3 Boston, 1650–1700

IN THE SECOND half of the seventeenth century, the colonies in Massachusetts still clustered around the arrival point in Plymouth but they grew increasingly diverse. Port towns, like New Bedford and Gloucester, looked eastward to the Atlantic and its fisheries; they attracted new settlers experienced in fishing, including migrants from Brittany and Normandy who brought linguistic diversity to the European-descended population. The generation of those who arrived in 1620 was succeeded by descendants and new arrivals, and the separatist communities of Puritans began to embrace more secular ways, particularly after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660—which, in both Britain and America, resulted in a lessening of enthusiasm for the ideas that had stimulated the original settlements around Massachusetts Bay. Puritan orthodoxy faded but remained powerful as new immigrants arrived with varied professions of Christianity.

Quakers found Massachusetts congenial, at least at first, but tolerance did not last long. The Puritans enacted a law to require deferential speaking: "And every person or persons whatsoever, that shall revile the office or person of Magistrates or Ministers, as is usual with the Quakers, such

Person or Persons shall be *Severely Whipt*, or pay the sum of *Five Pounds*" (Rawson 1660, 36). In 1660, the Puritans imprisoned some 3,000 Quakers because they refused to accept Puritan authority and submit to it. Those not willing to speak deferentially were banished with dire punishments promised should they return. Four Quakers were executed as part of this campaign, including Mary Dyer, who (like the others) rejected hierarchy, using the pronouns *thee*, *thou*, and *thy* instead of the gradations of status involved in using these pronouns in combination with *ye*, *you*, and *your* to distinguish degrees of respect. The Quakers were levelers; the Puritans were not.

In vocabulary, English was readily adapted to the New World. Some places were given (or retained) Native American names: *Nauset*, *Mashpee* (later anglicized to *Marshpee*), *Saugus.* Most settlers, however, applied the names of English towns and regions to the New World: *Boston*, *Essex*, *Plymouth*. The celebration of religious and civic virtues also found its place in the landscape. *Dedham* was at the outset called *Contentment*, and *Providence* endures as a name for the place where Quakers and others were exiled by the Puritans. Biblical names were common—for instance, *Mt. Pisgah* and *Sharon*. Personal names had a similarly uplifting flavor, particularly for women with names like *Patience* and *Prudence*. Always sensitive to language, the teenage Benjamin Franklin in the next century created *Silence Dogood* as a humorous character with a comic name. When New England Yankees became figures of fun in nineteenth-century humor, one could easily recognize the New England origins of Abijah Stone or Hosea Biglow from their names alone.

Puritans favored words of Germanic origin, associating terms borrowed from Latin-Romance sources with language not transparent to ordinary people. One such American usage was *selectman* (Massachusetts laws, 1646), an elected representative responsible for civic affairs in a town. Both on etymological grounds and in emphasizing the source of the authority of such persons, *selectman* was far better than *officer* or *councilor*. *Lecture-day* (for *Thursday*, 1677) made plain that people were expected to listen to sermons rather than conduct ordinary business. Though not a word original to America, a *fast-day* in the spring was ordained in New England and so called rather than employing words like *penitence* or *abstinence.* Similarly *outliver* (1675) was employed for a person who lived at a distance from settlements, perhaps in search of *settable* (1656) land—another New Englandism far more transparent than the established English word *arable*.

Innovations in the English of New England and the adaptation of the language to the new American reality are comparatively easy to discern given the massive documentary record that survives from the period. Nowhere in the English-speaking world at the end of the seventeenth century was literacy more common than in New England. Many men and women had quite limited skills, but the ideal of education was celebrated by all. In 1642, officials were required "to endeavour to teach, by themselves or others, their Children and Apprentices, so much learning, as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue, and knowledge of the Capital laws: upon penalty of *twenty shillings* for each neglect therein" (Rawson 1672, 26). Thus literacy was diffused through the social hierarchy rather than being the accomplishment solely of the wealthy and powerful. Some of the impulse toward literacy has been associated with the Protestant emphasis on a personal encounter with holy texts and works of exegesis.[1] Other views of the data emphasize related phenomena, such as the rise of individualism and a growing sense of the need to adapt to new economic and social circumstances. Both of these stimulated the demand for literacy. Whatever the cause, however, New Englanders from the very beginning of settlement were copious producers of documents (see Lockridge 1981).

Lawyers were scarcely represented among the immigrants to New England, but notions of legal obligations were strong. There needed to be an apparatus for justice, and writing enabled decisions and transactions to be seen and remembered. Here is an extract from the presentments made by the Grand Inquest held at Plymouth in March 1654:

> Imprimis, wee p[re]sent Willam Randall, and Elizabeth, his wife, of Scituate, for abusing the cunstable, Walter Hatch, in word and action, as by threats, and refusing to give securitie according to the warrant, and that when hee strained for the majestrates table, his wife tore the distress out of his hand, and hurt his hand soe as blood was sheed.
>
> It., wee p[re]sent the same Willam Randall for selling stronge waters to an Indian.
>
> It., wee p[re]sent James Gleghorne, and Abia Lambard, his now wife, of Barnstable, for carnall copulation before contraction. . . .
>
> It., we p[re]sent Joane, the wife of Obadiah Miller, of Taunton, for beating and reviling her husband, and egging her children to healp her,

1. Other regions of high literacy levels at the time included the north German states, Sweden, and Scotland, all places with strong Protestant institutions.

> biding them knock him in the head, and wishing his victials might c[h] oake him. (Shurtleff 1855, 75)

The first and last of these records report crimes that involve language: the first recounts when the Randalls abuse the constable who attempts to serve a legal paper (*distress*); the last includes such verbal actions as *reviling*, *egging*, *wishing*. Even the second and third are linguistic in nature: the verbal transaction involving selling intoxicants charged against William Randall, and the failure to execute a written contract that would make premarital sexual relations acceptable within the law.[2]

The deep preoccupation with language in Massachusetts was connected to a sense of hierarchy and the view that Massachusetts was a theocracy (within a geographically distant monarchy). While the usual prohibitions against blasphemy were common there and elsewhere in the Christian world, the Puritans gave special attention to the fifth of the Ten Commandments: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Silent obedience was an ideal for children, but the commandment was elaborated into a doctrine of "right speaking" that presumed that the clergy were surrogate parents and thus empowered to govern the speaking of those of lesser status. Thus, Anne Hutchinson was banished in 1637 for striving to address the male ministers on equal terms, when, in their view, a woman was subordinate to all men and thus required to keep silent. Laws against improper speaking were adopted, and people of all sorts were brought to court. Some were charged with offenses where capital punishment might have been imposed upon them. Accusations resulting in "presentments for speech against authority" were at their peak from 1641 to 1680 (Kamensky 1997, 200). These crimes were varied: children failing to speak respectfully to their parents; servants using inappropriate language; women speaking at all about matters of consequence in church and society. In the last years of the century, these actions were still considered criminal but restitution might be made in money instead of a public apology. (No one seems to have been hanged for offensive speech, though some were sentenced to be executed.)

Concern for right speaking yields documentary evidence of what constituted wrong speaking. In midcentury, John Porter shocked the community by abusing his parents, calling his mother "the rankest sow in the

2. More than half the infants born in the period were illegitimate or conceived before the parents were married. Very likely there was some other reason to vex the Gleghornes since their only reported fault was the failure to execute and record a written contract declaring their intention to marry.

towne" and declaring his father "a thiefe." In 1664, he was tried and found guilty. His immediate punishment was to be whipped and imprisoned. Eventually, his case was forwarded to courts in England, but no satisfactory conclusion was reached, and John died in 1684 (Kamensky 1997, 103–11). Court records are filled with the minute particulars of speech that was entered into them during the course of public apologies and recantations.

These legal actions arose from the conviction that language was powerful and even magical, that harm could come to a person cursed or lowered to the state of an animal. The court records of Essex County from 1651 to 1680 show that 332 cases were brought as criminal presentments and 163 as civil proceedings. Criminal cases involved blasphemy and attacks on established authority; civil ones, threats and forms of assault on a person's character or livelihood. Animal names were particularly offensive, particularly ones involving dogs and pigs. The word *dog* was often accompanied by modifiers: *base*, *base Welch*, *black*, *foresworn*, *French.* These were used in verbal assaults on men. For women *sow* was a common term of abuse with modifiers: *base*, *bobtail*, *filthy*, *lying. Rogue* was a particularly productive term, by itself or with such words as *adulterous*, *base*, *cowardly*, *thievish.* For women, *witch* might be accompanied by *black-mouthed*, *old*, *spiteful*, *ugly*. Cursers might attack children, and terms that merited legal action for them included *dog*, *puncke*, *qu[e]ne*. (*Punk* and *queen* meant 'prostitute'; the words did not begin to refer to homosexuals until the twentieth century.) Ministers might bring someone to court for calling them *deceivers of the people*; magistrates found it offensive to be called *poopes* 'dolts.' In all, cases were brought over ninety-six different principal words which might be accompanied by eighty-nine modifiers. Nationality names became terms of abuse: *Indian curr*, *Jersey cheat* (from Jersey in the Channel Islands), *Scotch curr*, *French dog. Ishmaelite* was the seventeenth-century term for Muslims, and it too is among the catalogue of illegal words (St. George 1984). Those found guilty of such crimes of speech were, at the least, obliged to make public recantation and perhaps fined or imprisoned.

Because New Englanders were both literate and litigious, court records about such disputes reveal something about the way people talked. In 1661, Beatrice Canterbury of Salem was brought before the magistrates for slandering her son-in-law. One of her neighbors gave the following deposition:

> [S]he heard her say to her daughter that her husband was both a rogue and a thief, her daughter sayd she must prove it[.] she sayd he was a

> thiefe for that he had stolen the best flower in her garden, & a rogue because he had brought her body to shame saying she did think the divel would picke his bones[.] this deponent sayd unto her she did not wel to speak so to her daughter agynst her husband. but you should do him the best good you can & give him good counsel for now he is your son: she sayd Cantebery's wife [i.e., Beatrice] answered that the divel shoul pick his bones before she would own him to be her son. (Quoted in St. George 1984, 277–78)

One should not presume that this is a precise transcript of what Canterbury said, though a high regard for minute detail in these crimes of speech meant that the neighbor was likely to have been scrupulous in what she reported. *Divel* 'devil' reflects a frequent variant pronunciation of the day, and the "devil would pick his bones" must have been a common curse in an age so profoundly convinced of witchcraft.

For the future of American English, contacts with Native Americans provided the most enduring effects. When Roger Williams published his great book in 1643, he called it *A Key to the Language of America*. He had endeavored to make himself fluent, and his work provides wonderful insights into relations between the two civilizations. That he called it "the Language of America" was significant, though in its subtitle he makes clear that he writes only of the language of New England. Of course, the diversity of languages was obvious to him, but he presented it to his readers as merely involving dialects (just as English dialects in Britain presented a challenge to travelers). By learning the *key* he provided, "a man may, by this *helpe,* converse with *thousands* of *Natives* all over the *Countrey*" (Williams 1997, A3v).

In order to understand the relationship between the English and Native Americans it is essential to realize that the English felt a strong kinship with them. Many regarded the newly encountered people as equal (and similar to) the European culture they brought with them. In 1650, Thomas Thorowgood wrote a book arguing that the natives were a lost tribe of Israel. When a second edition of *Jews in America* appeared in 1660, Thorowgood had a prefatory testimonial from John Eliot. Such speculation only advanced the ideas expounded by Thomas Morton a generation earlier pointing to resemblances between Native American languages and those of classical antiquity:

> . . . & by continuance & conversation amongst them, I attaned to so much of their language, as by all probable conjecture may make

> the same manifest, for it hath been found by divers, and those of good judgement, that the Natives of this Country, doe use very many wordes both of Greeke and Latine, to the same signification that the Latins and Greekes have done . . . (Morton 2000, 14)

American settlers in the second half of the seventeenth century discovered that Native Americans spoke many languages. Among the most common lexical borrowings of the period were names for the languages and cultures of these people: *Montagnais* (1654), *Montauk* (1657), *Iroquois* (1666), *Cherokee* (1674), *Chickasaw* (1674), *Onondaga* (1674), *Natick* (1678), *Minisink* (1684), *Mascouten* (1698), *Osage* (1698), *Pawnee* (1698), *Conestoga* (1699), and *Yamansee* (1699). Of course, many of these languages were spoken far beyond the threshold of settlements in Massachusetts.

Bilingualism among the English colonists was probably not common, though some of them tired of the rigid society of Massachusetts, vanished into the wilderness, and took up Native American ways. A few were captives, and some of them chose to remain and embraced Indian languages. Others were adventurers.

Some knowledge of languages though seems to have been common if not widespread. Demaris Wescott Arnold (1621–1678) was the wife of the governor of Rhode Island who was the successor to Roger Williams. She was able to detect emissaries falsely claiming to be from Connecticut; they "could not put off the Narrowgansett tone" and so were recognized by her as imposters (Winthrop 1645, 6).

Balance in the ecology of language began to shift in favor of English. While the first half century of English settlement had been characterized by translators and by the use of one of the simplified pidgins, the second saw the increasing use of a pidgin (or perhaps creolized) English, particularly among the Native Americans. Early evidence of this pidgin occurs in a court record from a case in 1651. Connecticut had passed a law forbidding trade with the Dutch coasters sailing from New Amsterdam (modern-day New York) eastward along the New England shore. An English-speaking colonist, John Dyer, was ferrying people across the mouth of the Connecticut River and was engaged by three Native Americans to take them. The story continues:

> [S]o hee [Dyer] brought them ouer, and when hee had turned the point into the North Coue, and came neare the vessels that rode

> there, the said Indians asked this deponent w^{ch} was the Dutch vessel, and hee tould y^{m} w^{ch}; then they asked this dependent whether the Dutchman had any coates: hee answered them, *tutta*; thene one of the Indians stood vp in the cannooe and called to the vessel and sayd, Way bee gon coates? Some answered, there was coates: then this deponent, tould the Indians, *Nux*; then they desired and hee sett them aboard, and this deponent tarried in the canoe: then Mr. Augustine, M^{r}ch^{t} [Merchant], called to the skipper to shew the Indians some cloths, so the skipper and the Indians went downe into the hold, as hee supposed, amonge the cloth.... (Trumbull 1850, 1:219)

Here the evidence shows the use of pidgin with elements from both English and the languages of southern New England. *Tutta* 'I don't know; I can't say' and *Nux* 'yes' are from Massachusett. "Weaybee gon coates?" is pidgin: "Away be gone coats?" = "Do you have any coats?"

A subsequent example, from 1669, comes from the testimony of Edward James, who accused a Native American named Nimrod of attempted rape. Given the very high value placed on exactness of language in the courts at the time, this allegation seems to have passed from James's wife to her husband, who then presented it to the court. This chain of evidence suggests that both of the colonists were conversant with the pidgin English of southern New England:

> Edmund James' complaint: that on Dec. 10, 1669, an Indian named Nimrod, with three other Indians, came to said James' house and without leave calling or knocking, his wife being at home alone, sat down by the fire to warm themselves. Nimrod became bold asking her the said Edmunds wife if she haue husband. she say yea. he said where he walke. she said little way fetch pigsack. Nimrod say you much ly, me great wake woods today. me no see pigsack. he no little wake [*sic*] he great way walke. come you give me meechin. Mee haue pudding. Mee haue meat wunnegin. she speake by by my husband come much hungry. he said your sannap be hangd me haue meechin. and so searching about the house for victaules but finding none drest he sate down again by the fire and began to speake partly in Indian and in broken English some baudy discourse about women which she began to understand and was sore afraid she standing knitting in the chimney corner with her back towards him, the other indians all the time laughing.... (Dow 1911–78, 4:230n)

Mary Mitchell, Edmund's wife, had been married just six months before, and she was very much frightened by this intrusion into her house. Fortunately for her, the other Native Americans "speaking in Indian" pulled Nimrod out the door, and they "tooke up theirs guns and hatchets and went away." In spite of her fears, Mary was able to speak pidgin, as shown by her answer to where her husband had gone: "little way fetch pigsack." Four usages in the extract come from Native American languages, including: *meechin* 'food' < *meechum* 'food'; *sannap* < *sanomp* 'adult male'; *wunnegin* 'good.' The most interesting of these is *pigsack* 'pigs': *pig* is a borrowing into pidgin from English with the Algonquian animate plural *-ak*. *Pigsack* is thus doubly plural, first with the English suffix *-s* and then with the Angonquian plural *-ak* (Goddard 1977, 40; Goddard [personal communication]). Other traits of pidgin appear in this report: generalized pronouns (e.g., *me* for *me* and *I*), simplified negative with *no*, omission of determiners (e.g., *a, some*), and reduplication (e.g., *by by* 'soon').

The effort that tipped the balance in favor of English was the attempt to convince Native Americans of the texts and principles of Christianity. After eight years of collaboration with a speaker of the Massachusett language, John Eliot published a complete translation of the Bible. It was generously supplied with loan words from English for culturally unfamiliar items like sheep and angels. Eliot hoped that Native Americans would become missionaries to their own people, using the catechisms and other religious texts he published. In support of this effort, he sought (and received) donations from English benefactors, and some of the works he published were directed at them. A few show the traces of the "broken English" he found typical of their speech, as he described in the following:

> Deacon Park propounded this Question. What is it in sin, why hee hateth it now more than before?
>
> Ans. his answer in broken English. I did love sin, but now not all one so, because I hear Gods Word, and that shewes mee, that which I loved is evil, and will bring mee to hell, therefore I love it not now. (Eliot 1660, 9)

Not much is "broken" about this English, and only "now not all one so" shows traces of pidgin. Eliot probably exaggerated the fluency of this speaker, Nishóhkou, in order not to distract attention from his repudiation of former sins.

The British audience for good news from New England was further encouraged by reports of Hiacoomes, a member of the Narragansetts, who appeared in 1643 at the mission under the direction of the Thomas Mayhews, father and son, on the island of Martha's Vineyard. Thomas Mayhew, Jr., taught Hiacoomes to read and write English, and he began to serve as an interpreter in Mayhew's work with Native Americans. Eventually, Hiacoomes became a missionary himself. The Mayhews were unusual in respecting the land and property rights of the Native Americans, and eventually Hiacoomes was ordained (by John Eliot) and in 1670 opened a church for the converts. As time went on, Hiacoomes played an increasingly important role in the affairs of the Christian Indians. The younger Mayhew was also unusual in seeking to empower them; he did not seek wealth and encouraged Native Americans to take charge of their own affairs. For example, Hiacoomes's son followed his father into the ministry. Escaping the tumult that soon would change the relations of English and Indians, Hiacoomes continued his work until his death in 1690. (See Standley 2000, s.v. Hiacoomes; Schultz 2000, s.v. Thomas Mayhew, Jr.)

On the mainland of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, the linguistic scene showed an imbalance, particularly in comparison to Martha's Vineyard. John Eliot was eager to bring Native Americans into the fold of Christianity. In 1651, he recorded for the first time the name "John Sosoman" as one of his assistants, and five years later he noted a payment of £30—a substantial sum—to three interpreters and schoolmasters: Sosaman, Monequason, and Job (Lepore 1994, 491). While hoping that educated English clergy would learn the local languages and carry out the work, he found few willing to do so. So the engagement of bilingual Native Americans was his only recourse, and he recognized that it was far more beneficial to his purposes to have them as missionaries. Eliot's colleague, Daniel Gookin, elaborated this point in a petition to English philanthropists in 1674. One method of encouraging bilingualism, he thought, was to put schools near Native American communities. Since "a schoolmaster will not be willing to leave English Society, and to live constantly among the Indians," these schools would draw children from their families for daily lessons and, at the same time, be given food and clothing (Gookin 1792, 79).

Gookin's other idea was that children might be brought into English families as servants and apprentices. Those acting as their employers would be required to teach them to read and write. Parents might be unwilling to cooperate with such a plan: "they are generally so indulgent to their chil-

dren, that they are not easily persuaded to put them forth to the English" (1792, 79). However reasonable that reluctance seems in the twenty-first century, it would have seemed strange to a seventeenth-century audience. In England at the time, half the population was or had been "in service," and so common was this social practice that resistance to it must have seemed almost inexplicable.

Eliot was determined that Native Americans become Christians, and to do so fully they needed literacy in order to engage personally with the Bible. They might best do so, he thought, in "praying towns" where converts and their children would be removed from the influences of Native culture. At the same time, he argued, they might benefit from English ways in housing and clothing as well as acquiring skill in agriculture and the trades. In 1664, a census of the fourteen praying towns showed that (of 462 converts) 31 percent could read the Massachusett language, 16 percent could write in it, and 2 percent could read English (Lepore 1994, 492). These numbers show the remarkable success of Eliot's leadership in fostering literacy in the Massachusett language. Surviving documents written in Massachusett over the next century are numerous and varied; some are official and some personal. Unsurprisingly, literacy mirrored English practices—petitions to government officials, for instance—but they also show "many aspects of the precontact culture of the Indians" (Goddard 1994, 397; Goddard and Bragdon 1988).

John Sassamon, as his name is rendered by modern historians, is an emblematic figure illuminating the linguistic situation. Sassamon was a bilingual educated in English culture. He was likely to have been the child of a community devastated by imported diseases in 1633 and raised among the English. Yet he maintained his ties with Native Americans and was fluent, and eventually literate, in Massachusett. Assisting Eliot in the creation of the praying town in Natick, he remained a figure there at least through 1656. In 1662, he reappeared as a translator and counselor to Metacom—known to the English as King Philip. Metacom was the grandson of Massasoit, who had greeted and befriended the English colonists arriving in Massachusetts in 1620. Metacom resisted Eliot's repeated attempts to convert him, and he attracted Sassamon to his service as translator and go-between. Sassamon was thus a figure who did not belong. Both the Native Americans and the colonists distrusted him, and in 1674 he warned the English that Metacom was preparing for war. The colonists did not believe him; he was killed in March 1675 by three Native Americans who were subsequently betrayed, tried by both English and Native American courts, and then executed.

In June 1675, Native Americans allied with Metacom assailed Plymouth. Soon they found supporters in western Massachusetts and launched further attacks. By July 1676, twenty-five towns established by the colonists had been destroyed; a tenth of the European-descended population had been killed. Native American communities were even more devastated. After Metacom was assassinated in August 1676, the survivors were rounded up, their property rights were abrogated, and many were sold into slavery. Enraged colonists made no distinction between allies and enemies, so-called pagans and Christians.

Many colonists recorded the events of the war, but John Eliot did not. His dream of a bilingual New England with Christians everywhere was shattered. This shockingly violent conflict made for profound changes in the language ecology. Native Americans were evicted from their lands in many places. News of the war reached Britain and discouraged immigration. The economy went into decline, and not until the eighteenth century did the community begin to recover.

Before Metacom's rebellion, words from the languages of southern New England were borrowed into English. Some of these are traced by the *OED* to "Algonquin," a collective name for languages covering much of the Atlantic seaboard of North America. Among these are *wigwam* 'hut' (1628), *kantikoy* 'a dance' (1670), and *kinkajou* 'wolverine' (1672). More specific attributions to New England languages include *peag* 'wampum' (1649) from Massachusett, and from Narragansett *nocake* 'cornmeal' (1634), *papoose* 'child' (1634), and *squaw* 'woman' (1622). (In Massachusett *squa* 'young woman' was a word of neutral or positive connotations [Goddard 1997]; negative connotations developed much later.) In 1676, *sunck squaw* 'queen' was borrowed into English from Natick. These words are typical of the introduction of Native American words into the English of the colonists. After the rebellion (often called King Philip's War), the historical record shows few borrowings from these languages, not a surprising development in the wake of the widespread death and displacement on both sides that occurred during and after it.

In the Chesapeake, most surviving documents show the conventional forms of English that would have been used in England in the first half of the century. Part of the reason for this bias in the archives is that those able to write (or having a need to write) were educated, and the documents that survive are mostly official records of several kinds. Another part of the reason is that many of the papers that were written did not survive into

the nineteenth century, when interest in colonial history began in earnest. High literacy rates in New England meant that more people were writing; there were more occasions requiring documentation; there was a great attention to preserving the past.

In this record of more standard written language, unconventional spellings allow insight into the way in which English was pronounced (Orbeck 1927). Most writers of the time would regard these as misspellings, but habits of speaking can be discerned in them. For instance, the use of [n] rather than [ŋ] was likely to have been even more common then than it is today: it results in spellings such as *stocken* 'stocking,' *accordenely*, *yearlin*, *gowen* 'going,' *riggin*, and *strenth*. This pronunciation is also apparent when writers improved their spelling by adding *g* where it was not conventionally used: *childring* 'children,' *oving* 'oven,' *suddingly* 'suddenly.' Vowel sounds in *sass* 'impudence' and *sassy* 'impudent' would eventually split off separate words from their originals, *sauce* and *saucy*. The distinction between *whoop* and *hoop* was increasingly lost, as shown in the 1775 title *The Yankies War Hoop* ("An American" 1775).

Final consonants were often omitted (as they are today): *nex* 'next,' *bes* 'best,' *threshall* 'threshold.' The collapse of initial [hw] and [w] is suggested by *whet* 'wet' and *where* 'were' (examples from Kytö 2004, 135).

The spelling *dafter* suggests *daughter* was pronounced to rhyme with *laughter*, though the most common spelling for the word was the modern one. Other competing spellings suggest variability in pronunciation. Examples from a body of late seventeenth-century New England documents produced such differences as these: *git(ting)* (10 instances) versus *get(ting)* (38); *divell* (125) versus *devil* (278); *parson*, *parsun* (14) versus *person* (378).

Far longer than in Britain, New Englanders retained the traditional pronunciation of words with the vowel of *fat*. According to William Dwight Whitney, describing in 1874 the English of the northeast in the mid-nineteenth century, this [æ] vowel had been preserved "until recently" in *calf* and *calm*, *ant* and *aunt*. The "new" pronunciations with [ɑ] in the second of these pairs was rarely heard, and when Whitney wrote, it had not yet begun to be appear in *chance*, *path*, *can't*, and similar words (Whitney 1874, 206).

The most interesting of these seventeenth-century pronunciations involves the pronunciation of *r* in the middle and at the ends of words. While the omission (or vocalization) of *r* is a prestige feature in modern British English, it was very much a rustic feature in seventeenth-century

England. In the evolution of *r*-less pronunciations, Boston led the English-speaking world in the development of norms that would later become important among opinion leaders in southeast England.

The process by which *r* becomes a vowel (or is omitted entirely) in the middle and ends of words started before settlement in America. The disappearance of *r* began in words where it appeared before *s*: *horse*, *parcell*, *worsted*. Words like these were sometimes spelled *hoss*, *passel*, *wosted*. In later American English, these pronunciations gave rise to separate meanings: *hoss* (as a term used for men with slightly mocking affection, *old hoss*) and *passel* (a collection of something, *a passel of trouble*). Weakened *r* spread in England during the seventeenth century, but observers seem to have regarded it as dialectal or simply a mistake. Only in the mid-eighteenth century did it begin to appear in respectable English (Lass 1999, 114–16).

Twentieth-century dialect surveys showed that the absence of *r* in the word *here* was typical of eastern New England and the coastal South. Studies in southeastern England at the same time demonstrated that the lack of *r* in *hear* was typical of Kent, Essex, and East Anglia, the three areas from which the most prominent Bostonians came in the seventeenth century (Kurath and McDavid 1961, Map 35; see also Kurath and Lowman 1970, 27). As a later chapter in this book discusses, the pronunciation of *here* was symbolically important in Chicago in its assertion of linguistic independence from New England and southeastern England.

As late as the 1820s, British purists decried the absence of *r* among "the natives of London" in such words as *pearl*, *girl*, and *card* (*Vulgarities* 1829, 256) even though these pronunciations were rapidly emerging as features of the prestige dialect. In the second half of the seventeenth century, however, the *r*-less pronunciation was emerging as a distinctive feature of American English. New England town records are full of spellings where historical *r* is omitted: *Mos* 'Morse' (1669), *fouth* 'fourth' (1693), *bud* 'bird' (1675). Even more persuasive evidence that *r* was commonly dropped in pronunciation is its appearance following long vowels in spelling: *horsers* 'hawsers' (1655), *geoge* 'George' (1665), *Chals* 'Charles' (1668), *pasneg* 'parsonage' (1666), *Borston* 'Boston' (1694) (Krapp 1960, 2:228–30). These spellings were not common, though, since the great attention to literacy in seventeenth-century New England preserved the historic *r* spellings even if the letter was silent. The words in which *r* is inserted are much more persuasive evidence that the deletion (or vocalization) of *r* was widespread in the region.

The richest seventeenth-century source for information about English in Massachusetts is found in the vast trove of documents preserved from the Salem witch trials of 1692. Salem, a town just north of Boston, caught itself up in a deadly attempt to eliminate witchcraft that seemed to plague the community, and by the time the panic subsided, after just four months, twenty men and women had been executed and many more imprisoned. Nearly obsessive documentation of these proceedings survives, and several scribes transcribing the same testimony produced quite different results, whether in small details or in quite different strategies of summarizing. Some have questioned the worth of these inconsistent reports, but it is certainly the case that they are far more detailed in characterizing speech than any other collection of documents anywhere else in the contemporary English-speaking world. Even if they are sometimes "radically dissimilar" (Grund 2007, 143), they show the same meticulous attention to detail that characterized the earlier records of slander and defamation trials. If people were to die as a consequence of what they did, it was important to record what exactly it was that they said. Of course, different scribes spelled words in different ways, and they thought different expressions had greater or less importance (see Rosenthal et al. 2008; Grund, Kytö, and Rissanen 2004).

For the broad picture of American English attempted here, a specimen of one of the depositions can give sufficient flavor of the kind of speech written down in the proceedings. Here is an extract from the interrogation of one of the accused witches, a woman named Tituba:

TITUBA: the Ind'n Woem'ns Examn March. 1. 1691/2 [March 1,1692]
Why doe you hurt these poor Children? whatt harme have thay done ont you?
TITUBA: thay doe noe harme to me I noe hurt them att all.
Why have you done itt?
T: I have done nothing; I Can't tell when the Devill works
what doe the Devill tell you that he hurts them?
T: noe he tells me nothing
doe you never see Something appeare in Some shape?
T: noe never See any thing (Boyer and Nissenbaum 1977)

In this passage, the interrogator speaks quite typical seventeenth-century English with one exception: "what do the Devill tell you" rather than "what does the Devill tell you." This use of *do* instead of *does* is not typical

of these documents but it was one of the characteristics of the English of East Anglia, the homeland of many of the emigrants to Boston (Kytö 2004, 138).

Tituba's English is far more interesting than that of her questioner. She was a South American, enslaved in Barbados and taught English there by an Englishwoman, Elizabeth Pearsehouse. She arrived in Boston in 1680 as a member of the household of Samuel Parris, a Puritan minister. The ideas she gained of the invisible world of demons came both from the Caribbean and from Anglo-American culture. Her reluctant confession, later recanted, told the court that she had made an agreement with the devil and thus had become a practicing witch (Breslaw 1996).

In this short extract from a longer examination, the distinctive feature for Tituba's English is "I noe hurt them att all." The more usual negative construction, found in other Salem documents, is "I know not the least thinge of witchcraft" or "he do not know any such pitt." "I no hurt them" is just the sort of grammar to be expected of someone from the Caribbean where a creolized form of English was in widespread use. Another scribe who recorded this examination turned Tituba's English in the direction of New England norms: "I do not hurt them" (quoted in Breslaw 1996, 190)—thus transforming the unfamiliar into the usual.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, New England became a backwater among the English colonial outposts in North America. The conquest of Jamaica in 1655 made possible the expansion of very profitable sugar cultivation, which earlier had begun in Barbados. The conquest of New Netherland in 1664 led to a new name for this Dutch colony: New York. It too had great economic potential from trade and from the rich agricultural lands of the Hudson River valley. In 1681, the English monarch granted to William Penn the huge tract of land that would become Pennsylvania; a hallmark of the new colony was religious tolerance extended not only to the Quakers (of which faith Penn was the prominent figure in America) but also to other religious professions. Both for economic and ideological reasons, these new colonies were far more attractive to potential emigrants than was Massachusetts Bay with its short growing season, less fertile lands, and ideological intolerance.

During the seventeenth century, about half a million people left England for the New World and nearly three-quarters of them settled in the Chesapeake and the Caribbean (Horn 1994, 24); these destinations took an increasing share of migrants in the second half of the century. Con-

stantly refreshed by new arrivals, these outposts remained satellites of English culture and very much attuned to linguistic developments taking place there.

Boston struggled. Its population at the end of the seventeenth century was fewer than 5,000. Nonetheless, Benjamin Harris launched the first American newspaper in 1690 amid great hopes that rumors would be scotched and truth reported. He announced:

> It is designed, that the Countrey shall be furnished once a moneth (or if any Glut of Occurrences happen, oftener,) with an Account of such considerable things as have arrived unto our Notice. (*Publick Occurrences, both Foreign and Domestic,* September 25, 1690, 1)

Certainly, there were occurrences of great public interest that flooded upon the community. But Harris's newspaper lasted only one issue, and published reports of considerable things would have to wait until the eighteenth century, when journalism began in earnest (Clark 1991).

Early in the new century, a distinctively American outlook on English began to take hold in New England. In 1704, Sarah Kemble Knight set out from Boston on an overland trip to New York. It took just over a month of steady travel for her to reach New Haven in Connecticut, and she and her guides faced day after day of difficulty as they forded streams, ferried over rivers, and followed roads that were little more than tracks in the forest. Along the way, she encountered people whose interest in language was of interest to her. For example, approaching Kingston, Rhode Island, her sleep was disturbed by two drunkards beyond the thin wall of her sleeping chamber. They were engaged in a heated argument about the meaning of the word *Narragansett*. One declared it was the name of a "prodigious" briar that grew around about; the other that it came from the name of a cold spring. (Neither is correct; Bright 2004.)

From the viewpoint of her refined Boston manners, the people Knight met were mostly clods and bumpkins, and she re-created their rudeness and their improper English. Coming to a house after being lost in a swamp, Knight and her guide entered the principal room.

> My Guide dismounted and very Complaisantly help't me down and shewed the door, signing to me wth his hand to Go in; w^{ch} I Gladly did—But had not gone many steps into the Room, ever I was Interogated by a young Lady I understood afterwards was the Eldest daughter

> of the family, with these, or words to this purpose, (*viz.*) Law for mee—what in the world brings You here at this time a night? I never see a woman on the Rode so Dreadfull late, in all the days of my versall life. Who are You? Where are You going? I'me scar'd out of my witts—with much now of the same kind. (Knight 1992, 5–6)

The daughter's rude questioning and rustic vernacular showed what was certainly true at the end of the seventeenth century: that English had split into urbane and rustic varieties.

Knight reported another, more complicated story to illustrate the administration of justice in Connecticut.

> A negro Slave belonging to a man in y^{e} Town, stole a hogs head from his master, and gave or sold it to an Indian, native of the place. The Indian sold it in the neighbourhood, and so the theft was found out. Thereupon the Heathen was Seized, and carried to the Justices House to be Examined. But his worship (it seems) was gone into the feild, with a Brother in office, to gather in his Pompions [= *pumpkins*]. Whither the malefactor is hurried, and Complaint made, and satisfaction in the name of Justice demanded. Their Worships cann't proceed in form without a Bench: where upon the order one to be Imediately erected, which, for want of fitter materials, they make with pompions—which being finished, down setts their Worships, and the Malefactor call'd, and by the Senior Justice Interrogated after the following manner. You Indian why did You steal from this man? You sho'dn't do so—it's a Grandy wicked thing to steal. Hol't Hol't cryes Justice Jun^{r} Brother, You speak negro to him. I'le ask him. You sirrah, why did You steal this man's Hoggshead? Hoggshead? (replies the Indian,) me no stomany [< *understand*] No? says his Worship; and pulling off his hatt, Patted his head with his hand, says Tatapa—You, Tatapa—you all one this. Hoggshead all one this. Had! says Netop, now me stomany that. Whereupon the company fell into a great fitt of Laughter, even to Roreing. (Knight 1992, 35–36)

Apart from the makeshift courtroom in the pumpkin patch, the humor of the tale lies in the younger judge defining a *hogshead* 'cask, barrel' by etymology—that is, the man's head is used to explain *hogshead*, a word whose metaphor of *hog* + *head* must have been thoroughly dead at the time of the incident. (*Tatapa* means 'head'; see Goddard 1977, 40.)

From the viewpoint of American English at the end of the seventeenth century, the passage is far more interesting. First, it shows that one judge is prepared to interrogate the witness in "negro." Second, the more perspicacious judge realizes that the examination should be conducted in creole, which he plausibly does in the use of borrowed words like *tatapa* as well as creole grammar: "you all one this." Knight herself knows her way about these language varieties too, and she displays that knowledge by describing the accused as *netop*, a borrowed word for 'friend' that had some subsequent currency among Anglo-Americans talking of themselves as friends of one another.

Now began to be recorded still more voices that were distinctively American. One of these was an African American slave called Onesimus, so named for a biblical slave in a petition written by Paul who sought his freedom. The original Onesimus was called a friend and brother, and that seems to have been the relation of the Boston slave to Cotton Mather in whose household he lived. Though the specimen comes from the following half century, it must have been the kind of voice heard in the second half of the seventeenth century.

> The occasion was the landing of a ship from Barbados in Boston in April 1721. Almost immediately, a small pox epidemic began. Immigrants from Europe who had been exposed to the disease were likely to be immune, but young people and native-born Americans were at great risk. The principal preacher of the day, Cotton Mather, recorded what Onesimus told him.
>
> I have since mett with a Considerable Number of these *Africans*, who all agree in One Story; That in their Countrey *grandy-many* dy of the *Small-Pox*: But now they Learn this Way: People take Juice of *Small-Pox*; and cutty-skin, and putt in a Drop; then by-nd by a little *sicky, sicky:* then very few little things like *Small-Pox;* and no-body dy of it; and no body have *Small-Pox* any more. (Mather 1972, 107; Read 1939, 248)

As shown by this extract, Onesimus spoke the Atlantic creole language used on shipboard and in coastal ports. From Portuguese and Spanish, the expression *grandy-many* means 'very many' (< *grande*); duplication of words for emphasis appears in *Sicky-Sicky*. *Cutty-skin* (< *cut*) and *by-nd by* (< *by-and-by*) 'soon' are both of English origin.

In writing for publication, Mather gave another account of what Onesimus had said:

> . . . that People take the Juice of the *Small Pox,* and *Cut the skin*, and put in a drop; then by'nd by a little *Sick*, then few *Small Pox*; and no body dye of it: no body have *Small Pox* any more. (Mather 1721, 9)

In both versions, Mather reported that Onesimus spoke English "brokenly and blunderingly," and the imperfections in his English seemed to him evidence that Onesimus was not attempting to impose a fictitious, and perhaps deadly, remedy. "Reasonable men," Mather wrote, would be more likely to accept inoculation because it was described in a "broken" kind of English.

In the course of the animated debate over the use of inoculation to control smallpox, one anonymous critic hurled a bomb through Mather's window. In the course of its trajectory, the fuse fell out and the accompanying note showed a vernacular style of invective:

> Cotton Mather I was once of your meeting. . . . You know who made me leave you, you dog. And damn you I will enoculate you with this—with a pox on you. (Brown 1916, 284)

Like the other forms of invective litigated in the previous century, this one uses *dog* as a term of abuse. That the note was carefully preserved is one more example of the impulse toward documentation that had become so common in Boston in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Boston was very much a part of the scientific revolution that took place in the English-speaking world in the last half of the seventeenth century. A fellow of the Royal Society in London, Mather communicated the results of the inoculations he carried out with the help of the premier physician of his day, Zabdiel Boylston. Those who fell ill with the disease numbered just under 6,000 and 844 of them died. Of the 246 inoculated by Mather and Boylston, only six died. Modern epidemiologists have declared this report to be the first use of numbers to evaluate a clinical trial (Best, Neuhauser, and Slavin 2004, 83).

What was American about the English of Boston and its satellites was not that it departed in some important way from the English of southeast England. Some of its features, of course, would have seemed dialectal or archaic in Britain—for instance, *holden* instead of *held* ("Court to be

holden at Ipswich") and *agoing* instead of *going* ("I am now agoing"), both of which were in use in East Anglia at the time the Massachusetts colonists left for America (examples from Kytö 2004, 142–44 and Boyer and Nissenbaum 1977).

What was distinctive was the emergence of a speech community in which the literate and the famous interacted with both educated and uneducated, crossing racial and linguistic demarcations. American English at the end of the seventeenth century was a cluster of various ways of speaking, and in this respect it was unlike almost any other community in the world.