epidemic that killed Endecott's first wife), Endecott begged Governor Bradford of Plymouth Colony for the loan of its doctor, Samuel Fuller, to come and treat the many sick at Massachusetts Bay.⁴⁰⁴ It seems reasonable that if Endecott himself were capable of performing any of the duties of a physician, he would have said so in his correspondence to Bradford; rather, he effusively thanks him for sending Fuller and sounds rather helpless.⁴⁰⁵ The title of "chirurgion" sounds suspicious under these circumstances: If Endecott was a physician, why did he need to send for one? Granted, in an epidemic, two doctors are probably better than one, but Endecott gives no indication that he possessed any tools to deal with the infectious fever that began aboard the *Abigail* and later swept through the colony. One recalls Thomas Morton's accusation in *New English Canaan* that Endecott was given to "impostury."⁴⁰⁶ This suspected element of self-invention recalls Endecott's title of "captain" that cannot be traced to any known military service.

But it is when Salisbury addresses the red cross and Merry Mount incidents—two acts, he declares, which have "often been mentioned to the prejudice of [Endecott's] character

⁴⁰³ Salisbury, *Memorial of John Endecott*, 7.

⁴⁰⁴ Mayo, *John Endecott*, 19. Dr. Fuller came to Plymouth in the *Mayflower* in 1620. Fuller himself became sick in autumn of 1633 during the first smallpox epidemic in New England, and died, as did a number of other Plymouth residents. <http://www.mayflowerhistory.com/Passengers/SamuelFuller.php>. The impact of the disease on the Native Americans, however, was disastrous. An estimated 90-95% of the Indian population along the Massachusetts coast was wiped out in this epidemic alone. See Dean R. Snow and Kim M. Lanphear, "European Contact and Indian Depopulation in the Northeast: The Timing of the First Epidemics," *Ethnohistory*, vol. 35:1 (winter 1988), 15-33, and Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 70-72.

⁴⁰⁵ Mayo, *John Endecott*, 20.

⁴⁰⁶ Morton, *New English Canaan*, 164.

for generosity and common sense⁴⁰⁷—that the chronic confusion over how to interpret these events becomes particularly evident. Judge W.C. Endicott’s letter to Salisbury, which accompanied the gift of the portrait to the American Antiquarian Society, states that “the original descended to [his father, William P. Endicott] as the oldest son of the oldest son direct from the Governor, together with the sword with which the cross was cut from the King’s colors. . . .”⁴⁰⁸ Yet for all the honor done to Endecott and his sword on the occasion, Salisbury feels the need to explain Endecott’s temper, and to do so he paraphrases the sympathetic Joseph B. Felt. Salisbury tells us that Endecott was “subjected to slight public censure, when he expressed too strongly by words and acts, the opinions that other leading men held in secret.”⁴⁰⁹ We are encouraged yet again to believe that Endecott was not unique in his rage and impetuosity, but merely channeling the collective will of the colony. In Salisbury’s analysis, the “May pole was cut down because it was a token of opposition and an instrument of mischief, and not because it was used for pleasure.”⁴¹⁰

As for the flag incident, Endecott was simply “more quick to feel and act than his associates” (Felt again). “The sword,” Salisbury asserts, “which is said to have been the instrument of this bold act of rebellion, is preserved as one of the most precious heirlooms of his family.”⁴¹¹ Salisbury makes clear his position on the red cross event: He is with Hawthorne. This was no anti-Papist, anti-Anglican gesture of a Puritan. It was proto-American. “May we conjecture that it was the flag, the symbol of foreign power, more

⁴⁰⁷ Salisbury, *Memorial of John Endecott*, 41.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

than the cross, that provoked the attack of Mr. Endecott, while his portraits are perpetual witnesses that with the carefulness of a crusader, he always wore the sacred emblem [the cross] conspicuously marked in the form of his beard.”⁴¹² Foreign power? These people were all English citizens. And the “sacred” symbolism in Endecott’s beard is surely Salisbury’s invention. Endecott’s facial hair was trimmed in a traditional style referred to as “handlebar and chin puff” or “chin strip and mustache” (or, in the twentieth century, “Colonel Sanders”).⁴¹³ The style has a long history pre-dating John Endecott, and was worn by such luminaries as Samuel de Champlain and Vlad the Impaler.⁴¹⁴ There is no suggestion in any other historical or fictional account that religious symbolism lurked in Endecott’s beard. (Hawthorne, no doubt, would have seized on the colorful allusion and put it to work in his fiction.) In relating the Endecott family history, Salisbury has thoroughly invested in Hawthorne’s fictional version of events, rendering Endecott a progenitor of the revolutionary movement.

Quoting Whittier’s “Cassandra Southwick,” Salisbury acknowledges that Endecott’s treatment of the Quakers was not one of the high points of his career, but argues that if he was occasionally “grave and stern” (as in the case of the Quakers) it was owing to a sense of duty and the best interests of the colony. Endecott “would not have retained, as he did through his long life, the respect and confidence of his people,” Salisbury submits, “if he had been a dark demon, with clergymen for counsellors, who were mocking fiends.”⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² Ibid., 44.

⁴¹³ <http://www.beards.org>.

⁴¹⁴ Allan Peterkin, *1000 Beards: A Cultural History of Facial Hair* (arsenal pulp press, 2001), 44. Vlad the Impaler: legendary 14th-century Walachian prince thought to be the prototype for Bram Stoker’s Dracula. Samuel de Champlain (1568-1638): French founder of Quebec (1605) and leader of New France.

⁴¹⁵ Salisbury, *Memorial of John Endecott*, 38.

Several of the Endecott memorials on the list are published speeches, delivered at commemorative events of historical significance or to audiences whose interests were grounded in early colonial history. Salisbury's *Memorial* is followed by a sequel, "Reception of Gov. John Winthrop at Salem, June 12, 1630," presented to the American Antiquarian Society, 1878; Sir Roper Lethbridge's *Hands Across the Sea: The Devonshire Ancestry and Early Homes of the Family of John Endecott, Governor of Massachusetts Bay, 1629*, was originally a speech delivered to the Devonshire Association; "John Endicott and the Men Who Came to Salem in the *Abigail* in 1628" by Frank Gardner, M.D., originated as a paper read to the Old Planters Society at Salem, 1909; and "John Endecott and John Winthrop" was the address of William C. Endicott, President of the Massachusetts Historical Society, at the Tercentenary Banquet at Salem, 1930, to commemorate the arrival of Governor Winthrop with the Massachusetts Bay Colony charter. Several of the above-mentioned speeches and articles were delivered or printed more than once. They all follow Charles Endicott's lead in fashioning their versions of the red cross incident: It was prophetic of American freedom. Endecott administered righteous "summary justice" in response to the challenges and dangers presented by the Merry Mount crowd.⁴¹⁶ As for that unfortunate business with the Quakers, it is best forgotten. As William Crowninshield Endicott put it, "John Endecott has always suffered from a hostile press."⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ Frank A. Gardner, M.D., "John Endicott and the Men Who Came to Salem in the *Abigail* in 1628," *Massachusetts Magazine*, vol. III, no. 1, Jan. 1910, 167.

⁴¹⁷ William Crowninshield Endicott, in his address as President of the Massachusetts Historical Society, at the Tercentenary Banquet at Salem, June 12, 1930, to commemorate the arrival of Governor Winthrop with the Charter. Although a commemoration of Winthrop, the speech focuses on John Endecott.

Works by Joseph B. Felt (*Who Was the First Governor of Massachusetts?*, 1853); Fred A. Gannon, who reminds us repeatedly that command is a lonely vigil (*John Endecott: His Ways and Times*, 1941)⁴¹⁸; Mabel McFtridge McCloskey (*Some Descendants of John Endecott, Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony*, 1943, and *Supplement to the Endicott History: Thomas—Joseph—Samuel*, 1959); and Gordon S. Harmon (*The Endicott Family History with Harmon Lineage's [sic]: 22 Generations: Nine Generations in England (1327-1627) and Beyond in America (1628-2001)*, 2002), are enthusiastically biased, creative accounts of the parts of colonial history touched by John Endecott. McCloskey and Harmon are Endecott descendants.

John Endecott's only formal biographer to date is Lawrence Shaw Mayo, whose 1936 work marked the end of the parade of Endecott memorials until 2002, when Gordon S. Harmon, that eleventh-generation grandson, addressed the subject with renewed vigor. Mayo's 1936 biography, dedicated to "William Crowninshield Endicott, a lineal descendant in the ninth generation from Governor John Endecott," is a genuflection that implies Mayo's sympathies. Despite assuming a worshipfully respectful tone toward his subject, Mayo makes an attempt to present something like a balanced view.

When the opportunity for historical interpretation presents itself, however, Mayo is glad to point blame away from his subject. For example, he lays responsibility for several Endecott gaffes squarely on Roger Williams, thus removing agency from Endecott himself. When Endecott makes himself ridiculous by insisting that women wear full head

⁴¹⁸ Gannon asserts that Endecott "was a magistrate vigilant against iniquity," and that "when Thomas Morton and his roisters of Merry Mount became a foe to good government, he [Endecott] wiped them out." *John Endecott: His Ways and Times* (Salem: Casino Press, 1914), 9. The historical record contradicts Gannon's version of events. See chapter 1 of this study.

coverings to church, Mayo comes to his defense, stating that “almost inevitably one infers that it [Endecott’s opinion] derived from [Roger Williams] that source of ‘strange notions.’”⁴¹⁹ There is, in fact, evidence to substantiate Mayo’s claim that Williams had considerable influence on Endecott. In March 1634, Williams came into conflict with the Boston authorities (who increasingly blamed him for Separatist beliefs in Salem) over his insistence that women in Salem cover themselves with veils when they went out.⁴²⁰ Endecott agreed, asserting his belief that the practice had been sanctioned by the apostle Paul. John Cotton heartily disagreed, Endecott responded with “fury,” and Governor John Winthrop “ended the turmoil by breaking off the discussion.”⁴²¹ Interestingly, it is Endecott, not Williams, who is most often credited for stirring up the issue of women’s headcoverings, and who is inevitably judged to be foolish as a result.

Another of Williams’s “strange notions” shared by the gullible Endecott involved the English flag, again linking Williams’s preaching to the disruptive behavior of Salem inhabitants. On November 5, 1634, the general court was advised that someone had defaced the English flag.⁴²² Thus the red cross legend, later made famous by the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne, was born. At the time, however, the colony’s ministers could not reach a consensus about the cross, or the legality of the flag’s design, or what the whole episode meant, or what they should do. Finally, in the spring of 1635, Endecott was called into question and the court proclaimed the oft-quoted judgment that Endecott’s act was

⁴¹⁹ Mayo, *John Endecott*, 83.

⁴²⁰ Roger Williams, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, vol. I, 1629-1653, ed. Glenn W. LaFantasie (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1988), 16.

⁴²¹ LaFantasie, *Correspondence of Roger Williams*, 16.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 17.

“rash and without discretion.”⁴²³ Glenn W. LaFantasie, editor of *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, holds that “although Williams’s name never surfaced in the debate over the red cross, the Bay authorities appear to have regarded Endicott’s act as an overt expression of the extremism that Williams was nurturing in Salem.”⁴²⁴ According to Mayo, it was Williams who felt antipathy for the red cross of St. George: “It was a relic of Roman Catholicism and hence anti-Christian, . . . an object of superstition that savored of idolatry. What Williams believed, all Salem was not slow to adopt as its own view. What Salem believed, John Endecott was not slow to convert into action.”⁴²⁵ Hence, the flag-slashing was really Williams’s fault. When Endecott was disabled from holding public office for one year as a result of his rash act, he was “thunderstruck.”⁴²⁶

Perry Miller confirms that Williams appeared to have had undue influence over Endecott. Miller writes that “in 1634 [Williams] wrote to John Endecott, of Salem, who hitherto had been a loyal if a somewhat impetuous soldier of orthodoxy, but who at that moment seemed seduced by the much more impetuous arguments of Williams against the charter.”⁴²⁷ Williams’s position was that the King of England had no title to the land of the Indians and so no right to issue a charter; English colonization was “a sin of unjust usurpation upon others possessions.”⁴²⁸ Williams’s letter to Endecott predates the two events discussed above, thus suggesting that Williams’s power over Endecott had its

⁴²³ *Records of Massachusetts Bay*, vol. I, 146.

⁴²⁴ LaFantasie, *Correspondence of Roger Williams*, 18.

⁴²⁵ Mayo, *John Endecott*, 84.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴²⁷ Perry Miller, *Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1953), 39. “Winthrop had read Williams’s manuscript treatise (it is lost to posterity, undoubtedly destroyed by the government), but he was not impressed.”

⁴²⁸ Winthrop to Endicott, 3 Jan. 1633/34, *Winthrop Papers*, III, 147.

genesis considerably before the headcovering and red cross debacles for which Endecott, not Williams, became known. Although Mayo is not willing to grant the point, it remains, however, that Endecott was responsible for his own actions.

Clearly expecting controversy over his approach to Endecott and the Quakers in Chapter XX: "Turmoil," Mayo inserts a Note revealing his process and sources.⁴²⁹ He discards as evidence the histories of Quaker historians William Sewel and Joseph Besse, not, Mayo says, because their accounts may have been true and would discredit Endecott and the Puritans, but because they appear "to be based partly upon hearsay or embellishment years after the event and not upon documents of the time." Mayo accepts the First Part of George Bishop's Quaker history, *New England Judged by the Spirit of the Lord* (1661), since Bishop was a contemporary: "It is only fair to consider that his bitter narrative was at least founded on fact."⁴³⁰ Mayo considers Thomas Hutchinson's account of the behavior of Mary Prince reliable because "Hutchinson's reputation as a careful and impartial historian of all periods of Massachusetts history except his own is secure."⁴³¹ Hutchinson, like Sewel and Besse, was not present when Mary Prince had her day in court, nor does he cite sources for his account, but Mayo decides to credit him nevertheless: "One assumes that he had a good basis for his statement."⁴³² Regardless of the thoroughness of Mayo's research and the readability of his prose, his arbitrary accreditation and selection of sources, no matter how transparent, might discourage a contemporary scholar from taking his conclusions seriously.

⁴²⁹ Mayo, *John Endecott*, 255.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 255-56.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

The intellectual instinct to challenge historical sources has gained momentum since Mayo's biography appeared in 1936. At that time, owing in part to the political climate, his methodology did not bother his reviewers one bit. On the heels of the Great Depression and in the midst of World War II, the excess zeal of Puritans like Endecott did not seem particularly objectionable, or even undesirable. Writing in *The New England Quarterly*, James Duncan Phillips declares that "there is little material from which to reconstruct the life of Governor Endecott. Mr. Mayo has used it all and used it so well that the old governor emerges from his pages as an aggressive leader in his early days and a wise statesman in his later years. No reader can fail to realize that the bloodthirsty tyrant that the Quakers and Baptists made him is largely a picture of partisan bias."⁴³³ *The North American Review* confirmed that assessment. In a review of Mayo's biography entitled "The First Puritan," E.H. O'Neill writes that Endecott has "suffered at the hands of historians, poets, and novelists" because he lacked "the charm and intellect of Winthrop" and "achieved his ends more often by force than by diplomacy." Writing during a time of failed diplomacy and critical reliance on force, O'Neill continues, "It is good in these days of unrest, indecision, and doubt to come upon the story of a man such as John Endecott. To him and his contemporaries we owe, despite their faults, the freedom and the liberty which we enjoy."⁴³⁴ Clearly, for some literary historians in 1936, John Endecott embodied important and valuable qualities, similar to those epitomized later in the century by John Wayne. The world elsewhere was at war and America was debating whether to act or

⁴³³ James Duncan Phillips, review of *John Endecott: A Biography* by Lawrence Shaw Mayo. *New England Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March, 1937): 181-182. www.jstor.org/stable/360172.

⁴³⁴ E.H. O'Neill, "The First Puritan," *The North American Review*, vol. 243 (Spring-Summer, 1937), 401-405.

remain out of the conflict. O'Neill was in no mood to slap the wrists of strong men from the past.

Gordon Harmon's *Endecott-Endicott Family History with Harmon Lineage's* [sic]: 22 *Generations* (2002) takes a backward look at John Endecott and all the Endecotts/Endicotts who went before and came after. He cites a number of the sources referred to in this study, including Edward Johnson's *Wonder-working Providence*, Lawrence Shaw Mayo's *Biography*, the *Dictionary of American Biography*, and, of course, Charles M. Endicott's *Memoir of John Endecott*. Harmon's section on John is not a narrative but a collection of snippets of information taken from a wide variety of sources contributed to the project by family members. The information inevitably reflects the contradictions and strains inherent in the sources themselves. Apparently, Harmon does not see the problem, or he made an editorial decision to leave the contradictions alone and let the reader sort them out. He offers this introduction entitled "Some Glimpses of Our Ancestor: The Father of New England":

It is not the intent to pass judgment on our ancestor, Governor John Endicott or to provide any analysis of his deeds, right or wrong. We will leave that to the historians. Our intent, is to show, what we have discovered in our research of what others have said about him. We have done this with the intent of gaining some genealogical value to better understand who he was and to better understand who we are Endicott descendants.⁴³⁵

⁴³⁵ Harmon, *Endecott-Endicott History*, 117.

This *History* is an amateur effort conducted with great enthusiasm. While it draws no conclusions (nor was that the author's declared intent), it is, however, a fine example of selective editing. From the many sources cited, no comments or data critical of John have been reproduced. More than any of the preceding Endecott family histories and memoirs,

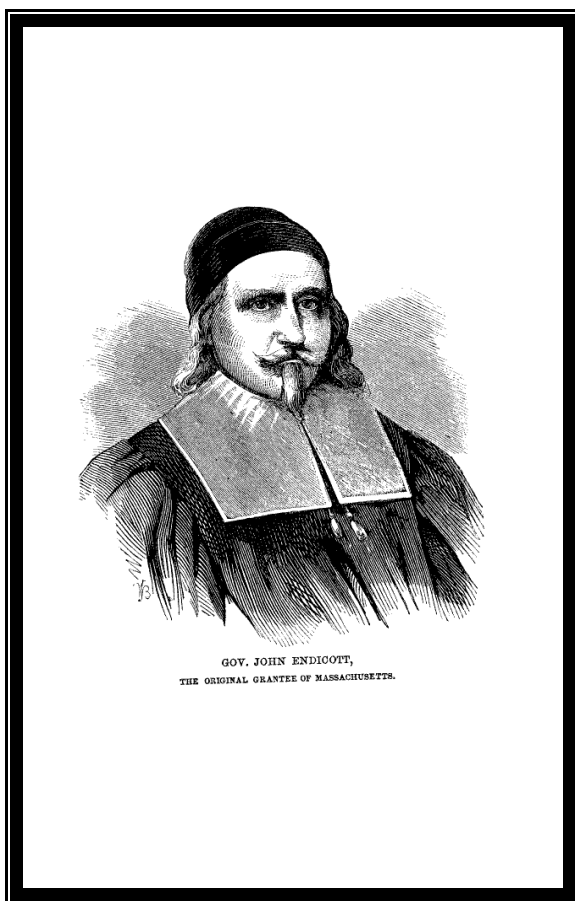


Figure 5: Image from an unidentified copy of *Magnalia Christi Americana*

Harmon's *Endecott-Endicott Family History* is unabashedly idolatrous; the author is deeply smitten with his bloodlines. At the bottom of each page of the text, in elaborate, bold, capitalized script, is the following:

THE HERITAGE OF OUR ENDICOTT
AND HARMON NAME SHALL
CONTINUE INTO ALL FUTURE
GENERATIONS

Harmon's quasi-biblical approach to his ancestors unfortunately does not contribute anything new to the existing scholarship on John Endecott, nor does it move us toward a more complete

understanding of the erratic and sometimes violent man to whom Harmon pays homage in this well-intentioned work.

Portraiture as Historical Artifact

The story of the twenty-three portraits of John Endecott is as curious and riddled with invention as is his metamorphosis from a blip on the historical radar to his emergence in literature as a full-blown storm. William Crowninshield Endicott (1860-1936), a ninth-generation, direct descendant of the governor, traces the history of the portraits and their owners in *Memoir of Samuel Endicott with a Genealogy of his Descendants*. The only original portrait of John Endecott, by an unknown artist, was painted in Boston in 1664/65, the year of Endecott's death at the age of seventy-seven. By 1924, twenty-three copies



Figure 6: From the portrait painted in Boston in 1665 and now in possession of William Crowninshield Endicott

existed.⁴³⁶ Eight of those copies are reproduced in this chapter, testifying to the variety of artistic interpretations imposed upon the original.⁴³⁷ In



Figure 7: Reproduction by Michele Felice Corne, 1802, now owned by the American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 1, Endecott is portrayed as young, vigorous and stern. In Figure 2, he has visibly aged and appears fatigued, though tough. There is an unusual set to his eyes, reminiscent of the Mona Lisa—one can't

⁴³⁶ William Crowninshield Endicott, *Memoir of Samuel Endicott with a Genealogy of his Descendants* (Boston: privately printed, 1924), 194.

⁴³⁷ Figure 1: Image from an unidentified copy of *Magnalia Christi Americana*
Figure 2: From the portrait painted in Boston in 1665 and now in the possession of William Crowninshield Endicott

Figure 3: Copy owned by the American Antiquarian Society. Used with permission.

tell whether he is looking at the viewer or off to the side or both. This is the aspect most often copied. In Figure 3, a reproduction made by Italian artist Michele Felice Corne in 1802, Endecott appears frail, with protruding eyes and thin face. His gaze is not directed at us. William Crowninshield Endicott tells us that “the original portrait is hard and severe and uncompromising,” and scoffs at the other “idealized portraits.”⁴³⁸ Based upon this description, it would seem that Figure 2 most closely resembles the original.



The History of the Portrait

Figure 8: Copy by T. Michell after the portrait in the Council Chamber, Boston. In possession of the Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts.
www.geocities.com/dlejr/genealogy/earlylife.

After the deaths of Governor Endecott and his son, John Endecott, Jr., who inherited the portrait according to the family custom of primogeniture, the painting was taken from Boston to Orchard Farm, the elder Endecott’s beloved country home in Danvers, Massachusetts, where it remained until 1816 and the death of yet another John Endicott who owned both the farm and the painting. The series of reproductions began earlier, in 1737, first by the colonial portrait painter John Smibert,⁴³⁹ and followed by other imitations in 1774, 1783, 1802, 1822 (two copies), 1845, 1848, 1873 (three copies), 1876, 1886, 1889 (four copies), 1892, 1899 (two copies), and 1916 (two copies). Some of these are copies of copies. There is also evidence that informal, unofficial sketches were made by unknown artists at various times. For example, a *New York Times* article from 1895 contains rough pen-and-ink drawings or woodcut

⁴³⁸ W.C. Endicott, *Memoir of Samuel Endicott*, 198.

⁴³⁹ See Richard H. Saunders and John Smibert, *John Smibert: Colonial America’s First Portrait Painter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 211-12.

prints—it’s hard to say which—of John (clearly modeled on the portrait), of the Endecott farm in Danvers, the Endecott mansion in Salem, and other related points of interest.⁴⁴⁰

Even two representations of the original by a single artist did not guarantee consistency or faithfulness to the likeness. The two copies made by James Frothingham for Samuel Endicott in 1822 are dissimilar: “Neither have any possible resemblance to the original portrait except the head, which lacks the vigor and force of the original. The portrait owned by Roger Wolcott is the better of the two, but the portrait now [in 1924] at the Essex Institute is



Figure 9: Image from www.mass.gov: “Portrait by an unknown artist, 1665.”

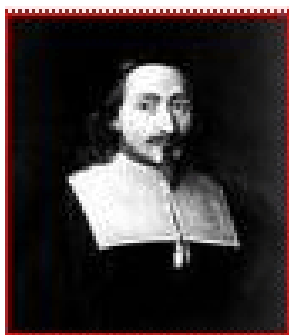


Figure 10: An unidentified copy from www.salemfocus.com

what one might call an idealized portrait and is wanting in any of the characteristics which tradition claims belonged to Governor Endecott. The original portrait is hard and severe and uncompromising, so that curtains and an empire table seem to make these copies almost ridiculous.”⁴⁴¹ W.C. Endicott sounds indignant at artistic efforts to civilize—or perhaps emasculate—Governor Endecott. In Endicott’s view, and in the views of subsequent generations, the “characteristics which tradition claims” are grounded in Hawthorne’s fictionalized bravado of the red cross event and other swordplay, not acted out in someone’s parlor.

⁴⁴⁰ “John Endecott, Puritan: Founder of the Name and Fame of the Massachusetts Family,” *New York Times*, September 1, 1895.

⁴⁴¹ W.C. Endicott, *Memoir of Samuel Endicott*, 198.



Figure 11: Image from www.hawthorneinsalem.com. The caption reads, "This portrait was painted a few months before Endecott's death in 1665."

Prior to the 1802 intervention that resulted in Corne's copy, the original suffered significant wear-and-tear. W.C. Endicott, writing in 1924, tells us that "shortly after the American Revolution, Mrs. John Endicott (Elizabeth Jacobs), heard that some stranger was coming to the farm to examine the portrait. She ordered Phyllis, the colored slave, to scrub it with soap and sand."⁴⁴² The portrait was already in a "dilapidated condition" when thus abused. Rev. William Bentley, who negotiated the Corne copy, wrote of the original in 1797 that "the face is the only part, which is not entirely gone. The canvas is chiefly bare."⁴⁴³ Endicott tells us that the portrait was used as a fireboard, both at Orchard Farm and later,⁴⁴⁴ which accounts for Bentley's subsequent report in 1801 that "the old picture grows dimmer by the smok."⁴⁴⁵

Endicott, who in 1924 possessed the original and one copy (made in 1916), provides the whereabouts of the others. The 1737 version was given to the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1836. The Essex Institute acquired the 1774 copy in 1821.

The American Antiquarian Society owns two copies, one (the Corne) donated by William Bentley in 1820, and the second (1873) by W.C. Endicott. The remainder are in the possession of Endicott family members living in the United States and England.

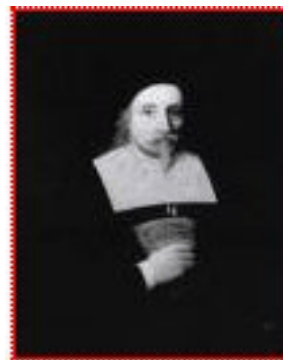


Figure 12: One of two dissimilar copies by James Frothingham www.artnet.de

⁴⁴² Ibid., 191.

⁴⁴³ William Bentley, *Diary of the Rev. William Bentley*, vol. II, 197. Qtd. in William Crowninshield Endicott, *Memoir of Samuel Endicott*, 192.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Bentley qtd. in *Memoir of Samuel Endicott*, 193.

History Imitates Art

The long and diverse history of John Endecott's portraits resembles his multiple re-inventions in history and literature. Endecott's image was reinterpreted and re-imagined in mediums of oil and pastel by fifteen different artists with their own agendas over a period of two-hundred-fifty years at the behest of many generations of Endecott descendants, also with their own agendas. It is not surprising that the images vary. It is remarkable, however, that the story of the physical reconstructions of John Endecott's image so closely parallels his largely fictional resurrection in literature and history. The process is grounded in artistic interpretation, with opposing clues as to where the truth might lie.

Myth, Blasted: The Future of Family Memoir

In 2007, John Sedgwick published *In My Blood: Six Generations of Madness and Desire in an American Family*, which is an investigation into how his “family illness”—manic depression—has shaped the lives of previous generations of Sedgwicks, and his own life as well. His book is a combination of history and memoir (one reviewer called it “emotional archaeology”).⁴⁴⁶ Sedgwick holds himself to the standard of a responsible historian. In his meticulously documented telling, the history of mental illness in his quintessentially aristocratic New England family accounts for the drive for accomplishment and the demonstrated brilliance of many of its members, along with many spectacular public and private unravelings. It is easy to imagine that more than a

⁴⁴⁶George Howe Colt, jacket copy, John Sedgwick, *In My Blood: Six Generations of Madness and Desire in an American Family* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

few living Sedgwicks (not to mention the members of the scholarly Catharine Maria Sedgwick Society) objected to this public revelation of fascinating craziness, although John does not say so.

William Crowninshield Endicott's 1936 obituary in the *New England Quarterly* hints at the impulsiveness and bluster of his personality. The rhetoric used to describe William is remarkably similar to that used to explain John three hundred years earlier. William served the second Cleveland administration "as faithfully as his father had served the first [as Secretary of War]," thus continuing the family tradition of government service. The last sentence of the obituary, however, reveals more about William's personality: "His unfailing interest in people was only one aspect of his great charm for all those who could see beneath strong words and impulsive opinions the lively affection of good nature and the genuine warmth of a noble heart."⁴⁴⁷ *Strong words. Impulsive opinions. Good nature. Noble heart.* The writer here performs the same kind of balancing act that distinguished the literature written about John. It could be a description of the Endecott family illness.

Memoir has become an increasingly popular genre for the general reader. Numerous recent memoirs have drawn critical fire for being too "creative" a form of creative nonfiction, or for interpreting "emotional truth" as synonymous with "I have an ax to grind," or for being outright lies. John Sedgwick may have created a new genre by successfully blending the historical record, family correspondence and interviews, the story of his own battle with depression, and providing readers with a sense of how this

⁴⁴⁷ Stewart Mitchell, "William Crowninshield Endicott, 1860-1936," *New England Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 4 (December, 1936), 563.

six-generation saga fits into American history. In John Sedgwick's hands, his family history tells a larger story about the founding of America. Fearlessly honest, insightful and compassionate, *In My Blood* models an approach to memoir-as-history that has the potential to productively unwind tightly-wrapped secrets of families like the Endecotts, or perhaps just relieve those immoderately treasured ancestors of the responsibility of providing an iron-clad, spotless pedigree for their descendants. As for the historical John Endecott, he might finally have the opportunity to emerge from Hawthorne's closet.

Chapter 5

ENDECOTT ON STAGE IN THE 20TH CENTURY**Introduction**

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the collective mythology surrounding John Endecott and the Puritans remains as securely grounded in the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne as it was in the 1830s, when Hawthorne first published “The Gentle Boy,” “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” and “Endicott and the Red Cross” and featured Endecott as a character. Richard L. Stokes’s libretto for the opera *Merry Mount* (1933)⁴⁴⁸ and Robert Lowell’s dramatic trilogy of one-act plays, *The Old Glory*, which includes “Endecott and the Red Cross” (1964, 1968), are evidence that as archetypes of moral ambiguity, the

⁴⁴⁸ *Merry Mount: Opera in Three Acts of Six Scenes*, libretto by Richard L. Stokes, music by Howard Hanson (New York: HARMS Inc., 1933).

stories surrounding Endecott and America's Puritan past hold contemporary relevance for audiences, artists, and historians.⁴⁴⁹

An important difference, however, between Hawthorne's genesis tales and twentieth-century adaptations of the Endecott legend, is a shift in focus from an inspection of the Puritan mission to the theme of Puritan violence. There seems to be scholarly agreement on this point. For example, Richard Clark Sterne observes that Stokes and Lowell have "taken a dark view of the 17th century police raid" known in history as the Puritan attack on the Merry Mount settlement,⁴⁵⁰ during which John Endecott chopped down the offending maypole with his sword. Stokes calls his libretto a "dramatic poem," and *Merry Mount* depicts violence and insanity as the outcome of Puritan repression; Lowell's "Endecott and the Red Cross" depicts the Puritans' incursion on Merry Mount as a "paradigm of the savage power games with which civilized men fill their lives."⁴⁵¹ Similarly, Alan Holder observes that "the play comes down simply to a struggle for power, uninformed by genuine moral principles."⁴⁵² In both works, an implied question is, What

⁴⁴⁹ See Edward M. Griffin, "Dancing Around the Maypole, Ripping Up the Flag: The Merry Mount Caper and Issues in American History and Art," *Renascence: Joseph M. Schwartz Memorial Essay* (Spring 2005). Griffin compares and contrasts the approaches taken to the Merry Mount incident by such historians as John Demos and Michael Zuckerman and literary artists such as Hawthorne and Lowell. See also John Demos, "The May-Pole of Merry Mount," *American Heritage* 37.6 (1986): 83-87, and Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1970).

⁴⁵⁰ Richard Clark Sterne, "Puritans at Merry Mount: Variations on a Theme," *American Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 4 (winter 1970): 846-47. Sterne conducts a comparative study of four versions of Merry Mount, which is based on the conviction that "they symbolize attitudes toward hedonism and Puritanism which were characteristic of Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries": Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" (1836), John Lothrop Motley's *Merry-Mount: A Romance of the Massachusetts Colony* (1849), Richard L. Stokes's *Merry Mount: A Dramatic Poem for Music in Three Acts of Six Scenes* (1932), and Robert Lowell's "Endecott and the Red Cross" in *The Old Glory* (1968).

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 846.

⁴⁵² Alan Holder, "The Flintlocks of the Fathers: Robert Lowell's Treatment of the American Past," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 44, no. 1 (Mar., 1971): 62. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/364942>.

does it mean to be civilized? And if the Puritans represented civilization (as they surely believed they did), was the price in misery worth it?

The key difference, along with the idea of violence, is the transference of the Hawthorne tale to a *dramatic* medium. It is not just a fictionalized retelling of Hawthorne's version; it's a reconception of that version for the stage, a reconceptualization capitalizing on the inherent or implied production values of the common fictional source in Hawthorne. The elements plucked from Hawthorne's stories for the stage versions are those stressing external action, spectacle, dramatic movement. Stokes grasps those moments of textual high drama and expands upon them until the original moments are all but lost. Lowell, less susceptible to histrionics and more interested in the questions raised by Hawthorne's text, conducts a subtler, more troubling, and more far-reaching investigation into Puritan conflict.

***Merry Mount* : The Opera**

History of the Production

Merry Mount, commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera, had its stage premier on February 10, 1934, conducted by Tullio Serafin.⁴⁵³ The Met had recently adopted a mandate to perform an American opera every season. Unlike most other Metropolitan Opera commissions, however, *Merry Mount* was accepted for performance before the

⁴⁵³ The *concert* premier took place at Hill Auditorium, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, May 10, 1933. *Time* magazine reported that the Met planned to put on *Merry Mount* in 1932 but Composer Hanson had not finished with his music. Financial woes delayed the opening further. Met manager Gatti-Casazza then "generously permitted the University of Michigan to steal a march on him." The *Time* critic applauded the performances of soprano Leonara Corona and baritone John Charles Thomas, but said "the love-motif for Wrestling Bradford sounded strangely like 'Limehouse Blues.'" *Time*, May 29, 1933, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,753718,00.html>.

score had even been written.⁴⁵⁴ *Time* magazine commented on these unusual circumstances in a tone of sarcastic disbelief in 1931, a year prior to the first planned opening: “Unlike most operas, this one was instigated by the librettist. Richard Leroy Stokes felt the creative urge when he was still writing sharp musical criticisms for the New York *Evening World*. He wrote a libretto in a combination of rhymed and unrhymed verse, dedicated it to his exotic-looking wife, then asked Director Howard Hanson of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester to write the music, please. Composer Hanson is now more than half done.”⁴⁵⁵ There are aspects of this uncommon arrangement that remain mysterious; it is not clear why Stokes chose Hanson (if he did—perhaps the Met exerted some influence), or in what manner Stokes approached Hanson, or why Hanson agreed to the project, unless it was simply desirable to have his work performed at the Met. And while the other American compositions were forgettable—or, as one reviewer put it, “lost in the land that atonality forgot”⁴⁵⁶—*Merry Mount* was initially—or apparently—a sensation. The premier, which was broadcast nationally on radio and was “accompanied by a blizzard of press coverage and discussion,”⁴⁵⁷ received a total of fifty curtain calls, still a house record.⁴⁵⁸ However, the Met never revived *Merry Mount* after the initial run of nine performances.

⁴⁵⁴ Allen Laurence Cohen, *Howard Hanson in Theory and Practice* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), 25, <http://www.greenwood.com/catalog/GM2135.aspx>
<http://books.google.com/books?id=6AAKBSIQAxMC>.

⁴⁵⁵ “Wrestling on Merry Mount,” *Time*, Feb. 23, 1931,
<http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,930372,00.html>.

⁴⁵⁶ Charles T. Downey, “Hanson’s Merry Mount,” *Ionarts*, June 6, 2007,
<http://ionarts.blogspot.com/2007/05/hansons-merry-mount.html>.

⁴⁵⁷ Cohen, *Howard Hanson*, 25.

⁴⁵⁸ “Howard Hanson,” b. Oct. 28, 1896 d. Feb. 26, 1981,
<http://www.usopera.com/composers/hanson.shtml>.

The decision was influenced by at least two factors. The first was artistic: the New York reviews, while generally positive, were mixed, and probably inflated. Stokes, a well-known and often exacting drama critic,⁴⁵⁹ was home talent. A critic from *Time* magazine stated that “most of the New York critics wrote sidestepping reviews” because Stokes was a friend.⁴⁶⁰ As for those fifty curtain calls, the same critic said, “the polite applause was described in the *New York Times* [newspaper] as ‘the most enthusiastic reception given any native music drama that had been produced in New York in ten years.’ No one mentioned the hissing which came from the back of the house after the dream scene of the 15th native work to be produced by the Metropolitan.”⁴⁶¹ The second factor may have been political: Metropolitan manager Giulio Gatti-Casazza, whose questionable judgment in commissioning the opera is said to have been based on his experience that “critics are likely to be lenient with the efforts of their fellow critics,” and who had unwisely “accepted the Hanson-Stokes opus when the music was scarcely begun,” left shortly afterward.⁴⁶² At that point, *Merry Mount*, and all other American works, disappeared from the Metropolitan stage.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁹ The Pulitzer paper, the *Evening World*, went out of business in 1931. It was bought by Scripps-Howard and became the *World-Telegram*. Before working for the *World*, Stokes worked at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; he returned to the *Post-Dispatch* in 1937 and had a distinguished career as a reporter and war correspondent, returning in 1949.

⁴⁶⁰ “Native No. 15,” *Time*, Feb. 19, 1934, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,746991,00.html>.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶² “Merry Mount in Michigan,” *Time*, May 29, 1933, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,753718,00.html>. The Met had planned to put on *Merry Mount* in 1932 but the score was not complete. It was then scheduled for the winter of 1932-33 but the Met was experiencing financial difficulties, so it was shelved again.

⁴⁶³ Cohen, *Howard Hanson*, 25.

Howard Hanson's musical score, however, continues in its popularity. Hanson was in his day considered the most important of American composers,⁴⁶⁴ although *Merry Mount* was his only opera. The Seattle Opera mounted a complete performance of *Merry Mount* in 1996 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Hanson's birth.⁴⁶⁵ A new recording, engineered from two live performances, was released in 2007.⁴⁶⁶ Hanson's score has been described as "equal parts Sibelius and Americana. . . full of gorgeous modern, tonal, lyrical lines."⁴⁶⁷ Chris Mullins, in *Opera Today*, declared that the "lush, evocative music" demonstrates that "Hanson did some of his best work in setting Richard L. Stokes's libretto." Mullins's enthusiasm for the score, however, did not extend to the lyrics: "The archaic language, flat characterization, and tedious narrative arc would hobble, one might think, any composer. Apparently Hanson believed in the project enough to let loose with streams of inspired melody."⁴⁶⁸

Stokes's libretto has inspired sharp criticism. Mullins's review accurately points out some of the problems. Charles T. Downey, writing in *Ionarts* (2007), goes further: "The opera's story makes sense, in spite of the crazy character names (credit to Stokes, not Hawthorne), until the unexpected conclusion. The opera is not one I expect to see on stage any time soon. . . ."⁴⁶⁹ In *Howard Hanson in Theory and Practice*, Allen Laurence Cohen

⁴⁶⁴ "Howard Hanson," <http://www.usopera.com/composers/hanson.shtml>. Hanson's work continues to command scholarly respect. See Walter Simmons, *Voices in the Wilderness: Six American New-Romantic Composers* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006).

⁴⁶⁵ John Sunier, "Howard Hanson: Merry Mount," *Audiophile Audition*, 2009, http://www.audaud.com/article_print.php?ArticleID=3241.

⁴⁶⁶ The 2007 recording was engineered from two performances (October 28 and 29, 1996). Downey, "Hanson's Merry Mount."

⁴⁶⁷ Sunier, "Howard Hanson."

⁴⁶⁸ Chris Mullins, "Hanson: Merry Mount," *Opera Today*, March 30, 2008, <http://www.operatoday.com/content/007629print.html>.

⁴⁶⁹ Downey, "Hanson's Merry Mount."

similarly argues that the reason behind the few professional productions of *Merry Mount* is “the unappealing character of its Puritan protagonist and other limitations of Stokes’s libretto.”⁴⁷⁰ The stage production was clearly a colorful extravaganza, replete with a superb musical score, stunning costuming, a huge cast of evil extras, and enough simulated hellfire to keep the dead awake. The opera’s popular demise and sudden (probably permanent) disappearance from the stage seems to be owing to Stokes’s unrelentingly bleak and oddly meaningless plot—including an “unexpected ending” where Wrestling Bradford, an unhinged Puritan clergyman, strides into the fires of hell with a captive woman screaming in his arms.

The Libretto

Wrestling Bradford is a substitute for John Endecott in this dark drama set in 1625. Endecott does not appear by name; nevertheless, the plot is driven by the maypole event and the significance it derived from Hawthorne’s creative adaptation of the historical record. In his preface Stokes writes that other than his indebtedness to the plot of Hawthorne’s tale “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” the fable he spins is original.⁴⁷¹ He does, however, credit additional historical resources, including Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana*, the King James Bible, Thomas Morton’s *New English Canaan*, and Josiah Cotton’s *Vocabulary of the Massachusetts (or Natick) Indian Language*. “The doggerel twanged by the Saints while hewing down the Maypole,” Stokes adds, “simulates the style of the Reverend Michael Wigglesworth’s ‘Day of Doom.’”⁴⁷² Stokes’s characters,

⁴⁷⁰ Cohen, *Howard Hanson*, 25.

⁴⁷¹ Richard L. Stokes, *Merry Mount: A Dramatic Poem for Music in Three Acts of Six Scenes* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1932) viii.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, ix.

however, are a wild departure from any historical account or fictional representation of the now-familiar Merry Mount incident. Bradford (Endecott), the central figure of Stokes's libretto, is a neurotic Puritan minister whose (barely) repressed sexual passion culminates in attempted rape and associated disasters.

Stokes wrote two other works of fiction based in history and folklore: *Paul Bunyan: A Folk-Comedy in Three Acts* (1932), and *Benedict Arnold: A Drama in Heroic Couplets* (1941), the plot of which follows E. Irvine Haines's theory that if Arnold was a traitor, he was also betrayed "by means of an influence to which many of the great of the earth have been susceptible—the lure of a beautiful woman [Peggy Shippen]."⁴⁷³ Stokes's subject matter and research practices suggest that he considered himself an amateur historian—perhaps a new folklorist for his time.⁴⁷⁴ He also was a well-traveled *bon vivant*. The preface to *Merry Mount* was written in Gavarnie, Hautes-Pyrenees in 1931, and the preface to *Paul Bunyan* in Florence, Italy, 1932.⁴⁷⁵ His only nonfiction work, *Leon Blum*:

⁴⁷³ Richard L. Stokes, *Benedict Arnold: A Drama in Heroic Couplets* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), vii. While a columnist for the *New York Times Magazine*, Haines wrote two articles on Benedict Arnold's case based on "recent discoveries" in the private correspondence of Sir Henry Clinton, in a forgotten diary of Aaron Burr, and in the private correspondence of the siren herself, Margaret "Peggy" Shippen Arnold, written to Major John Andre. Haines's articles cast Peggy, Arnold's second and much-younger wife, as an arch-conspirator in the plot.

⁴⁷⁴ "Even though Stokes disclaimed any intention of writing factual history in this libretto, he was attacked from all sides for perverting historical events. He replied to his critics on several occasions, but most exasperatedly in a letter to the *Musical Courier* [March 10, 1934]: 'Between persons addicted to fact and those given to imagination there appears to be an impassable gulf. Almost any public school child should be able to inform your correspondent that, had I restricted myself to literal date, there would have been no opera of Merry Mount. . . . I distinguish between the truth of fact and the truth of art.'" John Tasker Howard, *Our Contemporary Composers: American Music in the Twentieth Century* (Read Books, 2007), 78-79.

⁴⁷⁵ Richard L. Stokes, *Paul Bunyan: A Folk-Comedy in Three Acts* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1932).

Poet to Premier, A Biography (1937)⁴⁷⁶ was the result of an extended assignment in France during Stokes's tenure at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.⁴⁷⁷

In *Merry Mount*, Stokes's first foray into published verse, the author spares no effort to diminish and dismiss the Puritan myth of origin. The name "Wrestling Bradford" and others equally silly are mock allegories of Stokes's own invention and are clearly intended to satirize names from New England history, such as Increase Mather, Cotton Mather, and women named for the alleged female virtues, such as Temperance or Patience. Perhaps Stokes's declaration of his work's originality means that the reader should resist connecting his depiction of Wrestling Bradford's deeply flawed character to the first governor of Plymouth Colony who shares the surname, but it is difficult to imagine that Stokes chose the name "Bradford" at random. That name necessarily carries a shock for those familiar with the historical record of William Bradford, and perhaps that is Stokes's real intent—to rattle our preconceptions about Puritan sanctity (should we have any), even to intimate a connection between the historical Bradford and a fictional rapist.

Stokes's anti-Puritan sentiments are typical of what Perry Miller calls the "strident and derisive voices" of the 1920s and 1930s, reacting to the "stultifying conception" of Puritan history.⁴⁷⁸ Stokes put onto the stage a vivid example of his contemporary H.L. Mencken's

⁴⁷⁶ Richard L. Stokes, *Leon Blum: Poet to Premier, A Biography* (New York: Coward McCann, 1937).

⁴⁷⁷ Stokes's assignment was to "undertake a series of articles" on Blum, who had been a "rhymer, jurist and former millionaire" and who became on June 4, 1936, the first Socialist and first Jewish Premier of France. Owing to the lack of readily available biographical material on Blum, Stokes remained in France longer than planned. Stokes, *Leon Blum*, 9. During his two years as a war correspondent in Europe, Stokes covered the trial of the German war criminals at Nuernberg. He had landed in Normandy the day after D-Day I June, 1944 with Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army and remained with it until the end of the war eleven months later. Close coverage of the front lines was his speciality. "Richard L. Stokes Dies in East at 74," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 2, 1957.

⁴⁷⁸ Perry Miller, *Errand Into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), viii.

famous definition: “Puritanism: The haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.” Stokes’s “strident and divisive voice” and his “conception of Puritan history” expressed in *Merry Mount* may have been exactly the tone in keeping with that of his cohort. However, in his ferocious attempt to expose the hypocrisy and veneer of the Puritan shell by simplifying Hawthorne’s John Endecott story, “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” Stokes turned out a product that is so reductive as to be simplistic. It loses what we demand of drama. Stokes has distilled Puritan error to its most reductive and appalling state, but in the process he has taken out all the ambiguity and most of the art.

Stokes simply borrows the Merry Mount incident involving John Endecott to ground his own story about Puritan corruption. He pushes that moment in American colonial history to the extreme—so extreme, in fact, that the Bradford/Endecott character is quite unbelievable. Worse, he is a loathsome specimen, ricocheting between his illicit desires and his love of God, and he does not hesitate to abuse his position as a minister to pursue his own lusts. In a fit of jealous rage, he orders the destruction of the maypole and punishment of the revelers, not for any ideological reason (such as the one owned by the historical Endecott and voiced by Hawthorne’s fictional Endecott) but because the Queen of the May has just rejected his sexual advances. The difference between Stokes’s vilification of the Puritans and other lesser vilifications is the presence of sex, sex, sex as the preoccupation that makes the protagonist offer up his soul to the devil and make a damned fool out of himself in the process.

Stokes does not explain his choice to eliminate Endecott, Hawthorne’s primary player, but the most obvious reason for substituting “Wrestling Bradford” for “Wrestling

Endecott” is that Endecott had already been used as a Puritan foil by many other writers treading slightly closer to the historical record—Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, to name but a few⁴⁷⁹—and Stokes wanted to take a more original shot at original sin in the new Eden. Or, he may have wanted to avoid the legal dangers inherent in demonizing a historical figure with many living descendants. In any case, Stokes successfully portrays a morally grotesque Puritan landscape that more closely resembles hell than it does New England. Stokes states that his preparation for writing the *Merry Mount* libretto led him to a “study of Pilgrim demonology,” which he describes as the proclivity of the spiritual founders of America to see nature as “an ambushade of fiends, and the New World a desert of abominations which had prevailed unmolested, from Genesis to Mayflower, as Satan’s peculiar demesne.”⁴⁸⁰ Stokes’s imaginative interpretation of the historical record sounds a bit like Governor William Bradford’s first-hand account of the fear and dismay of the *Mayflower* passengers upon encountering the New World forests: “What could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men.”⁴⁸¹ Stokes was evidently deeply influenced by his discoveries. He seems fixed on exposing hypocrisy and lemming-like subservience to organized religion, and in revealing the disastrous—indeed, incendiary—results of repressed sexual desire.

⁴⁷⁹ See chapter 4 of this study.

⁴⁸⁰ Stokes, *Merry Mount*, viii.

⁴⁸¹ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 62. The original settlers were, of course, worried about more than the unwelcoming landscape. Additional stressful factors, such as the prospect of a New England winter without shelter, and their sea captain’s impatience to sail for England, whose departure would have left them stranded without any resources, contributed to their anxiety.

This theme has received much treatment, by everyone from Freud to D.H. Lawrence, but Stokes complicates the issue without making it any more interesting. Wrestling Bradford dreams nightly of the “fair lascivious concubines of Hell,/ With dewy flanks and honey-scented breasts,” who tug at his covers and prick his flesh “with hands of fire.”⁴⁸² “Thou’rt over-ripe for marriage,”⁴⁸³ Elder Praise-God Tewke tells the young man—“any jade” can heal him of his demons—but Tewke is wrong. Wrestling’s desires go beyond sexual frustration. He is obsessed with visions of rampant, sinful sexual athletics, and ordinary sexual release will not solve his problem; his crisis is spiritual, not physical. Tewke’s hapless daughter, Plentiful (think: Temperance, Patience) fancies Wrestling, and his desperation is so great that he demands that they marry immediately, that very night. In anticipation of the nuptials, he kisses her mouth with “brutal fury” and recoils, leaving her in tears and himself with profound dismay. “Away!” he tells Plentiful. “Thou hast no drug to medicine my wound.”⁴⁸⁴

Somewhat predictably, Wrestling meets the human incarnation of his succubus in Lady Marigold Sandys, the Anglican niece of Thomas Morton. Lady Marigold loves, and intends to marry, Sir Gower Lackland. Happily unaware of her role in Wrestling’s fantasy life, Marigold, vexed because the Puritans flogged one of her servants, strikes Wrestling about the head with her riding crop: “Thou dastard! Thou Puritan dog!” she cries. For his part, Wrestling experiences a “voluptuous shudder” at this unexpected introduction to S&M,⁴⁸⁵ and concludes that his previous vision of a female demon has been transmuted

⁴⁸² Stokes, *Merry Mount*, 13.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, stage direction, 17-18.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, stage direction, 30.

into a “Spirit of Paradise.”⁴⁸⁶ This wasn’t a beating; it was a mating ritual. From this point on, he confuses his visions and dreams with what is happening in the material world, and the audience is expected to participate in the illusion.

Wrestling’s downfall, of course, is his desire to possess Marigold, who wants no part of him. But more than Wrestling’s soul is at stake: Lucifer wants New England for his own. Wrestling’s ensuing three temptations follow biblical lines, echoing Christ’s temptations in the desert.⁴⁸⁷ Lucifer tempts Wrestling with power over the natural elements, with power over New England, and finally with the licentious courtesans of Hell whom Wrestling met earlier in his bedroom.⁴⁸⁸ He withstands all three without much difficulty until Lucifer pulls out a trump card: Marigold, appearing as Astoreth, an ancient fertility goddess. In order to possess her, Wrestling signs the Devil’s Book and sacrifices his soul along with all of New England. His demise, of course, closely patterns that of Christopher Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus, whose deal with the devil was clinched by Helen of Troy.⁴⁸⁹

While overall Stokes’s *Merry Mount* is a depressing piece of drama, there are elements of campy humor. The Puritans are so spiritually limited and dim-witted that they become caricatures, and Stokes uses his considerable talent as a rhymster to turn their bigotry into hilarity: “By Prophets black” the Pilgrims chant, “And all five books of Torah,/ The

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁸⁷ See Mt 4:1, Mk 1:13, and Lk 4:2.

⁴⁸⁸ Stokes, *Merry Mount*, 90-91.

⁴⁸⁹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Faust* (Part I, 1808; Part II, 1832) also features Helen of Troy as the ultimate beauty and hence, the ultimate male temptation, but Goethe’s Faust is redeemed by his compassion for humankind before his soul is lost. Not, alas, the fate Stokes assigns to Wrestling Bradford/John Endecott.

heathen smack/ Of Sodom and Gomorrah!”⁴⁹⁰ Stokes relies on the implicit production qualities in Hawthorne and puts them on parade in grand opera style: spectacle, deployment of singing choruses, grand costuming, stagecraft relying on light and flames—even the seventeenth-century convention of revelations of hells and heavens and supernatural beings flying about the stage.⁴⁹¹ It’s as if the entire catalogue of conventions of grand opera have been brought to bear.

In addition to the problems with the script already mentioned—and perhaps another reason that the opera is not fated for a twenty-first century revival—is the relentless demonization of Native Americans. Of course, when Stokes was writing, cultural awareness had not set in; what is offensive today was not even blinked at in the 1920s. Indians were stereotyped in all the arts as mindless savages and occasionally noble savages. In the current marketplace, however, Stokes’s portrayal of Indians and monsters in about equal proportion as physical incarnations of evil would not get a reading. The whole hideous mob is brutal, bloodthirsty, and perverse. The Indians are drunk, of course, or trying to get that way, and worse, they speak gibberish that recalls every racist slur made at the expense of Native Americans. “Quag-kin-oh-boo,” they say. “Ha, ha, ha, ha!/ Ook-ook-tah-moh,/ Tchick, tchick, tchick, tchick!”⁴⁹² Stokes tells us that the “gibberish for Indians and Monsters of Hell is devised from syllables extracted, without aim of sense,

⁴⁹⁰ Stokes, *Merry Mount*, 38.

⁴⁹¹ Howard Mayer Brown, "Opera (I)," *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/40726pg7>.

⁴⁹² Stokes, *Merry Mount*, 59.

from [Josiah] Cotton's manuscript vocabulary of the Massachusetts tongue."⁴⁹³ The first part of this statement is entirely believable; no "sense" is found in Stokes's borrowing, but neither is there any similarity to Cotton's work. Cotton's representation of the Massachusetts language contains few monosyllables, none spoken in sequence, and none that sound like "ha, ha, ha, ha" or "tchick, tchick, tchick, tchick." These utterances are repeated throughout Stokes's poem by various Indians, monsters, and demons, leaving no question about the ignorant and evil natures of the creatures who garble them. By Indian-bashing, Stokes may have been distancing himself from his own ethnicity. *Time* magazine stated that he was "part Indian," although I have been unable to discover any other reference to his Native American ancestry.⁴⁹⁴

The Puritans don't fare any better. The lyrics lambast colonizer and colonized alike, offering no redeeming feature of either society. Stokes forgets that humor and satire are most effective when the audience shares the views being acted out on stage, or at least has knowledge of the problem being satirized. The libretto lacks balance, the kind Geoffrey Chaucer skillfully implemented when he satirized clerical corruption in *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer's Pardoner, Friar, Monk, Prioress, and Summoner are dishonest, but subtly so, and their impact is mediated by the goodness of other characters on the pilgrimage to Canterbury. Stokes's Puritans are too one-dimensional to be interesting.

The influence of Hawthorne's character John Endecott, however, is demonstrated once again. The tale Stokes chose as paradigmatic of the Puritan experience is Hawthorne's

⁴⁹³ Ibid., Stokes, ix. See Josiah Cotton, *Vocabulary of the Massachusetts (or Natick) Indian Language* (Cambridge, MA: E.W. Metcalf & Co., 1829). See also Josiah Cotton, "A Dialogue in Two Languages," *Remarkable Providences*, ed. John Demos (New York: George Braziller, 1972).

⁴⁹⁴ "Merry Mount in Michigan," *Time*, May 29, 1933.

“The May-Pole of Merry Mount.” Regardless of what name he is given, that tale has only one major protagonist: John Endecott.

The Old Glory

In the preface to *The Old Glory* (1964, 1968) Robert Lowell states that his sources for the three historical plays in the collection were “Nathaniel Hawthorne’s stories and sketches, *Endecott and the Red Cross*, *The Maypole at Merry Mount* and *My Kinsman, Major Molineux*; Thomas Morton’s *New [English] Canaan*; and Herman Melville’s *Benito Cereno*.”⁴⁹⁵ Lowell, sounding very like Hawthorne, once explained that the title, *The Old Glory*, has two meanings: “it refers both to the flag and also to the glory with which the Republic of America started. And my own relationship to this glory is ambiguous. I think my principles are unavoidable, they are in my blood and I have to work with them. But all the weight of my criticism is turned against them, and that is sort of turning against myself.”⁴⁹⁶ Alan Holder observes, “Given Lowell’s lineage, [his] backward gaze, incorporating local and familial elements, seems only natural.” The New England Lowells are descended from Edward Winslow, a Mayflower passenger and governor of Plymouth Plantation, as well as from John Stark, a hero of the American Revolution. Lowell’s treatment of the past “is no simple matter of piety or celebration,” Holder argues; “Lowell’s treatment of American history presents a tangle of tonalities. . . . His feelings about the past have been in a state of flux throughout his career, history intersecting itself

⁴⁹⁵ Robert Lowell, *The Old Glory* (New York: Noonday Press, 1964), preface.

⁴⁹⁶ A. Alvarez, “A Poet Talks About Making History into Theater,” *Robert Lowell: Interviews and Memoirs*, ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 127-28.

in a shifting drama.⁴⁹⁷ Lowell's personal ambiguity, like Hawthorne's, about his relationship with his family history and Puritan America is reflected in the title character of his play, John Endecott.

In *Tragic Method and Tragic Theology: Evil in Contemporary Drama and Religious Thought*, Larry D. Bouchard finds that Lowell's "Endecott and the Red Cross" is an "indictment of a cultural pathology that still exerts its force."⁴⁹⁸ For Bouchard, the root of that pathology is confusion, a "cognitive blindness in characters who do not discern the realities that bear upon them and so act in way determined, it would seem, by the dynamics of history."⁴⁹⁹ For Lowell, the "inner vacuity" that afflicts characters such as Endecott is an American ailment, "a cleavage between heart and head, or flesh and spirit, embodied in persons of power or authority."⁵⁰⁰ Endecott, symbolic of the Puritan mission, is hopelessly rent between the democratic pragmatism of Thomas Morton and the uncompromising grip of Puritan doctrine. Endecott's administrative nightmare and crisis of faith-in-progress ferment, along with prolonged (un-Puritan) grief over the death of his wife, to create a toxic decoction that leaves him emotionally gutted, a "suit of empty armor walking."⁵⁰¹ This man, who could aptly be called Wrestling Endecott, is over before the play begins.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁷ Alan Holder, "The Flintlocks of the Fathers: Robert Lowell's Treatment of the American Past," *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 1 (March, 1971): 40.

⁴⁹⁸ Larry D. Bouchard, *Tragic Method and Tragic Theology: Evil in Contemporary Drama and Religious Thought* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 151.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁵⁰¹ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1964), 28.

⁵⁰² "Over" as an adjective: usage borrowed from Ernest Hemingway, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro."

History of the Production

The Old Glory was first staged at The American Place Theater (APT) in New York City in November 1964. The theater's initial purpose was to produce and develop the first plays of outstanding writers from other literary forms. APT was founded in 1963 by Wynn Handman, Sidney Lanier, and Michael Tolan at St. Clement's Church, far west on 46th Street in Manhattan, and was incorporated as a not-for-profit theater in that year. Tennessee Williams and Myrna Loy were two of the original Board members. The first full production was Robert Lowell's "theater trilogy masterpiece," *The Old Glory*.⁵⁰³

"Benito Cereno" is the most stage-friendly of the three plays in Lowell's trilogy, owing to the presence of great tension and action. Melville provides marvelous opportunity for highly visual, theatrical set-pieces, such as the barbering scene with Babo's holding his razor at the throat of shaking Don Benito, who is draped in the flag of Spain.⁵⁰⁴ When the plays were first performed, the poet Randall Jarrell wrote, "I have never seen a better American play than *Benito Cereno*. . . . The play is a masterpiece of imaginative knowledge."⁵⁰⁵ Robert Brustein similarly declared, "*Benito Cereno* is a cultural-poetic masterpiece, but the entire trilogy is an event of great moment."⁵⁰⁶ Not all of the reviews

⁵⁰³ <http://www.americanplacetheater.org>. The American Place Theater is now in its 47th season (2008-09). In addition to Lowell, APT artists have included William Alfred, Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, Paul Goodman, H.L. Mencken, Joyce Carol Oates, S.J. Perelman, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, May Swenson, and Robert Penn Warren.

⁵⁰⁴ Robert Lowell, "Benito Cereno," *The Old Glory* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1968), 184-87.

⁵⁰⁵ http://www.powells.com/biblio?show=TRADE%20PAPER:USED:9780374527044:5.00#synopses_and_views

⁵⁰⁶ Robert Brustein, "*The Old Glory*," *Critics on Robert Lowell*, ed. Jonathan Price (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1972), 102-03.

were that glowing, although “Benito Cereno” was unanimously considered by critics to be the strongest play in the trilogy.⁵⁰⁷ That opinion still prevails.

The significance of Lowell’s “Endecott and the Red Cross” lies more in its value as literature than as performance art. It does not work well as a one-act play because it lacks high-stakes action taking place in the present moment, and because it relies too heavily on exposition and dialogue—in contemporary parlance, it is tell-not-show instead of the desirable reverse. Jonathan Miller, who directed *The Old Glory* at the American Place Theater in 1964, reluctantly dropped “Endecott and the Red Cross” from the production. In this case, ironically, the Miltonic qualities of the costumed masque around the bedecked maypole overwhelmed the underlying psychological crisis Lowell had assigned to Endecott. “The essence [of “Red Cross”]. . . seems to me,” Miller wrote, “to be its complex spiritual irony, and this can be easily swamped by the spectacle of the mid-summer fete. . . . We never entirely got over this problem and after a lot of rehearsal, cutting and re-writing, we had to drop the play before the first night. . . .”⁵⁰⁸ Miller commented that possibly the play needed to be expanded and presented as a full length piece on its own. As deeply important as John Endecott’s crisis of soul was to Lowell, and as important as it remains in our ongoing cultural work⁵⁰⁹ to understand the persistent influences of the Puritan past, the 1964 version of the play made for dull theater because Lowell could capture only Hawthorne’s stage-settings but not the arch tone of the narrative voice that observes and controls the action in Hawthorne’s tale..

⁵⁰⁷ See *Robert Lowell: Interviews and Memoirs*, ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

⁵⁰⁸ Jonathan Miller, “Director’s Note,” *The Old Glory* (1964), xvii.

⁵⁰⁹ See Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Lowell returned to the play and composed a revised edition, which was staged at APT in 1968. A reviewer observed:

“Endecott and the Red Cross”. . . is not really a play, it is a variety of some other distinctly interesting things. . . . It is a kind of animated syllabus on the making of the New England mind, and a soul-scorching look at the Calvinist implacability of the Puritan temper. It contains the implicit suggestion that in the despoliation and murder of the Indians was born a legacy of violence that has remained a melancholy strand of American life.

The reviewer’s conclusion confirms that although even in the revision Lowell could not quite turn the tale into great theater, Hawthorne’s satirical interpretation of the historical red cross incident still has the power to instill patriotic fantasies: “The historical moment is a century and a half before the American Revolution, but as the first shots are fired, and puffs of acrid smoke drift across the stage, the playgoer sniffs the unmistakable odor of revolt.”⁵¹⁰

The same writer, however, seems to have been unaware of the significance of Lowell’s changes to the drama. I suggest that Lowell’s motivation to revisit the story of Endecott and the red cross at this particular time was motivated less by the challenge of making a short story into a “real play” than by the political events of the 1960s, in particular the Vietnam War, and Lowell’s desire to make Endecott emblematic of a crisis of American conscience.

⁵¹⁰ “Endecott & the Red Cross,” *Time*, May 10, 1968, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,902208,00.html>.

The Transformative Years: 1964-1968

“What I have added are mostly Indians,” Lowell said of the 1968 edition. “Innumerable lines have been ‘improved’ to be stronger, to be quieter, less in character, more in character.”⁵¹¹ Lowell is correct in his assessment that the 1968 revision is superior to the first version. However, that deepening is not due to the presence of Indians, although there are a few, or to tinkering with a few lines, although some lines have changed. Lowell was keenly attuned to political abuses in the world around him,⁵¹² and it is possible that the growing American Indian Movement (AIM) raised his consciousness during this period. Perhaps the moment seemed to demand a statement, and he already had at hand a vehicle he could adapt to the current circumstances and also trace continuity back to the ancestral past.⁵¹³ Lowell, a tenth-generation Mayflower descendant, navigated an unsteady course between his first-family genealogy and the realities of the twentieth-century culture in which he lived. The Puritan past seemed to require explanation—accountability or erasure⁵¹⁴—and, like Hawthorne, Lowell consistently felt the genealogical imperative to

⁵¹¹ Robert Lowell, *The Old Glory: Three Plays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968).

⁵¹² In addition to those of Lowell’s editorials discussed in this chapter, see the following letters sent to selected individuals and copied to newspapers: “HUAC” (protesting the House UnAmerican Activities Committee), Sept. 8, 1966; “Protest” (to Leonid I. Brezhnev), March 14, 1969; “Local Cause” (on behalf of the United Public & Service Employees at Duke University), Aug. 1, 1968; “Protest”(U Thant), March 27, 1969.

⁵¹³ “AIM—the American Indian Movement—began in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the summer of 1968. It began taking form when 200 people from the Indian community turned out for a meeting called by a group of Native American community activists led by George Mitchell, Dennis Banks, and Clyde Bellecourt. Frustrated by discrimination and decades of federal Indian policy, they came together to discuss the critical issues restraining them and to take control over their own destiny. Out of that ferment and determination, the American Indian Movement was born.”

http://www.mnhs.org/library/tips/history_topics/93aim.html. Also see <http://www.aimovement.org/>.

⁵¹⁴ See chapter 2 of this study. Also see Stephen Carl Arch, *Authorizing the Past: The Rhetoric of History in Seventeenth-Century New England*.

revisit that theme.⁵¹⁵ He does so again in his 1968 revision of “Endecott and the Red Cross.” The increased strength of the that work lies in the greatly complicated spiritual crisis of John Endecott as representative of American’s malaise as a nation.

The years 1964-1968 were a transformative, crucial time for Lowell. America’s disastrous “legacy of violence”⁵¹⁶ was being realized once again in the Vietnam War. He became deeply involved in the political world, traveling with presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy, and writing many public letters and editorials. His radicalization became focused in opposition to President Lyndon Johnson’s Vietnam policies, although Lowell’s political conscience found voice in many other causes. In 1943, the young Lowell had made himself a public figure with his open letter to President Roosevelt refusing to serve in the Second World War because of his opposition to bombing cities.⁵¹⁷ In the fall of 1943, Lowell was imprisoned as an official Conscientious Objector.⁵¹⁸ In 1965, nearly twenty years later, he publicly refused an invitation to the White House Arts Festival. James Sullivan argues that it was Lowell’s “cultural capital”—his personal prestige—and not any specific text that gained him the invitation,⁵¹⁹ which gave Lowell “the opportunity and authority on that occasion to embarrass and criticize President Johnson on his foreign

⁵¹⁵ In the same vein, consider Lowell’s preoccupation with Jonathan Edwards, the great defender of the revivals called the “Great Awakening.” His poems “After the Surprising Conversions,” “Mr. Edwards and the Spider,” and “Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts” pay a grudging homage to Edwards while holding him accountable for the emotional wreckage his revivals inflicted on such emotionally and psychologically vulnerable New Englanders as Edwards’s uncle Joseph Hawley, who took his own life out of despair over the state of his soul.

⁵¹⁶ “Endecott & the Red Cross,” *Time*, May 10, 1968.

⁵¹⁷ Lachlan Mackinnon, review, “Collected Poems by Robert Lowell,” *The Independent*, September 6, 2003, <http://license.icopyright.net/user/viewFreeUse.act?fuid=MzEwNzg5Nw%3D%3D>.

⁵¹⁸ Steven Gould Axelrod, *Robert Lowell: Life and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 42.

⁵¹⁹ James Sullivan, “Investing the Cultural Capital of Robert Lowell,” *Twentieth-Century Literature*, vol. 38, no.2 (Summer, 1992), 198.

policy. Lowell sent copies of his refusal, which registered his protest against the Vietnam War and the United States invasion of the Dominican Republic, to the White House and to the *New York Times*,” which quoted it on the front page.⁵²⁰ Similar to John Greenleaf Whittier’s two refusals to attend the Essex Institute’s commemorations of events which had led to the persecution of his Quaker ancestors,⁵²¹ Lowell’s refusal was a well-aimed slap at United States foreign policy.

In June 1968, Lowell was awarded an honorary degree from Yale University. Once again he used the occasion (and the press) to declare his disapproval of the Vietnam War and to voice his support for William Coffin and the other war protestors who had been convicted of conspiracy to counsel, aid and abet draft resistance.⁵²² In a letter to Yale President Kingman Brewster (and the newspapers), Lowell expressed his wish to speak the following sentence after receiving his degree: “I know that I am being honored mostly, and probably entirely, for my poetry; still I wish to express my gratitude to the University for now honoring me, when I stand in much the same position, and perhaps in some of the same danger, as William Coffin of Yale and Benjamin Spock of Yale, and other defendants at Boston.”⁵²³

Lowell’s 1968 editorial, “Day of Mourning,” clearly demonstrates an allegorical linkage between the Vietnamese of his own day and the Indians—lately added by Lowell to his play—of Endecott’s time:

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ See chapter 3 of this study.

⁵²² In 1970, an appeals court overturned the verdict. Paul L. Mariani, *Lost Puritan: A Life of Robert Lowell* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), 363-64.

⁵²³ Robert Lowell, “Yale Degree,” *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 11, no. 1 (July 11, 1968), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/11634>.

We should have a national day of mourning [Lowell writes], or better our own day of mourning, for the people we have sent into misery, desperation—that we have sent out of life; for our own soldiers, for the pro-American Vietnamese, and for the anti-American Vietnamese, those who have fought with unequalled ferocity, and probably hopeless courage, because they preferred annihilation to the despair of an American conquest.⁵²⁴

These words are repeated nearly verbatim by Endecott in the 1968 play:⁵²⁵

I should ask for a day of mourning in the colony,
 or better my own day of mourning,
 for the people we have sent into misery, desperation—
 that I have sent out of life:
 my own soldiers, the turncoat Indians who served
 our turn,
 and for the other Indians, all those who are fighting
 with unequalled ferocity, and probably
 hopeless courage,
 because they prefer annihilation to the despair of
 our conquest.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ Robert Lowell, "Day of Mourning," *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 10, no. 4 (February 29, 1968), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/11786>.

⁵²⁵ Lowell's letter appeared on February 9, 1968. "Endecott and the Red Cross" was performed at the American Place Theater in May 1968, and the copyright for *The Old Glory* was filed in 1968 as well. It is unclear whether the editorial or the passage in the play was written first.

⁵²⁶ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1968), 77.

This speech does not exist in the 1964 version of the play. Its inclusion suggests an important connection between the shift in Lowell's depiction of John Endecott; Lowell's decision to return to his 1964 script and work on it again; and the play's association with 1960s events in the life of Lowell and in the United States. The "Day of Mourning" letter indicates a very real linkage between Lowell's politics and his art. John Endecott is a Puritan Lt. William Calley,⁵²⁷ a prisoner of his moment in history, forced by personal ambition and unavoidable circumstance to be both bait and shark.⁵²⁸

"Bible, Blood and Iron"⁵²⁹

"Endecott and the Red Cross" is set in a generic period described in stage directions as "the 1630s."⁵³⁰ In it, Lowell, like Hawthorne, conflates numerous historical events and simply rearranges others in order to bring his major players from history together. The

⁵²⁷ On March 16, 1968 the angry and frustrated men of Charlie Company, 11th Brigade, Americal Division entered the Vietnamese village of My Lai. "This is what you've been waiting for -- search and destroy -- and you've got it," said their superior officers. A short time later the killing began. When news of the atrocities surfaced, it sent shockwaves through the U.S. political establishment, the military's chain of command, and an already divided American public.

My Lai lay in the South Vietnamese district of Son My, a heavily mined area where the Vietcong were deeply entrenched. Numerous members of Charlie Company had been maimed or killed in the area during the preceding weeks. The agitated troops, under the command of Lt. William Calley, entered the village poised for engagement with their elusive enemy.

As the "search and destroy" mission unfolded, it soon degenerated into the massacre of over 300 apparently unarmed civilians including women, children, and the elderly. Calley ordered his men to enter the village firing, though there had been no report of opposing fire. According to eyewitness reports offered after the event, several old men were bayoneted, praying women and children were shot in the back of the head, and at least one girl was raped and then killed. For his part, Calley was said to have rounded up a group of the villagers, ordered them into a ditch, and mowed them down in a fury of machine gun fire. "The My Lai Massacre," http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/vietnam/trenches/my_lai.html.

⁵²⁸ After news of the My Lai Massacre reached the American public in 1969, Lowell wrote a scathing letter attacking the policies that made such a debacle possible. "Our nation looks up to heaven," he seethed, "and puts her armies above the law. . . . Retribution is someone somewhere else and we are young." As for Lt. Calley, "He too fought under television for our place in the sun. Why should the bait be eaten when the sharks swim free?" Robert Lowell, "Judgment Deferred on Lieutenant Calley," *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 16, no. 8 (May 6, 1971).

⁵²⁹ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1968), 37.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

1964 and 1968 versions are similar in many respects. Thomas Morton has returned from his first deportation to England, still feisty and unrepentant and still selling whiskey and guns to the Indians.⁵³¹ In the revision, Morton treats Lowell's newly added Indians like adopted, simple children; their presence does not contribute tension to the drama because they have no agency, nor do their actions drive the plot. The trouble over England's threatened involvement in the colony's business is the driving force of the action, prompting Endecott's inflammatory speech to the soldiers, which culminates in Endecott cutting down the English flag. On the surface, there are many similarities.

But the Endecott in the revised version no longer *wonders* why he feels like "a suit of empty armor walking"; he *knows*.⁵³² "I am the hollowness inside my armor," he tells us.⁵³³ He has recently suffered from fevers, nightmares, waking deliriums. He dreams of "pacing in chains through a strange land."⁵³⁴ His men suspect him of becoming soft. "Have you noticed the Governor lately?" one soldier asks another. ". . . How he keeps whining to himself, / and complaining about his armor? / . . . I think [he] is turning away from God. / No one gets killed any more."⁵³⁵ Endecott's armor symbolizes his vocational choice as a soldier and the political power that he has craved. At this moment, it is also his prison. "If I could crawl out of my armor. . . I might be alive then," he muses.⁵³⁶ Consider this contrast between similar lines in the 1964 and 1968 versions:

⁵³¹ Morton arrived in New England for the first time in 1624 at the age of forty-eight. In 1628, he was arrested by Miles Standish and deported. Morton returned in 1629 and was banished a second time in 1630. He remained in England until his last return to New England in 1643. During that time he lobbied to undermine the colonies and published *New English Canaan* (1637), his scathing account of the Puritan mission. Morton died in Maine in 1647.

⁵³² Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1964), 28.

⁵³³ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1968), 41.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

When my wife died, I went into the army,
 as you know. I soon found I couldn't go on fighting
 without an iron religion.
 I found our iron religion.⁵³⁷

The Endecott in the second statement is colder, more calloused, solitary: “When my wife died, I served in the army./ Somehow, I found I couldn't stomach killing/ without an iron faith. I found that iron faith.”⁵³⁸ This Endecott later reflects, “I have little faith. The faith of armies./ I am only alive when I am fighting for my life./ I detest this, but it is so.”⁵³⁹ A similar passage in the earlier version reads, “I am only alive when I am fighting for my life *and my faith* (my emphasis).”⁵⁴⁰ Lowell has moved Endecott beyond Puritan zeal into a state of true despair in which the anchors of his former life are meaningless.

The critical point in the action in both dramas is the arrival of Mr. Blackstone, bearing the dreaded news from England that the King has appointed a tribunal for New England, headed by Archbishop Laud, and has appointed Sir Ferdinando Gorges as Royal Governor.⁵⁴¹ A royal bureaucracy will be imposed on New England, along with the Anglican faith—“an aesthetic, rational/ and systematic religion,” Blackstone sneers.⁵⁴² Endecott is way ahead of the game. He anticipates the news long before it arrives, and

⁵³⁷ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1964), 30-31.

⁵³⁸ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1968), 42.

⁵³⁹ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1968), 49.

⁵⁴⁰ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1964), 36.

⁵⁴¹ The two events—the bad news from England and the defacement of the flag—actually took place two months apart. The moves by the British crown occurred in September 1634, and Endecott cut the red cross from the English flag in November. Hawthorne conflates the events for dramatic effect and Lowell follows suit.

⁵⁴² Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1968), 67.

reflects on how to handle it. He will give a speech, he decides, mostly because that is what will be expected of him:

It will be a hollow, dishonest harangue,
 half truth, half bombast.
 But let's hope every word will be practical.
 It must stir soldier and preacher to fury.
 Then—no toleration, no quarter!
 Everything here in America will be Bible, blood and iron.
 England will no longer exist.⁵⁴³

This is not Hawthorne's impetuous, hot-headed Endecott who is fully invested in the Puritan mission and who slices the red cross from the English flag in a fit of rage. Lowell's Endecott is deliberate, desperate, and depressed. He acts the strongman, the role the colony expects of him, but his heart is not in it. "I now understand statecraft," Endecott reflects. "A statesman can either work with merciless efficiency/ and leave a desert;/ or he can work in a hit-and-miss fashion,/ and leave a cesspool."⁵⁴⁴ Thomas Morton inadvertently hits on the truth without realizing it: "You really are no longer a governor," he taunts Endecott. "That title is now as empty and hollow as your heart."⁵⁴⁵

Lowell's rendition of the red cross incident departs from both the historical record and Hawthorne's adaptation of it in two important ways. First, Lowell's Endecott orders a sergeant under his command to "tear the Red Cross from its staff!" The sergeant refuses:

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 50.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 64.

“I am afraid to. I am a soldier;/ I served against Spain under this flag.”⁵⁴⁶ This move detaches Endecott from the event. It’s not about him—he simply wants to orchestrate an irrevocable political breach with England and does not care how it gets done. Emotionally removed from the action, he does what is expected of the “iron man” of the Puritans: he proclaims that “no flag shall stand between us and our God” and cuts the ensign from its staff himself.⁵⁴⁷ Endecott then rallies himself most insincerely to order the killing of some Indians, the burning of the houses of Merry Mount, and the burning of the Indian village, a colonial My Lai. He takes a breath and delivers the “Day of Mourning” speech discussed earlier in this chapter, which perfectly elucidates the man inside the empty armor. It also foreshadows Endecott’s role in the Pequot War of 1636-37.⁵⁴⁸ At the end of Endecott’s soliloquy, Elder Palfrey reminds him of the biblical fate of Lot’s wife.⁵⁴⁹ Endecott, who knows something about despair himself, is in no mood to be comforted and does not give a damn about Lot’s wife. His retort is laced with bitter irony that is lost on Palfrey, but not on the reader: “Oh, stop it, Palfrey!” Endecott snaps. “You need a rest./ Go out and watch the Indians die:/ they deserve the blessing of your presence.”⁵⁵⁰

The second difference in Lowell’s version of the red cross incident is closely related to the first. In a gesture that once again distances Endecott from the action, he does not cut the red cross from the white background of the English flag as he did in history, in Hawthorne’s fiction, and nearly all accounts since. Instead, he simply cuts the flag from its

⁵⁴⁶ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1964), 55; Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1968), 74.

⁵⁴⁷ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1968), 75.

⁵⁴⁸ See Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).

⁵⁴⁹ Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt for disobeying God’s command to not look back as she and her family fled the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Ge 19:26.

⁵⁵⁰ Lowell, *The Old Glory* (1968), 78.

staff. In the view of British loyalist Mr. Blackstone, the act is still “treason and blasphemy,”⁵⁵¹ but the English flag has not been defaced or deliberately damaged. It merely falls to the ground unharmed, able to be run up its staff again. This act is less personal, less invasive, and less permanent than cutting the red cross out of the flag itself, akin to the difference between knocking a man down and running him through with a sword.

Lowell deliberately makes John Endecott’s sword an afterthought in this representation of American myth-making. Hawthorne wrote tongue-in-cheek when he suggested that Endecott’s swordplay represented “the first omen of deliverance” for the colonies and foreshadowed the American Revolution. Hawthorne’s irony in declaring the act to be “one of the boldest exploits which our history records” was (and continues to be) misinterpreted as sincerity.⁵⁵² The tale has inadvertently become a tool for construction of American national mythology. Jane Tompkins asserts in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* that Hawthorne’s literary reputation was strictly a political matter. She argues that works such as Hawthorne’s, which have attained the status of classics, are therefore believed to embody universal values, when in fact they embody “only the interests of whatever parties or factions are responsible for maintaining them in their preeminent position.”⁵⁵³ It was in the interest of post-Revolutionary War America to gaze back over the colonial past (which, after all, contained some embarrassments) and locate the admirable seed of independence. Hawthorne’s tale was appropriated to that end.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁵² Hawthorne, “Endicott and the Red Cross,” *Twice-Told Tales*, 345.

⁵⁵³ Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 4.

Lowell, however, is clearly aware of the folly of the Endecott myth, and works to erode the appealing notion that Endecott's flag-slashing was personal, admirable, risky, or significant. In Lowell's deconstruction, the act could have just as easily been performed by the nameless soldier under Endecott's command, and it would have been if the man had followed orders. Had Endecott's iconic sword remained in its scabbard, little in this drama would change. The cultural work of this play is to dismantle the constructed significance of John Endecott's now-legendary action, and in doing so, demythologize his sword as the weapon that struck the first blow for American independence. "It's strange I was in such an unmanly terror about a flag," Endecott broods as he kicks the flag off the steps in the final scene of the play. "It's a childish thing."⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁴ Lowell, *The Old Glory*, 1968, 79.

Epilogue:

John Endecott's Sword

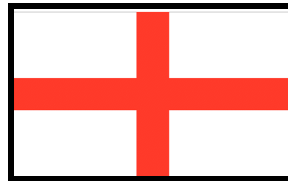


Figure 1: English Flag
with Red Cross of St.
George

History of the Sword: 1634-1991

For readers, historians, and Endecott family members, the sword-wielding Endecott has become a folk hero, emerging from the red cross episode as a champion for early American independence. The iconic sword with which the act was supposedly committed has become a historical artifact, symbolizing the fervent and courageous spirit of all things nationalistic.

It is ironic, and supportive of the themes of this study, that the sword with which John Endecott attacked the maypole at Merry Mount does not on its own generate the same, or any, reverence. Perhaps it was the same material sword, perhaps not. The sword gained

mythical significance in relation to Hawthorne's story "Endecott and the Red Cross" (1838), but was not similarly iconified through Endecott's actions in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" (1836). An attack on an undefended maypole in the middle of nowhere does not inspire legend. A similar impromptu assault on the flag of England is the stuff of which legends are made.

Charles M. Endicott, an Endecott descendant and biographer of John Endecott, echoing Hawthorne, wrote in 1847 that the attack on the red cross was the "first blow struck in this country in defiance of the royalty of England."⁵⁵⁵ The sword has been preserved, Endicott assures us, and is in the possession of one of the family "to whom it has descended, in direct line, by right of primogeniture. It is a plain, unornamented rapier, emblematical of the puritan simplicity of our forefathers."⁵⁵⁶ Stephen Salisbury, a later Endecott biographer, writes that "the sword, "which is said to have been the instrument of this bold act of rebellion," is preserved as one of the most precious heirlooms of [Endecott's] family." Salisbury continues, "May we not conjecture that it was the flag, the symbol of foreign power, more than the cross, that provoked the attack of Mr. Endecott."⁵⁵⁷ In a neat slight-of-hand, Salisbury has substituted a democratic political motive for Endecott's consciously avowed motive of anti-Catholicism/anti-Anglicanism. It is not clear whether Charles Endicott or Salisbury actually saw the sword. If Endecott's irrational behavior was anxiously explained by his contemporaries but later glorified by fiction writers and historians, his family was on a similar mission. A myth that was good for America was

⁵⁵⁵ Charles M. Endicott, *Memoir of John Endecott, First Governor of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* (Salem: The Observer Office, 1847), 54.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵⁵⁷ Stephen Salisbury, *Memorial of Governor John Endecott* (Worcester: Charles Hamilton, 1874), 43-44.

good for the Endecotts and vice versa. In this way, the sword became emblematic of the family honor as well as symbolic of the “first blow struck” for American independence.

In 1940, upon the death of William Crowninshield Endicott, the sword, along with the only original portrait of John Endecott and three other family heirlooms of historical interest, were donated to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the terms of his will.⁵⁵⁸ The sword found a home in the Massachusetts State Library’s Special Collections and was displayed there until 1991, when William T. Endicott inquired about having a replica made so the Endecott family tradition of primogeniture could be revived.⁵⁵⁹ Before proceeding, however, an expert in arms and armament was asked to inspect the piece to make certain that the centuries-old weapon would hold up under the process.⁵⁶⁰

The Search for the Sword: 2003

Wanting to see the famous artifact for myself, and knowing nothing of its history or location, I first went in search of the sword in 2003, feeling confident that it would be easily located in some Massachusetts archive or museum. No one seemed to know where it was. After a dozen contacts over a period of weeks, I finally discovered that the sword was in storage at the Massachusetts State Library. The story of the weapon’s demotion was not a tale that the archivist was eager to tell. I finally learned that Walter J. Karcheski, Jr.,⁵⁶¹ who was Curator, Arms and Armor, at Higgins Armory Museum in Worcester, MA,

⁵⁵⁸ The other items were: the Endicott coat of arms, an oak chair once owned by Governor Endecott, and the original printed petition sent to Charles II on behalf of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1660. “Governor Receives Endicott Relics,” *Boston Herald*, May 16, 1940.

⁵⁵⁹ William T. Endicott, letter to Martha R. Richardson, Coordinator, State House Flag Project, State House, Boston, MA, March 23, 1991.

⁵⁶⁰ Betsy Lowenstein, Chief of Special Collections, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Library, telephone interview, October 16, 2003.

⁵⁶¹ Walter J. Karcheski is considered to be one of the world’s foremost authorities on arms and armament.

had inspected the sword back in 1991 and, to everyone's astonishment (not the least being that of William T. Endecott), declared it an eighteenth-century piece that John Endecott (1588-1665) could not possibly have owned, never mind wielded in the flag slashing. In other words, the famed Endecott sword was a fake. After Karcheski's statement, it had been promptly removed from the museum display and stored. Apparently no one, including the Endecotts, quite knew what to do with it. William T. Endicott wrote at the time that the news "has given my brother and me pause on pursuing this whole matter [of creating a replica]. I wonder if the sword is a fake or whether the curator is wrong. Do you think you could figure out a way to resolve this? I don't want to spend a goodly sum of money and other people's time on this project if the sword isn't what it is supposed to be, i.e., once belonged to John Endecott. Perhaps you could start by putting the matter to the curator directly." At that point, Bill Endicott left for eight weeks in Europe. "Maybe you could have a letter waiting for me when I return," he wrote to Richardson.⁵⁶²

After this revelation, I located a photo of the sword in the *Album of American History*.⁵⁶³ It is an ornate piece, with a wide blade and highly decorated grip. Not wanting to let the story of the sword simply fade away, I located Mr. Karcheski at his new position as Chief Curator of Arms and Armor at the Frazier Historical Arms Museum in Louisville, KY. He did not remember the sword, but I sent him a photo and what I had on its history. It turns out that he did not formally inspect the piece but had simply viewed it in a display

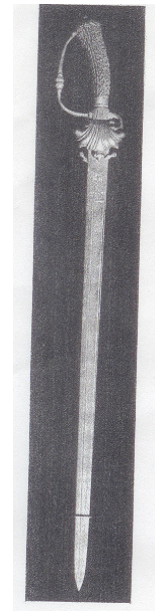


Figure 2:
John
Endecott's
Sword

⁵⁶² William ("Bill") T. Endicott, letter to Martha Richardson, June 4, 1991. Used with permission of the Massachusetts State Library.

⁵⁶³ James Truslow Adams, *Album of American History*, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner, 1969).

case on a random visit to the museum with his wife. On the basis of his casual observation, the museum made the formal report that the sword was an eighteenth-century piece. I asked Becky Lowenstein, Chief of Special Collections, if anyone had requested a second opinion. No. Given the historical significance of the sword, it seemed odd that the Endecott family would not have challenged the findings (unless they already had some suspicions of their own). Mr. Karcheski's reply to me confirmed his earlier assessment:

I have been able to review and rethink my comments and observations made more than a decade ago. I was also able to discuss the illustration of the sword and my notes with some colleagues in London last week. My general thinking remains unchanged, that this is not a sword of age or type that would have belonged to Governor Endecott. The hilt (the hand grip and curving metal guard) is from about 1700, while the shell-shaped plate and the blade are more recent, dating from the mid 18th century or slightly later. I no longer feel that the sword is homogenous, although I cannot say as to when the pieces were married. I still believe it to be probably German.⁵⁶⁴

In the midst of this curious exchange, I returned to the biography of John Endecott written in 1847 by Charles M. Endicott, "a descendant of the seventh generation," which pays homage to the weapon: "*It is a plain, unornamented rapier, emblematical of the puritan simplicity of our forefathers* (my emphasis)."⁵⁶⁵ Although I believed I already knew the answer, I asked Mr. Karcheski whether the sword in the possession of the Massachusetts State Library could be considered a rapier. He replied, "As to your present question concerning the sword's resemblance to a 'rapier,' there is no chance possible that

⁵⁶⁴ Walter J. Karcheski, Jr., email to Abigail Davis, December 1, 2003.

⁵⁶⁵ Endicott, *Memoir of John Endecott*, 54.

the two items could be one and the same. Not only is the existing sword not a rapier, but its decoratively etched blade would certainly preclude any consideration of its being ‘plain [and] unornamented.’”⁵⁶⁶ The Endecotts have produced an impressive number of family genealogies over the years,⁵⁶⁷ some quite brief and others, such as the one written by Charles M. Endecott, one hundred fifteen pages in length. Did this family in love with their ancestry not read Charles’s 1847 memoir that included a description of the weapon? Could even a novice in arms and armament confuse the existing heavy sword with a light, thin rapier? Neither the Massachusetts State Library nor the Endecott family seemed interested in making the fraudulent sword a public matter. The family’s silence is certainly understandable. John Endecott had no siblings in this country, and of his two sons, only the second, Zerubbabal, had children. The entire aristocratic line descends from one man.

The Search Continued: 2009

I felt I could not complete this study without determining the fate of the sword, so I again contacted the Massachusetts State Library and discovered it was no longer in their possession. It had been transferred to the State House Art Collection on Sept. 29, 2004, “probably as a result of your 2003 inquiries,” said the librarian.⁵⁶⁸ My subsequent conversation with Art Collections Manager Susan Greendyke, who has been in her position for twenty-five years, confirmed my earlier findings. Greendyke is, of course, aware of the sword’s checkered past as an artifact. It “came in with a story, and the story was perpetuated,” Greendyke said. The weapon is now in storage in its new location, and

⁵⁶⁶ Karcheski, email to Abigail Davis, November 28, 2003.

⁵⁶⁷ See chapter 4 of this study.

⁵⁶⁸ Katherine Chase, Special Collections Librarian, State Library of Massachusetts, telephone interview, Mar. 26, 2009.

Greendyke has “cleared the files”—in other words, it is no longer listed or identified as John Endecott’s sword.

Greendyke told me that she hears from the Endicotts “from time to time—a handful of times in twenty-five years.”

“What do they ask you?” I wanted to know.

“They want to make sure the sword is safe. They don’t want to believe that it has been evaluated by an arms specialist and it’s not what it’s purported to be.”

“So, as far as the Endicotts are concerned, the sword in your possession is the real thing?”

“Yes,” she replied. “But there are *lots* of things at the State House that aren’t what they came as.”

Greendyke then shared the story of a certain portrait in the State House collection that had been donated, as many items are, by a family. There is a different portrait of the same individual hanging at Harvard. “Every time I go over there,” Greendyke said, laughing, “I look at that painting and compare the resemblance to ours, and think, ‘Maybe if he turned to profile, or aged, or stood in the light, or *something*, it could be the same person.’”⁵⁶⁹

Conclusion

If the intact myth of John Endecott and his sword is important to his heirs, it is even more important to the American national mythology which, in a sense, created him.

Endecott is not alone among historical and literary figures in his accidental role as the

⁵⁶⁹ Susan Greendyke, Art Collections Manager, State House, Boston, MA, telephone interview, March 27, 2009.

subject of what Edward J. Gallagher calls a “cultural industry.”⁵⁷⁰ Analogous to the figure of Endecott might be the figure of Pocahontas—a rival personage in the American search for origins. As Ann Uhry Abrams points out, the Pocahontas story is one of “two familiar tales” that “constitute the genesis chapter of American history. One explains the origins of Virginia; the other describes the founding of Massachusetts. Most nineteenth-century Americans accepted the stories as verifiable explanations of how the first two English colonies in North America began and revered them as if they were divine revelations.”⁵⁷¹ Thanks to John Smith, Pocahontas got star billing in the Southern creation story, and she has retained it throughout 400 years; thanks to Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Endecott achieved prominence in New England’s originary myth, and, as this study has demonstrated, generations of literary artists have followed Hawthorne’s lead by maintaining Endecott’s prominence in successive retellings of his adventures with his sword.

Similarly, the well-known legend of Paul Revere’s revolutionary heroics is largely due to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem, “Paul Revere’s Ride.” In fact, Revere did not succeed in reaching Concord in time to warn the populace on that tense night in 1775. The only one of the three men who set out by different routes to deliver the alarm to Concord to arrive in a timely manner was Dr. Samuel Prescott, whom few people now remember.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰ Edward J. Gallagher, “Introduction, *The Pocahontas Archive*. <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/index.php> Also see Robert S. Tilton, *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) for further explorations of the competition for the “authentic” myth of national origins, and *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. (Cambridge, London, and New York: 1983).

⁵⁷¹ Ann Uhry Abrams, *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas: Rival myths of American Origin* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 3.

⁵⁷² David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere’s Ride* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Popular history has also forgotten William Dawes, the third man on the team of riders. Longfellow not only does not mention Prescott or Dawes in his poem, but he implies that Revere acted alone. Longfellow's poetic dramatization, not history, is most often remembered by Americans who dearly love stories about rebellious heroes who demonstrate the best of what Americans like to believe is uniquely American character. The rescue of the dashing John Smith by Pocahontas, Paul Revere's "midnight ride," and the incident of John Endecott and the red cross incident are of a piece.

If historical figures have been fictionalized in the quest for a national narrative, the reverse is also true: fictional characters have been endowed with human histories by fans of the fictions and icons connected with them take on the status of shrines. In the realm of colonial and early American literature, consider Susanna Rowson's 1791 American bestseller, *Charlotte Temple*. The fate of Charlotte, the protagonist in this novel that was reprinted in more than two hundred editions, so deeply affected readers that they believed she must be real. Her "grave" still exists in Trinity Churchyard in downtown Manhattan; it is not clear who, if anyone, is buried there.⁵⁷³ Similarly, Elizabeth Whitman, the thirty-seven-year-old daughter of a Connecticut minister, became the object of gossip and newspaper notices up and down the eastern seaboard when in 1788 she died in self-exile in South Danvers, Massachusetts, having delivered a stillborn child out of wedlock. Her story was recounted in the "first American novel," William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789). A few months earlier, Whitman's friends had paid for an "unusually wordy" headstone to be erected in Danvers. Whitman later became the prototype for Eliza

⁵⁷³ Lisa M. Gordis, "None Need Think Their Sympathy Wasted": Reading Early American Books, *Common-place*, vol. 9, no. 3 (April, 2009). <http://www.common-place.org/vol-09/no-03/gordis/>.

Wharton, the heroine in Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797). "Whitman's epitaph, which was reproduced with some minor but significant revisions at the close of *The Coquette*, was one of the most widely reprinted in the nineteenth century. Her grave (like that of the fictional heroine Charlotte Temple in New York City) became a major tourist destination. . . ." ⁵⁷⁴

John Endecott, likewise emerging from the earliest days of British America, and functioning as both a historical and fictional figure, is a human text on which the story of American independence has been selectively written. The legendary sword as artifact *and* text functioned in the construction of the myth. The histories of John Winthrop and William Bradford, the satirical account of Thomas Morton, the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne, the authors of the Endecott biographies, the keepers of the sword—all tell only pieces of the story. Each has participated, however, in the process of American history-making. After four hundred years and in the work of many hands, John Endecott has been fully mythologized.

⁵⁷⁴ Bryan Waterman, "Who Reads an Early American Book?" *Common-place*, vol. 9, no. 3 (April, 2009). <http://www.common-place.org/vol-09/no-03/waterman/>.

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