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Beatriz Gómez Requena

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Abstract: This paper outlines the relationship between how the reality of the 17th century New England affected literature and how literature affected the Puritan reality. To achieve this aim, the paper will be developed through three works: the sermon preached by John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity* (1630); and two of the major works of Cotton Mather: *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions* (1689) and *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693). This study offers an introduction to Puritanism as well as a descriptive account of the episode of witch-hunt in Salem to be able to evince the reciprocity between literature and reality later on in the study. The findings from this research illustrate how a religious belief that ensued in the Reformation of the 16th century changed the way society thought and lived as well as how the society was reflected in literature.

Keywords: John Winthrop, Cotton Mather, witch-hunt, Salem Trials, New England, Puritanism.

Beatriz GÓMEZ REQUENA

Puritan Experience in 17th Century New England: The Witch-Hunt Episode through the Works of John Winthrop and Cotton Mather

0. Introduction

The term Puritanism is admitted by historians to be puzzling in its definition but Coffey and Lim are helpful as they define Puritanism as "the name given to a distinctive and particularly

intense variety of early modern Reformed Protestantism which originated within the unique context of the Church of England but spilled out beyond it" (1).

Puritans arose within the Church of England in the late sixteenth century and challenged the supremacy of the Catholic and the Anglican Church. They wanted a reform in their national church that would eliminate every shred of Catholic influence. (Bremer *Puritanism* 4). As a consequence of their different interpretation of the *Bible*, Puritans started considering emigration. Staying would mean to wholly accept the English Church and even though leaving England would mean cutting off with family and friends and create a new life in a new territory, they got to the conclusion that there was no choice but to leave (Bremer 17-18).

According to Stone, sometimes the figure of the Devil became even more important than the figure of God himself (4). As she claims, Puritans were taught to believe the Devil was everywhere, trying to destroy them; thus, they became extremely paranoid and superstitious. Accepting the possibility of the Devil also implied the existence of witchcraft. As a consequence, a chain of events took place in 1690s Salem, Massachusetts: a mass hysteria that left more than two hundred people accused of witchcraft and twenty finally executed (Hoffer 5).

Cotton Mather was one of the authors that compiled much of what happened in the 17th century Puritan colonies. Two of his major works, *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions* (1689) and *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) will be the main objects of this study in order to closely analyse what happened in Salem. Another important figure in Puritanism is John Winthrop and his influential speech *A Model of Christian Charity* (1630), given during the Puritan migration to the New World. It had special importance in how the Puritan community would develop and, as this work shall argue, it affected the episode of witch-hunt that would take place in Salem decades later.

The aim of this paper is to establish a relationship between how the reality of the 17th century New England became affected by these texts and how these texts likewise were affected by the reality of the Puritan doctrine. The study will start by identifying the background and the main tenants of Puritanism in the subsequent chapter.

1. A First Approach to Puritanism

1.1 The Roots of Puritanism

While some historians agree about the importance that Puritanism has had in history, they cannot agree in what Puritanism really means and, to some extent, this is because in its first century of life, Puritanism did not have an official institutionalised form (Bremer *Puritanism* 2). In fact, 'puritan' was originally a term used by their enemies and later adopted by themselves (Bremer *Puritanism* 2).

In its broadest terms, the roots of Puritanism can be found in the beginnings of the English Reformation. The most crucial moment in the development of Puritanism goes back to the 1530s when King Henry VIII disowned papal authority and created the Church of England. Still, much of the liturgy and ritual of Roman Catholicism was kept in the just founded Church of England (Bremer *Puritanism* 4).

Through the reigns of the Protestant King Edward VI (1547-1553) and the Catholic Queen Mary (1553-1558) the Puritan movement continued growing despite of the repression this group suffered. Many objectors thought that the English Reformation had not been enough. They rejected the ecclesiastical government elected by Queen Elizabeth I and favoured instead "a new church based solely on the Scriptures where the world be purely preached and the saints allowed to organize themselves after the pattern of the apostolic church as they understood it" (Parker 4-5). As a consequence, several groups of worshipers got together and separated themselves from their local churches in which preaching was not adequate. Furthermore, some individuals went a step further by declaring themselves separated from the national church ("Puritans").

However, Puritans were not the only movement that came out as a consequence of the English Reformation. Pilgrims were also non-conformists about the English Reformation and shared the same teaching influence of John Calvin that Puritans. However, Pilgrims, labelled Separatists (Bremer *Puritanism* 14), differed from Puritans as the latter maintained their attachment to the English Church in their determination to purify it.

1.2 From Europe to the New World: first settlements

The correlation between Puritans and Pilgrims is interesting because although both of them feared for their safety due to their distancing from the official church, each of them chose a different location to move in so as to be able to develop their ideal image of religion. It is not difficult to understand the desperation these Separatists felt and their desire to escape in that, as the number of Separatists congregations did not stop increasing, the authorities intervened, "putting their leaders in jail and even executing them" (C. Collier and L. Collier 21).

Another problem was the Pilgrims' concern of losing their own identity and that is why they made a petition to the King of England, James I, to grant them rights to settle down in Virginia, a petition that was accepted. They shipped from Southampton on August 23, 1620 aboard the Mayflower and in November they finally landed in Plymouth. After their arrival, they redacted the Mayflower Compact, one of the earliest documents of self-government in America. It was signed by the Mayflower crew to create the Plymouth Company and was necessary because they landed in a territory that was not under the jurisdiction of the English Crown. The aim of the Mayflower Compact was to guarantee the survival and cooperation of the colonists by working together (Bremer *Puritanism* 17).

Puritans migrated instead to the area of Massachusetts Bay aboard the Arbella and were led by John Winthrop, who became a very significant figure for Puritans, not only because of his 20-year governance of the Massachusetts Bay colony but also due to the sermon he preached to his fellow travellers. He titled his sermon *A Model of Christian Charity* and Parker summarized its main goal as "the desire to create an ideal community of justice and love, to be a godly people of the highest moral and spiritual commitment, to lead the world by shining example" (Preface IX).

Predestination is a doctrine within Calvinism that deals with the inquiry of how much control does God have over the world. Some Puritans were Calvinists and therefore, believed

in this theory in which God chooses before human birth who will be saved and who will be eternally damned (Bremer *Puritanism* 39).

God, by his eternal goodwill, which has no cause outside itself, destined those whom he pleased to salvation, rejecting the rest. Those whom he dignified by gratuitous adoption, he illumined by the Spirit, so that they receive the life offered in Christ, while others voluntarily disbelieve, so that they remain in darkness destitute of the light of faith (Calvin 58).

The God worshipped by the Puritans was not a forgiving God, indeed, they feared Him and wanted to be worthy in His eyes. Moreover, Puritans considered themselves to be representatives of God; they were hard-working by nature and their lives were voluntarily submitted to the duty of the Lord. The speech by John Winthrop in the *Arbella* is a suitable example that illustrates the vision of Puritans as God's representatives.

2. John Winthrop: A Model of Christian Charity

Winthrop's listeners aboard the *Arbella* were taking risks as it has already been mentioned: they were leaving their homes and looking for a new life in an unknown land. Winthrop's speech can be considered to have been a lesson for the passengers about how to achieve a prosperous life and a saved soul. Through his speech, he encouraged them to always support their community by "giving, lending and forgiving" (2).

As Bremer states, there was one main reason to preach this sermon: there was an obstacle. Colonists traveling in the ship came from different regions of England, "where their particular experience had led to variations on the Puritan theme" (Bremer *Companion* 128). The challenge was how to settle a community which would work together and achieve what they considered to be God's will (128).

Winthrop started his sermon affirming that God, by his providence, created men of different ranks, "some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in submission" (1) and that he did this for three reasons. With the first Reason, Winthrop presented a wise God for having created different kind of people able to live in harmony, "show forth the glory of his wisdom in the variety and difference of the creatures, and the glory of His power in ordering all these differences for the preservation and good of the whole" (1). The idea of respect is embraced in the second Reason, "upon the wicked in moderating and restraining them, so that the rich and mighty should not eat up the poor, nor the poor and despised rise up against and shake off their yoke" (1). Finally, the third Reason summarized the idea of collaboration: they needed one another. Winthrop claimed that although the kind of men created by God was different, they needed "the bonds of brotherly affection" (1). Winthrop firmly argued that they all should work together as a religious community and help each other, "every man might have need of others, and from hence they might be all knit more nearly together" (1). With these three Reasons about why God created men of different ranks, Winthrop established a very profound idea of unity in the

Puritans aboard the *Arbella*. This idea of unity would lead into a feeling of dependence: an action committed by an individual would affect the whole community.¹

While he encouraged his travellers to follow the moral, he supported his claims with biblical passages. Once more Winthrop strengthened the idea of unity by referring to Micah in the Old Testament, "the only way to avoid this shipwreck, and to provide for our posterity, is to follow the counsel of Micah, to doe justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God. [...] we must be knit together" (9). Winthrop also encouraged them to enter in a Covenant with God,²

'the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us as his own people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways, so that we shall see much more of his wisdom, power, goodness and truth than formerly we have been acquainted with' (9).

A well-known concept that was presented in the last part of his sermon was that of a "City upon a Hill", which emphasizes the idea of cooperation and unity that he gave through his whole speech,

For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and by-word throughout the world. (9)

The idea of being a City Upon a Hill compile the ideas of the whole sermon and furthermore, showed the Puritans that they should be an example for the rest of the world, "The eyes of all people are upon us" (9). Puritans were going away from their homes and they left everything they had to establish themselves in a territory where they could be loyal to their beliefs and develop them in the way they had chosen, "let us choose life that we, and our seed may live, by obeying His voice and cleaving to Him" (9). For this reason, Winthrop knew these new colonists were going to be in the eye of many people and he wanted them to shine like an example to the world. With this concept, Winthrop also stated the idea that if Puritans failed upholding their Covenant with God, their sins and errors would be exposed for all the world as they would be in the eyes of everyone. Moreover, as Winthrop stated, the Covenant with God would be broken and "the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us, and be revenged of such a people, and make us know the prices of the breach of such a covenant." (9)

Throughout his whole speech, Winthrop clearly stated the purpose for the people that would settle in the Massachusetts Bay Colony through a structure of questions and answers that emphasized the importance of social cohesion for the triumph of the colony in New England. He also encouraged them to differ from the rest of society, to feel they have been

¹ This is a crucial concept that will be connected to some episodes in Salem in next chapter while discussing the witch-hunt.

² A Covenant can be defined as "'a debt and credit account' with God" (Ellis 152).

the elected for a new life and to enjoy and take advantage of the love God was giving to them, "He loves his elect because they are like Himself" (6).

Winthrop's sermon became a key player in the construction of the reality of these colonists in New England. What is interesting about his sermon is how he fused two concepts of community. First, the community as a social network in which everyone should work together and cooperate with the others letting away the image of hierarchy. Secondly, the community as one in Christ, "true Christians are of one body in Christ" (5). The City upon a Hill was the first ideal in the faith of these travellers, and despite their success or their failure, Winthrop's sermon affected their realities as it is going to be seen throughout this paper.

2.1 The Arrival in New England and the Roots of the Witch-hunt

Both Pilgrims and Puritans finally landed in their aimed territory. However, the Pilgrim Plymouth Colony never had a royal charter and Puritan Massachusetts Bay had its royal charter nullified. On October 3, 1691, "Westminster issued a charter that united the Plymouth Colony and the Massachusetts Bay Colony into one corporate body called Massachusetts Bay Province" (Weir 65). The puritans, who had left their homes in England due to religious persecution, feared their religion was again under attack and worried about losing the control of their colony. Political and religious instabilities created a miscarried feeling and discontent in the New Massachusetts Bay Colony.

This sensation of losing control might have been one of the reasons that boosted the infamous witch-hunt in Salem, Massachusetts. Moreover, in *Salem Possessed*, Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum explained how common was to suffer from undiagnosable diseases, the sudden death of a family member or to experience certain inexplicable misfortunes that were all thought to have evil origins. According to the authors, "But in New England, as in Europe, inexplicable misfortunes, such as the sudden and undiagnosable death of a family member or a prized farm animal, were often attributed to demonic acts—that is, witchcraft—committed by malicious neighbours" (Boyer and Nissenbaum qtd. in Ray 2).

Citizens of Salem also feared an Indian attack. It was a huge threat that took its toll over the minds of the Puritans "raising levels of anxiety and preparedness" (Hoffer 42-3). This mixture of instabilities and worries led in a mass hysteria commonly known as the witch-hunt of Salem. However, before having a closer look at the events, it is important to be aware of the magnitude this historical episode presented: "the seven months of prosecutions and execution resulted in 152 arrests, 54 confessions, 28 convictions, 19 executions (by hanging), and 5 deaths—including that of an infant—due to poor jail conditions" (Ray 1).

3. Cotton Mather

Cotton Mather (1663-1728) was a prolific author and a socially and politically influential New England 17th century Puritan minister. Chapter 4.1 and 4.2 will attempt to describe what happened in Salem as well as the relation between Mather and the trials. However, as Demos argues, "There is, to be sure, continuing debate over one set of issues: the roles

played by the persons most directly involved" (1311). As a former medical-student, Mather became interested in reported cases of possession in New England as he did in works such as *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions* (1689) and *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693). These two major texts by Mather will serve to show how Puritan literature became affected by the horrifying episode that took place in New England in the last decades of the 17th century as well as how Puritan literature also affected that reality.

The following section discusses the notion of Spectral Evidence and its influence, the reliability of the afflicted physical symptoms and how those accused of witchcraft were finally declared as such, approached through Mather's already mentioned works and having the Goodwin Children as protagonists.

3.1 Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions

"In Massachusetts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries children were used for 'crying out' witches, and their accusations were taken as gospel by priests, judges, and respectable members of the community" (Brain 161). There was the common idea that the devil could reach women's and children's souls easier because they were considered to be weaker not only physically but also mentally as Reis states:

Their souls, strictly speaking, were no more evil than those of men, but the representation of the vulnerable, unsatisfied, and yearning female soul, passively waiting for Christ but always ready to succumb to the devil, inadvertently implicated corporeal women themselves (15).

This idea is also present in Mather's *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcraft and Possessions* that collects the story of Ann Glover and the Goodwin Children. This case was the same that Mather's father, Increase Mather, used years before to write *Remarkable Providences: An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684). Although this story took place in Boston not in Massachusetts, it serves as a precedent for what was going to happen in Salem a few years later and the trial of Ann Glover became the base for many of the cases in the 1692 Salem Witch Trials.

According to Collins Dictionary, Spectral Evidence "refers to a witness testimony that the accused person's spirit or spectral shape appeared to him or her witness in a dream at the time the accused person's physical body was at another location" and that "it was accepted in the Salem Witch Trials" ("Spectral"). Spectral Evidence played a decisive role in the verdict of the person accused in many of these cases, as it reduced the objectivity of justice procedures due to this lack of reliability, since it could serve, practically, to accuse anybody: "The admission of 'spectre evidence' make the accused guilty without the power to prove their innocence" (Hoffer 132).

Ann Glover was one of the first to be accused with Spectral Evidence of having bewitched the Goodwin children. She was an Irish woman who had moved to New England with her daughter Mary and both worked as housekeepers for John Goodwin. Everything started when the daughter of John Goodwin accused Mary Glover of stealing laundry. This made Ann Glover have an argument with the Goodwin children. Afterwards, the daughter of

the Goodwin's fell ill and, days later, her brothers also followed suit (Mather *Memorable* 1-3; sec. I-IV).

It was reported by Cotton Mather himself that the children were continuously afflicted by spectres in the day "and tho about Nine or Ten at Night they alwaies had a Release from their miseries, and ate & slept all night" (Mather *Memorable* 4; sec. V). Although he seemed to believe in the supernatural cause of the children's sickness, he avoided using Glover's real name claiming that "lest we wrong the reputation of the innocent by stories not enough enquired into" (Mather *Memorable* 13; sec. XII).

Memorable deals with the idea already mentioned in chapter three about cases of undiagnosed illnesses or sudden deaths and its exorbitant consequences for some of those unlucky enough to have merely been in the wrong place. The witch-hunt period was pervaded by irrationality and when doctors could not find a reason or explanation for an illness, witchcraft occupied the first position in the diagnosis, as can be seen in the following extract from Mather's work:

Within a few weeks, they were all four tortured every where in a manner to very grievous, that it would have broke an heart of stone to have seen their Agonies. Skilful Physicians were consulted for their Help, and particularly our worthy and prudent Friend Dr. Thomas Oakes,' who found himself so affronted by the Distempers of the children, that he concluded nothing but an hellish Witchcraft could be the Original of these Maladies (*Memorable* 3; sec. IV)

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century it was believed that no witch could recite a prayer without stumbling on or skipping some of the words because Satan would never let any of his subjects recite the Lord's Prayer fully (Guiley 209). Ann Glover was requested to recite the Lord's Prayer, and the 'Hag', as Mather named her, could not recite it, thus becoming a further proof for the court to think she was a witch. As Mather reported, "it was found, that tho clause after clause was most carefully repeated unto her, yet when she said it after them that prompted her, she could not possibly avoid making *Nonsense* of it, with some ridiculous Depravations." (*Memorable* 6-7; sec. VII).

The truth was that, though she understood English, being a native Irish she could only speak fluently in Irish. This, in addition of being Catholic, certainly had an impact over her recitation of the Lord's Prayer. During her trial, as a rational human being, she was expected to deny the accusation of witchcraft and to defend and prove her innocence in order to save her life. However, "It was long before she could with any direct Answers plead unto her *Indictment* and; when she did plead, it was with Confession rather than *Denial* of her Guilt" (Mather *Memorable* 7; sec. VIII).

Some years later, during the Salem prosecution, there was instituted a way of salvation for the accused that consisted in the admission of the sin of witchcraft on the first place, then to repent from it and, finally, sign a confession of your repentance. However, in the case of Ann Glover there was no pardon as she was finally executed, being the last person to be hanged for witchcraft in the streets of South Boston.

The final lines of section XVI and the initial claims of section XII illustrate that the deterioration of the Goodwin children continued even after the death of the woman who supposedly caused it: "All their former Ails pursued them still, with an addition of [...] more, but such as gave more sensible Demonstrations of an *Enchantment* growing very far towards a Possession by Evil spirits." (Mather *Memorable* 12; sec. XI). In this fact, the flaws of the superstition that pervaded the Puritan way of thinking can be appreciated.

However, the sentence of Glover was not the only instance that evinces the excessive devotion of puritans. As the symptoms of the Goodwin children did not disappear despite the death of the supposed witch, but even became worse, Mather decided to hold a day of prayer at the Goodwin's house with all the children present. Surprisingly, after the prayer, Mather relates how the tremendous symptoms were declining until their disappearance:

The children were miserably tortured, while we laboured in our *Prayers*; but our good God was nigh unto us, in what we call'd upon Him for. From this day the power of the Enemy was broken; and the children, though Assaults after this were made upon them, yet were not so cruelly handled as before (Mather *Memorable* 31-32; sec XXV).

The debate about how these terrifying symptoms could be healed by mere prayers has offered several possibilities. The only medicine available in the colonies in those days were simple remedies crafted from local herbs. When these medicinal compounds did not yield the hoped results, families resorted to prayer to cure their relatives. This connected the physical symptoms of any sickness with the supernatural. For decades, authors have searched for explanations to the symptoms suffered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that were always attributed to witchcraft. Linda Caporeael proposed that these hallucinogenic effects came from a fungus called ergot that could be found in Massachusetts at that time (Caporeael qtd. in Carlson 122). Von Economo, proposed another explanation about the symptoms: they were the result of an unrecognized epidemic of encephalitis. This explanation has satisfied many of the unanswered questions by comparing the afflictions reported during the witch-hunt and the encephalitis lethargica pandemic of the early twentieth century, revealing that both were quite similar (Carlson 124). One of the features common to both cases was that "the afflictions appeared in late winter and early spring and receded with the heat of summer, similar to encephalitis" (Carlson 125). The last possibility that has been proposed was that the symptoms were faked. All scholars have agreed that fraud was a significant aspect in most of these cases.

In this way, superstition played a crucial role in Mather's *Memorable* from the beginning, when the malady of the children, originated in an argument within the household, is attributed to witchcraft, to the final part in which children are relieved from their ailment by mere prayers. This paradigm was repeated in most of the cases during the Salem Witch Trials: first, the bewitchment of an individual was attributed to witchcraft, yet was related to a mundane action or event after the symptoms had appeared. Then, with the testimony of Spectral Evidence, the individual was accused of witchcraft and, in many cases, executed.

3.2 The Wonders of the Invisible World

In 1693, during the Salem Witch Trials, Mather wrote *The Wonders of the Invisible World* in which he collected observations of several of these trials, including the trials of Bridget Bishop, Susanna Martin and Elizabeth How, among others. Mather's text provided information concerning the legal procedures of the prosecution, as well as illustrated how these trials affected the people living in Salem in 1692 and 1693.

As Burklè claimed, Mather wrote this work because "he was given the official records of the trials" and "the judges hoped it would favourably describe their role and judgments" (2). There are two arguments that may support this statement. The first is that the kind of trials he focused on in *Wonders*, were highly based in the bad reputation of the accused, which was an effective tool used to support the testimonies of Spectral Evidence given by the accusers. By doing that, Mather assured that the evidences provided would account for a fair condemn by the judges. Secondly, the trials described in *Wonders* only narrated the testimonies of those presumably afflicted by the accused and suffered from the lack of any other information that might have raised questions to the judges. As Wise claimed, "Mather's version of the trials deviates significantly from the court records" (Wise 353)³ and that "it is the information left out of Mather's version that is the most disturbing and potentially damaging to the judges' case" (Wise 202).

The first part in *Wonders* is called "Enchantment Encountered", and it provides an image of Mather's thoughts about this popular delusion. Mather was absolutely sure that witches and the Devil existed and that they were the cause of the horrible and inexplicable misfortunes that the citizens of Salem were living. His certainty about the existence of this supernatural evil forces is presented in the very first pages of this work, The New-Englanders are a People of God settled in those, which were once the Devil's Territories; and it may easily be supposed that the Devil was exceedingly disturbed, when he perceived such a People here accomplishing "the Promise of old made unto our Blessed Jesus":

[...] And we have now with Horror seen the Discovery of such a WITCHCRAFT! An army of Devils is horribly broke in upon the place which is the Center, and after a sort, the First-born of our English Settlements: and the Houses of the Good People there are fill'd with the doleful Shrieks of their Children and Servants, Tormented by Invisible Hands, with Tortures altogether preternatural. (Mather *Wonders* 13-14; sec I).

According to Mather, the ideal Puritan image and behaviour was being corrupted by a supernatural force. John Winthrop's speech takes importance as it was the behaviour preached in his sermon that was being endangered by the Devil. As it has been discussed in Chapter 3, Winthrop emphasized the feeling of unity among the Puritan colonists and the idea that the acts of a single citizen would affect the whole community. The evidence of how much impact Winthrop's ideas had can be proved by connecting the idea of a united community with the events occurred in Salem.

³ Mather was given the official records of the trials of Salem with the purpose of selecting only certain kind of information. William Stoughton and John Hathorne, two of the fiercest prosecutors of witches during the witch-hunt, were present at the meeting when Mather was given the official records. The presence of these two figures may have affected the trials selected by Cotton and the manner in which was going to presents the events in *Wonders* (Wise 342).

The introduction of *Wonders* related that the trials of Salem started “at the commencement of June” and that the first victim who was hanged was called Bridget Bishop (*Wonders* 6). As prisons started to be crowded, Governor Phips created the Court of Oyer and Terminer, “to hear and determine” (Hoffer 71). There were no clear evidence laws that had to be taken into account by judges when they had to decide if a citizen was innocent or a witch, so that, in the trials, judges were guided by empirical observations and, most of the time, by the mere knowledge they had about the events (74-75).

Only five trials were described in *Wonders*. However, the analysis of only a few testimonies about one of these trials is enough to create a picture of the whole process thanks to Mather’s consistent descriptive method throughout the whole work.

The second of June, 1692 was the day that Bridget Bishop was taken to Court to decide if she was a witch or an innocent. When she glanced toward the imposing building of the Court, a crash was heard in the inside. Cotton Mather described the phenomenon:

she gave a look towards the House: And immediately a Dæmon invisibly entering the Meeting-house, tore down a part of it; so that tho’ there was no Person to be seen there, yet the People, at the noise, running in, found a Board, which was strongly fastened with several Nails, transported into another quarter of the House (Mather *Wonders* 138; sec XIV).

Bridget Bishop had a bad social reputation, she was in her third marriage (her two former husbands had died prematurely) and, as Callero points out, “she was known to be loud and quarrelsome in public. In the eyes of the community, Bridget was no doubt a weak and sinful woman” (37).

As Bishop was the first condemned and judged in Salem, the testimony of her accusers was essential to introduce an important concept that would open a door to the rest of the trials and accusations of the witch-hunt: the incubus nightmare (Wise 272). This concept can be connected with the idea of Spectral Evidence. As Davies explained, it was just when “the nightmare experience tied in with other misfortunes, or occurred repeatedly, that witchcraft came to be suspected or confirmed” (188).

Mather offered the testimony of ten of Bishop’s accusers. Samuel Gray testified that “about fourteen Years ago he wak’d on a Night, and saw the Room where he lay, full of Light; and that he then saw plainly a Woman between the Cradle, and the Bed- side, which look’d upon him” (Mather *Wonders* 132; sec VI). The first detail to take into account is how precisely Samuel remembered the event after having told that it happened about fourteen years ago. It is crucial to have into account the mentioned cradle because “The Child in the Cradle gave a great Screech, and the Woman disappeared” but “after divers Months, died in a sad Condition” (Mather *Wonders* 132; sec VI). Here, it can be seen how the pattern described through the whole paper was the reality of the Salem episode: they were all inexplicable misfortunes that were attributed to witchcraft. After this disposal, Mather continued narrating Samuel’s testimony in which he argued that although “he knew not Bishop, nor her Name”, and that it was when he saw her that he knew “it was the Apparition of this *Bishop*, which had thus troubled him” (Mather *Wonders* 132; sec VI).

As Wise explained in his work, this relation between the natural and the Invisible World can be explained through what is currently known as night terrors (274). The symptoms exposed by Mather about the afflicted corresponded perfectly with episodes of such kind and may have had nothing to do with the supernatural. However, as Puritans "believed that they were most likely to encounter the devil as the tempter who urged them to seek their own good rather than God's" (Bremer *Puritanism* 31), it is not rare they connected these episodes to the figure of the Devil rather than to interpret them as dreams or fears.

In Chapter IX, Mather narrated the testimony of Samuel Shattock, who argued "That in the Year, 1680, this Bridget Bishop, often came to his House upon such frivolous and foolish Errands, that they suspected she came indeed with a purpose of mischief" and that his child, present during these visits, "began to droop exceedingly" and that every time Bishop came to his house, "the worse grew the child" (Mather *Wonders* 133). In this testimony, it can be seen the pattern that has just been mentioned: the bad reputation of the accused served as a tool to support the allegation of spectral evidence and consequently, to support the accusation. In this section and testimony, Mather included the concept of the "invisible Hand" when describing how this child was afflicted, "As the Child would be standing at the Door, he would be thrown and bruised against the Stones, by an invisible Hand, and in like sort knock his Face against the sides of the House, and bruise it after a miserable manner" (Mather *Wonders* 133; sec IX).

Samuel Sattock's testimony also included Spectral Evidence in the form of nightmares as it has just been seen in Samuel Gray's account. The chosen testimonies presented the same characters in the same roles: a man afflicted by a spectre in the shape of a woman and a child suffering the consequences. Children and women were believed to be the more sensitive to answer the call of the Devil, an idea already explained in Chapter 4.1 by drawing from Reis' work.

Although only two out of ten testimonies against Bishop have been analysed, the rest also presented the same structure. Richard Coman testified that while he was awake in his Bed, "he was annoy'd with the Apparition of this *Bishop*" and how Bishop took him by the throat and pulled him "almost out of the Bed" (Mather *Wonders* 132-3; sec VII). The same happened in the testimony of John Louder. Mather narrated how after Louder had some controversy with Bishop, he was sleeping when suddenly he found Bishop "grievously oppressing him" and that he was unable to move "till near Day" (Mather *Wonders* 135; sec X).

The analysis of the text has made clear that Mather only narrated the testimonies of the afflicted by the alleged witches with no other information that could create any kind of controversy or debate concerning the jury's verdict; he merely collected the data that would help in the image of the Court.

In section XIII, Mather did not narrate any testimony but he added another physical proof that incriminated Bishop according to the beliefs of that time. He described that "a Jury of Women found a preternatural Teat upon her Body" but that "upon a second search, within 3 or 4 hours, there were no such thing to be seen" (Mather *Wonders* 137-8). There was the belief that witches had spots in their skins, as Gordon and Fleisher explain in their work,

"The Devil's mark was an alleged spot on a witch's body that showed she had been attached to the Devil" (4).

After the ten Salem citizens gave their testimonies, which incriminated Bridget, she was given the chance to speak, declaring herself to be innocent every time she was asked. In many of these cases, those who declared themselves as innocents were confronted with the proofs based on Spectral Evidence and condemned to death due to the impossibility to prove their innocence. For those who confessed their sin, they were eventually released, saving their lives in most cases. In Puritan communities, a wrong action from a single person affected the reputation of the whole town so confession was perceived as a form to purge the community and, therefore, to follow the righteous path. The people who confessed "were allowed to go free would live the rest of their lives in fear of being accused again to the point of paranoia. They also suffered prejudice from the community [...] Even daily actions and casual meetings became a threat to that person's innocence." (Maple 51 qtd. in Kremmel 14).

Women, economically disadvantaged people or those with a liberal mind-set who, as in Bishop's case, did not conformed to the Puritan values, became easy targets for accusations. Ezekiel Cheever made a compilation about Bridget's interrogatory in trial, letting the reader know some important extracts from the trial as this brief one below:

(Mr.Haten) What do you say now you see they charge you to your face?

(Bishop) I never did hurt them in my life. I did never see these persons before. I am as innocent as the child unborn.

Chapter XII of *Wonders* related how was Bishop unable to give a reasonable justification for the accusations against her, "she could give no Account unto the Court, that was reasonable or tolerable" (Mather *Wonders* 137). Moreover, in Chapter XIII, and bearing in mind the aforementioned piece of interrogatory collected by Cheever, Mather related that Bishop was "evidently convicted of *gross Lying* in the Court, several times, while she was making her Plea" (Mather *Wonders* 137) which finally sentenced her to be hanged.

In the introduction of *Wonders*, the author stated how influential this work was to the reality of the 17th century New England, "This work, no doubt, spread the alarm of witchcraft through the whole colony, and had some influence on the events which followed" (Mather *Wonders* 7). When *Wonders* was published, the trials were almost finished. Therefore, the effects *Wonders* had were, firstly, of making the community accept the trials: they "appear significantly more literate, logical reasonable, and credible than they appear in the official records" (Wise 342). The second effect was the one mentioned in the beginning of this chapter: Mather wrote *Wonders* in an attempt to defend the reputation and image of the judges and the whole Court by "omissions, distortions, lies, suppression of legitimate information, and the ignoring of certain obvious questions" (Wise 338).

4. Conclusion

Puritanism arose as a political and religious movement against the established Church of England and it stood out due to the undeniable risk it took: the search for independence. At

first, in literary terms, they were only moved by teachings from the *Bible*. Afterwards, the writings of the 17th century in New England became paramount to their culture and society as these captured their reality, as it has been seen through the examples of the two texts by Cotton Mather that have been analysed, which also served to historically preserve the events and even to function as a tool for their justification.

It has also been proved how the reality lived in Massachusetts was highly affected by the sermon preached by John Winthrop aboard the *Arbella*. The present study has evinced how Winthrop developed and reinforced the idea of unity in the community, essential for the prosperity and righteousness of the Puritan fold, arguing that the witch hunt episode of Salem might have been affected by Winthrop's sermon. Their feeling of unity, which implied that the actions of an individual affected the whole community, and their belief of being an example to the world were so significant that they would have done anything to preserve it.

In his speech, Winthrop showed his travellers how lucky they were because they had been the elected by their Lord. This feeling of success might have also contributed to the outburst of witch hunt in Salem. As the elected ones, their aim was to settle in an unknown land and to develop their vision of religion and society. The pressure they should have felt in order not to lose God's grace, as well as to show themselves as an example to the world, could have made them feel vulnerable to the influence of evil forces whose purpose was to corrupt their community. Bearing in mind that they had the figure of the Devil very present in their daily lives, Puritans from Massachusetts might have linked the misfortunes they suffered to the figure of Satan. As Winthrop preached, the acts of a single member would affect the whole community so, in an attempt to avoid greater repercussions, they thought that getting rid of any kind of suspiciousness would contribute to the preservation of their colony and the Grace of their souls.

In *Memorable Providences*, Mather focussed on the aesthetics, actions and the symptoms that, presumably, witches possessed as opposed to *Wonders*, which focussed on the trials. In the former, Mather showed the qualities someone had to have in order to be accused and condemned as a witch. Some of these qualities included being unable to recite the Lord's Prayer or even just to have an argument with a neighbour as it was the case of Ann Glover.

Taking into account that the trials discussed in Mather's *Memorable Providences* happened in Boston few years before the outburst of the witch-hunt in Salem, his work might have contributed to the episode. First, Mather gave real data about the events and testimonies surrounding the case of Ann Glover, which has been discussed in chapter 4.1. With every detail in the book, it is very probable that, it served as a precedent for what was going to happen in Salem contributing in how the events developed. The events in Salem and in Boston shared similarities that were based in the structure and principles defined in the testimonies given in both cases, which were collected by Mather in *Wonders* or the case of Ann Glover collected in *Memorable Providences*. In all of them, Spectral Evidence constituted one of the major arguments used for the prosecution of the accused and based on inexplicable misfortunes like the ailments of the Goodwin Children or the several deaths narrated in the testimonies against Bridget Bishop in *Wonders*. Citizens in Salem might had

taken the data narrated in *Memorable Providences* to use it as a tool that would have made them able to accuse someone depending on their interests.

With all these evidences, it cannot be denied that Puritanism has an extensive history full of mysteries and unanswered questions. However, what can be affirmed is that from its inception, its history and literature have been very close. The three works analysed in this paper have shown that Puritans had a clear aim: making God proud of having elected them. To achieve it, they were willing to eradicate anything, even people, that supposed an obstacle to the development of this image of representatives of God. After this analysis, it can be seen how the sermon preached aboard the *Arbella* affected the ideals of the community but also its literature, exemplified by Cotton Mather. Reversely, it has also been proved that Mather's works had an impact over the community that might have not had if he had been loyal to the original records of the Salem Witch Trials telling the whole truth about the events.

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Bioprofile of the author

Beatriz Gomez Requena holds a degree in English Studies from the Complutense University of Madrid. Concerning her academic research, her main area of interest is the history of the first settlements in New England and its literature. As a result, she devoted her final dissertation to the interface between Puritan literature and the society of the New England colonies.

Contact: < begome04@ucm.es >