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The fall of the Wilderness King, part II John Sassamon

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THE FALL OF THE WILDERNESS KING, PART II

JOHN SASSAMON

By

Christopher H. White

B.A. University of Maine, 1995

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

(in English)

The Graduate School

Universtiy Of Maine

December, 2001

Advisory Committee:

Welch Everman, Associate Professor of English, Advisor

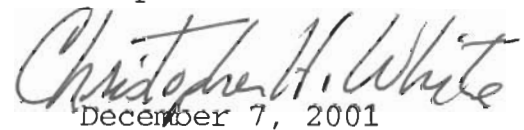
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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher H. White". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the date.

December 7, 2001

THE FALL OF THE WILDERNESS KING, PART II

JOHN SASSAMON

By

Christopher H. White

Thesis Advisor: Professor Welch Everman

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
(in English)
December, 2001

The Wilderness King, Part II, John Sassamon is a verse play set in seventeenth century New England during the period leading to the outbreak of King Philip's War (1675-81). In per capita terms that war remains the most devastating conflict in U.S. history with a ten percent casualty rate among the English adult male population alone. Moreover, the New England colonies lost the almost de facto autonomy they had enjoyed before the war; because of it they would not recover independence until a century later.

Another effect of the war was the collapse of the cooperative, pluralistic society between the newly arrived Europeans and native Americans which had enabled the original English inhabitants to survive in a harsh and unfamiliar land.

In such an atmosphere the drama I have written about the life of John Sassamon unfolds. As an Indian standing astride two cultures by virtue of his literacy and his fluency in languages, he had staked his career on the continuation of the bi-cultural world he had always known. That world began to unravel despite his efforts

to forestall it. Ultimately, he could not negotiate the demands of the new age.

In this respect Sassamon establishes an American character archetype; in him we see a man who struggles to keep two dividing cultural strains together. When this proves impossible in the period leading to hostilities, he is pulled away from his conscience and his ideals by the inexorable shift of political power then underway. In this environment he betrays the probable losers of the conflict, and aids its probable winners. Because he spies against the Pokanokets, they execute him for treason. In the aftermath his death sparks one of the most destructive wars in American history.

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CHARACTERS

John Sassamon, *originally Wasassamon, translator, missionary, and Emissary-at-Large*

Wamsutta, *also King Alexander, son and successor of Massasoit, chief sachem of the
Pokanokets*

Metacomet, *also King Philip, his brother and successor*

Sonconewha, *brother of Wamsutta and Metacomet; a shaman and principal counsellor*

Anawon, *chief counsellor*

Peter Tobias, *another counsellor*

Alderman, *a warrior*

Rowan, *warrior and brother of Alderman*

Potuck, *husband of Eartha Manthrower, uncle by marriage to Wasassamon*

Miantonomi, *chief sachem of the Narragansetts*

Canonchet, *his son, also a sachem*

Mascus, *another son of Miantonomi and brother of Canonchet*

John Eliot, *a Christian missionary and translator; mentor of John Sassamon*

Cockenoe, *his assistant*

Captain John Underhill, *an adventurer and speculator*

Sergeant Ralph Cockburn, *his partner*

Corporal Roger Saltonstall, *a soldier*

Private James Pritchett, *his friend*

Private Davy Saltonstall, *a soldier later raised in rank to corporal, eventually to*

Lieutenant

Peter Talmon, Sr., *an indentured servant*

Peter Talmon, Jr., *his son, a freeholder*

Simon Bradstreet, *a merchant*

Benjamin Thompson, *also a merchant, eventually friend of Bradstreet*

Goodman Joseph Talbott, *a tradesman*

Rev. John Cotton, *a puritan divine*

Rev. John Mather, *a puritan divine*

Rev. George Sewell, *a puritan divine*

Josiah Winslow, *Governor of Plymouth*

A bailiff

Eartha Manthrower, *aunt of John Sassamon*

Princess X, *a captive of war; later, wife of John Sassamon*

Betty Sassamon, *daughter of Princess X and John Sassamon*

Anne Hutchinson, *spokeswoman for a conciliatory group termed Antinomians or*

Equivocators by their detractors

*And overlapping choruses of warriors, soldiers, parade marchers, dancers, singers,
wrestlers, colonists, workers, stage crew, etc.*

INTRODUCTION

My interest in the events during King Philip's War (1675-81) began as a consequence of a detour, a literal one. Returning to New England after a trip to New York, my wife and I took a side trip to Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts. We had arrived too late that November afternoon to see any of the exhibits, but we ventured into the bookstore where I bought Russell Bourne's Red King's Rebellion. The book intrigued me because it recounted the collapse of the cooperative, pluralistic society between the newly arrived Europeans and native Americans which had enabled the original English inhabitants to survive in a harsh and unfamiliar land. Moreover, the war at the center of this collapse remains the most devastating one in U.S. history, at least in per capita terms: along with massive property damage some ten percent of the English adult male population fell casualty to the hostilities. To make matters still worse, the New England colonies lost the almost de facto independence they enjoyed before the war, a status they didn't recover until a century later.

What had gone so wrong? What political forces had contributed to a state of affairs in which the colonists feared for a time that the Indians would drive them into the sea? To learn more I investigated further into the history of the period with the idea of dramatizing it in some way. A further impetus in this direction came from learning more about the late work of Eugene O'Neill, particularly his ambition to write a series of ten plays exploring the founding of the American republic. (Of this project apparently only A Touch of the Poet survives.) But this earlier war, and the

period attached to it, seemed especially ripe for the kind of exploration that he set for himself in his grand project. More than the events of the Revolutionary War, this period shaped our cultural origins and defined our first principles. Here we find our foundation myths, the patterns and beliefs, often unconscious, which define our institutions (or their precursors) and which continue to influence them to this day. The German political philosopher Eric Voegelin or the ethnologist Mircea Eliade has explored this territory, among others writing in the tradition of the early seventeenth century Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico. Contained in this thinking is the idea that a culture's origins hold the clue to the nature of its eventual decline and death.

Thus, we see the crucial importance of first principles. And almost nowhere else do we see such a roiling complex of first principles as we do in the late seventeenth century. The development of contract law, the founding of joint stock companies, the extension of literacy, the establishment of the inductive scientific method, and the technology which came in its wake, all began in this period. These essentially European innovations developed almost collaterally in the New World; and for some the consequences proved devastating. Let us take one example. The ready alienation of land from dowries, inheritances, and other feudal residues, and its eventual commodification, had begun in England only a few generations before. Such a concept was incomprehensible to the native population who regarded land as part of the commons like air or water. Imagine their bewilderment

when the new arrivals put treaties and contracts before them asking them to relinquish all rights to a resource they considered part of the commonweal. And imagine their outrage when they discovered that they had forfeited forever what they thought could only be shared. Indeed, quite in line with the idea of first principles under discussion, this privatization of the commons has proceeded throughout our history. Though, as an innovation it has unarguable advantages over its feudal antecedent, it also has its dark side, even at present: as, for example, in the patenting of basmati seed developed in India or the monopolization of the local water supply in Bolivia by U.S. based trans-national corporations.

These founding principles stood at odds with the nature mythos of the extant culture. Yet this too recalled features of Europe's not-too-distant past. The wild man, the hermit, the outsider who lived beyond the confines of the town or city had an ancient heritage; despite Europe's deforestation in the Roman period he persisted, sometimes in a secular incarnation, sometimes in a religious one. He still occupied a corner of the popular imagination as late as Shakespeare's time to make him familiar enough to audiences as Jaques in As You Like It or the Friar in Romeo and Juliet. As the "Green Man" in William Anderson's study he also presided over the doors of many European cathedrals like Chartres, as such incorporated into christian ideology from his pagan roots. He embodies, of course, mankind's connection to the natural world; the great cathedral builders knew this, and they knew that civilization ignores or suppresses him at its peril. Yet the puritan sects which landed in America had embarked on an

experiment to do just that. They wished to purify christianity of its pagan underpinnings-- even to the point of outlawing the celebration of Christmas Day-- in favor of a deracinated dogma derived primarily from scripture. And in this regard, the Bible will provide them with ample ammunition to vilify the natural world. From it they confirm their notion that nature harbors the devil and his minions. The wilderness, even devoid of its satanic creatures, they deem God's wasteland awaiting the shaping touch of human hands.

In such an atmosphere the life of John Sassamon unfolds. Orphaned at an early age, historians conjecture that English missionaries raised him. He thus acquired fluency in English as well as his native tongue. More importantly, however, he also achieved a high degree of literacy, a faculty rare even among the colonists at the time. He thus stood astride two cultures with facility in his early years. But after staking his career on the continuation of the bi-cultural world he had always known, that world began to unravel. Because English territorial expansion swept aside any desire for cooperation with the native people, even the Pokanokets, the tribe which had helped them survive their inauspicious beginnings in the New World, appeared to stand inexpediently in the way of colonial advance. In this way the sons of Massasoit, the savior and ally of the original colonists, devolved into enemies of English territorial ambition. These sons, Wamsutta (King Alexander) and Metacomet (King Philip), had to be eliminated for western expansion to proceed.

Although this oversimplifies the complexity of the situation, its basic features were such that the central figure in the drama below could not possibly adapt to its demands. In this respect John Sassamon establishes an American character archetype; in him we see a man who struggles to keep two dividing cultural strains together. When this proves impossible in the period leading to hostilities he is pulled away from his conscience and his ideals by the gravitational-like wake of political power. In this environment he chooses to betray the probable losers and aid the probable winners. Because he spies against the Pokanokets, they execute him for treason. The English seize this as an opportunity to try the Pokanokets leadership for murder. When such a conflict would not admit arbitration, war was the inevitable result. Thus, Sassamon's death sparks one of the most catastrophic wars--relatively speaking-- in American history.

The Fall of the Wilderness King,
Part II:
John Sassamon

1. Scene 1.01

[Scene: A chorus of birdsong fills the air. From blackout, lights arise on a clearing abutting the English settlement at Dorchester. POTUCK emerges from his lodge, stiff from the early morning chill, and walks toward a nearby tree. But before he can relieve himself, the gate in the high, rough-hewn fence swings open. Enter GOODMAN JOSEPH TALBOTT.]

GOODMAN TALBOTT

Nay, stay not. Is it not so that in plenitude
Or ex vacuo the body's needs will in or out?
Does this not express the credo of the natural man?

All well and good, we're understood:
Thus far will I yield and call this flesh
Our common ground. "Glorify God
In your body." Sayeth so the Lord.

But not unlike it is the mind when through a fitful
and a sleepless night
Its own motions it cannot subdue. You think I lie?
You stare as if I do. Oh, I lie alright, lie all
night turning,
Like an aggrieved ancestor spinning in the grave,
stirred
By a cacophony that would alert the coarsened
senses of the dead:
Ah, from bleating sheep to whirring mites to
howling canines I cannot reproduce,
Then whistles, calls, and other chirps which I
thought always
Not native to these shores. Then, half dreaming,
half in sleep,
I swore I heard such monstrosities as mating mules
and rutting does.

But this I know I did not dream:
Your son--

Son, not the one which warms the sky, your own,
Wassas-samon--
Lay sleeping across the threshold of my barnyard
door.

And this I saw.... No, look not there.
He waits not on the gentle action
Of th' sun to lift his blinds-- yea, now
The sun which rises in the east--

For he woke and fled with namore than th'
heft
Of my dark glance. Still, his flight told
all
I needed of the night before:

How he draped about my fence, mooning my daughter
in th' midnight glow,
And sang her praises like a howling wolf. Oh. And
then by morning her mother,

Stuffed with her silly midwife tales,
Teaches me my daughter's menarche
Which otherwise I would not hear.
I would not know it yet but that
Your son-- nay, nephew?-- already seemed
To scent it like a teeming cat;
Only then my wife imparted me
To this debut. To speak truly,
And yes, I do admit, exceed
The bounds convention fixes to keep
Our r'spective fellowships, I say,
I like it not. You understand?
Your nephew shall not tender the egg
In which my progeny is cast.
Do you hear? I will not make it his
To fondle, ruffle, break, or dis-
Array. He shall not chance it... nor

For that matter, any else of his blood. Show me you
comprehend. Tell him
She cares not for his calls, his midnight songs, or
his countless sighs
In the hour when even the barn owl keeps his peace.
She cares not.
I have her word. And that's not all. She cares not
for his letters too,
Which I, hereby, post back to you. Look therein and
you'll find
His presumption's clear. I have no more to say.

[He wends his way back along the garden path, but before he reaches the gate he turns:]

A man, if man he be,
Reigns master of his home.
That's the English way:
King, sachem, sagamore--
Choose what mold you may--
But... Awgh... Good day.

[Exit.]

[Potuck approaches a hay cart at the other end of the garden. He pushes aside hay and uncovers a portable, legless desk, or SECRETARY, and lifts the lid. WASASSAMON, crawls out. As the boy descends from the cart, Potuck brandishes the letters the English colonist delivered to him. Then he crumples and tears at them. The boy tries to restrain him; but Potuck turns against Wasassamon and beats him. Enter EARTHA MANTHROWER from inside the lodge.]

EARTHA MANTHROWER

Stop. No, stop. What you doing?

POTUCK

Bite on tongue, woman.

EARTHA MANTHROWER

You wake whole village. That what you want? When people...

POTUCK

I said bite tongue. I know what I do. Your boy here do not.... Know what he up to-- all night by moon and all? Then no use by day.

EARTHA MANTHROWER

All night? Again? You think the spirits ada-vance you mooning over some girl in her unclean time? That not what Reverend Eliot have you do.

POTUCK

And that not all to tell. He lay little love trap for-- for-- Ingleesh bird.

EARTHA MANTHROWER

True? Or no...?

POTUCK

Of course true.

[Presenting the letters; Wasassamon snatches them.]

EARTHA MANTHROWER

Wo-wait. Well? What you say?

POTUCK

He think this bring feathers to his nest. You think any our girls have use for this?

WASASSAMON

You don't understand.

EARTHA MANTHROWER

What no understand?

POTUCK

No tell no understand.

EARTHA MANTHROWER

Me understand. Understand you, you plenty. You...

[Altered type below indicates dialogue to be translated and spoken in an Algonquin dialect. In these instances the characters move back and forth between their native language and English.]

POTUCK

Honor elders. Kinsmen too. Go. *Get over there with the hoe. Start at one end and work all the way to the other. While you're at it, cut all those Ingleesh weeds out too. Understand?*

EARTHA MANTHROWER

Why I no understand? What wrong with village girl? Why not see own kind girl? Why not here? What wrong?

WASASSAMON

None interest me.

EARTHA MANTHROWER

What?

WASASSAMON

I thought you understood.

POTUCK

Understand? What? What he say? *What was that?*

EARTHA MANTHROWER

Enough. Let's us go. Leave be. *I said let him alone.*

[Exeunt Potuck and Manthrower into hut; manet Wasassamon.]

2. Scene 1.02

[Scene: Wasassamon hoes. Rev. JOHN ELIOT enters through the gate from the English compound.]

JOHN ELIOT

The coast has cleared? Did I not hear a mighty
tumult?
Had I been abed, it would have shook me from it,
and then,
With all the waters parted, and all the mountains
coalesced,
I would have... But enough. How goes it with thee,
there?

You look unwell. Nothing yet to say?
The morning mist and brazen dew still
steals
Upon the earth to cleanse it while we
wake
And takes advantage of our reticence.
Look how the one creeps off for its
gentle theft,
Retreating to the corners where the
shadows,
Still in their midnight mood, cavort and
play
Unmindful the rising sun's own scathing
eye.
Lest we forget: our Lord sends it us,
Jealous that moisture betok'ning
idleness;
You see, by day He brooks no other
comfort
Except those beads wherewith He divides
our brow;
Like th' rivers which etch their sorrows
on the earth,
So do our labors shape and write on us,
Watched overall by God's companion star.
Perhaps I would give you some what I have
heard--
Only what a bird by happenstance hath
told--
But though, you see, myself I cannot
sing,
Yea, even so, a plainspoke' bird did I
hear,
She caring not I cannot sing her tune;
But chiding, nonetheless, that in our
zeal
To make our friend a scholar, we did not,

Let's say, matriculate him to those
refinements
True learning presupposeth: first of
these
We mark discretion, the faculty by which
We keep t' our duties God before us sets,
And by which we eschew objects held by
Him
Beyond our reach, however much, by gross
passions,
Desire enflame them in us; this I hold
A worthy measure-- will you agree?-- to
let
Our little bird beat her wings and fly
to.
Do give it thought, for now will I pay a
call
On your good kin, though on your behalf I
come.
When I return, no doubt, we should speak
more.

[He walks to the lodge and exits within.]

[Enter PRIVATE DAVY SORENSON straddling the top of the stockade wall.]

PRIVATE SORENSON
pst.... Pst.... Sst...!
What's going on? You coming?

WASASSAMON
'ey, how'd you climb up there?

PRIVATE SORENSON
Simple. These. Wha' think you?

[He lifts a leg to reveal one of the stilts attached at his knee.]

WASASSAMON
Fancy.

PRIVATE SORENSON
Keep you dancing
Sure as th' devil in hell.
Stand still, you drop-- whoa-- 'less
You hold to... Wanta try?

WASASSAMON
Can't.

PRIVATE SORENSON
Waited you, last night.
Thought you coming. Where were..?

Had our foremost muster.
Handed out powder and ball,
Uniforms too, and all
The like; coulda had yours--
Soon 's us.

WASASSAMON

I'm not cut for a
soldier.

PRIVATE SORENSON

Who is?

WASASSAMON

I'd like to get out...

PRIVATE SORENSON

Go, then. Come on.

WASASSAMON

But I...

You've got t' be disciplined,
Obedient, all that.
I have no right to dream...

PRIVATE SORENSON

Don't let Capt'n Willy
Hear that pass your lips.
"Soldiers made, not born,"
He bellows; and keeps his word:
Should see the clay he works--
Not like you. So join us,
We'll beat that sodden ploughshare
For you into knives
And swords. Come on. Why wait?

[Exit Sorenson.]

WASASSAMON

Not two hours hence my dreams did fire the
night
Only to be doused by day's opposing light--
Oh, did they not, like Caesar's candles,
soar
And bind themselves to heaven's divided
shore?
Did they not b'witch the canyon swirls of
space
As if to marry them t' a dreamlike face
Where all the solitary specks of doom
Would seem re-born and some pleasing shape
assume?

Divisions in our stars unhook our bliss
As sure as dawn binds up Orion's sword;
That's why the universe withholds her kiss
Distill'd in her whom I dreamt th' stars
adored.

[*He hoes the returned letters into the earth.*]

What serves words only heaven can invent?--
I plant them knowing nothing from them
grows
And never will, as useless in intent
As prospects for a military pose.

Oh, I would not be a soldier now, never
If for glory's sake a soldier I would be:
That soldier in myself already dies
Long afore he drills or dreads a bugle's
blare.

But, I'll not stay unborn as now I am:
I'll purge this chrysalis which hems me in.
Let them make me soldier, though care I not
for fame:
Thus will I pillory disgrace and murder
shame.

[*Exit.*]

3. Scene 1.03

[*Scene: An English fortification. Standing on a rampart* CORPORAL ROGER SALTONSTALL *untangles the line of a flagpole. PRIVATE DANIEL PRITCHETT speaks to him from below.*]

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

What's this? You once would count her virtues.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

She does as she does. which is to say
As she may do. I know no more;
Nor less. Pass me up the pennant.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

You puzzle me, for once you would say...

"Of all that God and Nature culminate--
She stood a paragon: of paragons,
She, th' most beauteous exemplar of them
all..."

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Beauteous? I would not have spoke such:
Flowers seem beauteous until they wither.
Right now I see naught but the hag
The passing moons will undisguise.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

She's fickle then. All women are.
They wear their loyalties alike
And match them to their other whims.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Fickle? Nay, fickle. She flaunts
indiff'rence
In all she does. Nay: what she shows
Leapfrogs indifference too. She is...
Good God, she is an impulsive thing.
Spare the thumb-rod and you spoil
What zeal her father taught, and all
Th' Sunday churchmen 'pressed on her.
No: woman has no scruples: none.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

I always thought she came of stock,
A family praised by you for breeding.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Oh, fit for breeding alright, for that
She cares not how she comes by seed.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
I see. She has offended you.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Ah, she should have shaken loose by now,
Like August cherries long past primed
By th' season's sun, but-- nay, not even:
The thin and vaporous air alone
Should have borne her to my lips. But no:
Her father's mad, mad I tell you.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
Him? This can't be so. Why him, sir?

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Well, maybe not as a hatter mad,
But mad enough. I'll give you proof.
Do you know that because some redman's
son
Once stalked his daughter in the past
It has him spooked?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
A man of nature? No.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Rather than rushing to take my bid,
As would any sane and thoughtful father,
He withholds her from the marriage mart.
Now none dare contemplate her no matter
How bright h's prospect or complexion
shines.
Had he not waylaid my plans by now,
I would have rid' her home with all
The relish Mars himself would bring
To Venus were not intervening earth
Standing in his way. Instead,
Here am I bound, where I must divert
My lusty appetite to war.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
So much we gain by the honor then.

[*Private Sorenson enters now as CORPORAL SORENSON. He remains unnoticed by Saltonstall for several moments.*]

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Honor? Sir, in all modesty
I think war a gentler mistress by far.
So long as it contents her, in her
I'll ply my blade and make my peace.
You see this? This I call th' right hand

Of war: war does as this does. She does
no...

CORPORAL SORENSON
With such an instrument as that
You much exceed what Nature urges
As means to discontinent yourself.
For you, with far less indirection,
Could r'lieve the ache which irritates
you..

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Step lightly. You tread on feeble ground.

CORPORAL SORENSON
Why, then I w'draw, and with me does
The letter I would have delivered you.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
A letter? Stay then, I'm coming down.

[Saltonstall climbs down from the rampart and disappears, for the moment, behind the fortification wall.]

CORPORAL SORENSON
Why should I bother stay for him?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
You can give it here. He is my friend.

CORPORAL SORENSON
I'd not keep him a fair weather friend,
Much less for the inclemency of war.

[Exit Sorenson.]

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
I see here a female hand.
An' this unchaste flourish shows no
mother's touch.
She sends him this aft'r what she's put
him through?
Ha, I'll take care of this.

[He tears the letter. Re-enter Saltonstall.]

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Huh? Ho! What goes? What do you do?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
She shan't enjoy that satisfaction
Her words have soiled your fingertips.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Her? Who? Oh, my bird, my threnody.
She sings, and you have quashed her song.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
But did you not disclaim her a fick...
A faithless thing, a breeding hag,
A..?

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Nay, forget what I have said,
You shall not play me back. What's done
Is done: all's forgiven now.
Oh, where is she? Gawd. Torn to tatters.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
(Gathering up the torn fragments.)
God tendereth what man rendereth. Or,
Phoo... Look: right here: she says, "lo-
loves..."

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Loves?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
Oh, she comes straight to it.
"Loves..."

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Loves, loves. What else? Loves what?
Loves who?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
Here it trickles off the page. Let's
try...

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Where? Can't you tell me whom she loves?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
Here: splice this thus to this it says,
"Writes words of honor swelling
praise..."

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Not me. I'm simpler in my praise.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
And here, "Sends praises swelling
beauty..."

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Swelling? What's all this swelling for?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

And: "Beauty swelling, confounding all."

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

I'd like to make her swell myself.
Who writes such stuff and keeps straight-
faced?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

This one says something Indi-an...

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Indi..?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

We need to find its match.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Good God, man, look.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

No need to fret.

This rip belongs some other place.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Why would she use the Indian word
And post a letter to her lover?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

God knows. It could mean anything:
Indian corn, Indian summer,
Indian burn, even Indian-a...

[A bugle peals from offstage. Enter a small contingent of SOLDIERS from within the palisade. Enter SERGEANT RALPH COCKBURN at the rear of the column.]

SERGEANT RALPH COCKBURN

And left, and left, and left, right,
left.

Right march. And left, and left, and
halt.

Sound off. Wait. Where? What's with the
others?

Did they all crawl back inside their
bunks?

SOLDIER

They're bringing along the prisoner, sir.

[Enter Wasassamon half-dressed.]

SEARGEANT COCKBURN
Who are you?

WASASSAMON
Wasassamon.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN
Wa-Wha? That's your Chri-- your forename,
then?

SOLDIER
He doesn't know.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN
And who asked you?

SOLDIER
I... No one. They don't have first names,
sir.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN
I asked him, I thought, or didn't I?

WASASSAMON
John.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN
John, is it? Alright, then, John.
Do I need to keep you punished too?
Eh...?

WASASSAMON/JOHN SASSAMON
Wa-John, eh-Sassamon. No, sir.

[Enter more soldiers with *one of their own*, limbs tied and stripped to the waist.]

SEARGEANT COCKBURN
Face you the deserter up.... What we do
in war
Perplexes us, for even in time of peace
We put thieves to death. Does it not say
in Scripture,
"If a man be found stealing, then that
thief shall die?"
So is it written. But a people righteous
And forgiving might otherwise suit word
to action,
Action to purpose, and punishment to
crime.
Should we not therefore remove th'
offending part? Well...?

PRISONER

O Lord...

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

(Aside to Pritchett.)

Does he think himself a preacher
Wearing the outgear of a soldier?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

(Aside to Saltonstall.)

Very like he missed his calling;
A huckster's rags would suit him more.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN

Do we not know as much in our own
 hearts?:
If the eye offends, we pluck it out;
If the ear offends we cut it off.
So should it fall to us, we help the
 thief
Sever that part himself which most
 offends.

PRISONER

No offense, sir. I have repented...
 for...

SEARGEANT COCKBURN

Pluck out what he cannot extract of
 himself:
T' cut off the hands of thieves we'd do
 as much.

PRISONER

But the thief feels no misgiving, sir,
But that the world owes him his theft.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN

Of course in time of war we need all
 hands.
So let us be more artful in our sanction.
If, by circumstance, we cannot isolate
 the part,
Then must we apply our physic to the
 whole:
For this we stretch him by the neck--
 take care,
Not fatally. We order th' offending
 corpus
To dangle at some remove we calibrate
From this, the mind which failed to
 master it.

PRISONER

Ah! I beg thee, no, I'll stay the course:
Loose me and I'll fling defiance
Even in the cannon's tooth.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN

Now, hoist him up. Here will you stay
Till dusk to sweat and burnish in the
sun.
As your feet grope for ground to stand,
pause on that kind
Of soul your fellows want you rooting
there.

[*Pritchett and Saltonstall, aside to one another.*]

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

Does he think that dancing for his breath
Will goad his mind t'ward contemplation?

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

This is most cruel and unusual.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

Whyn't he use a red man to make his
point?

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

They breed them stoic, sans fear of God.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN

Soldiering is an hon'able art.
No profession better molds the man.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Pff, have you heard of such a thing?

SEARGEANT COCKBURN

Boys, only th' soldier who stands his
ground
Lives for that honor which outlasts him.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

The honor of a flag-draped coffin.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN

The rest must languish in the ranks.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

I'll take the rankness he despises
Over praises meant to dupe
Th' innocent, like that one there:
You see, his buckles are undone.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
The Indian? Judging by his haste
His friends left him and let him sleep.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN
'Ten-hut. About face. Right march. And
left,
And left...

[*Exeunt military corps; manent Saltonstall, Pritchett, the prisoner, and Sassamon.*]

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
I wonder if he reads?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
Or writes? But the few who claim to read
Cannot even pen their names.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
You there, you, your strap hangs cock-
eyed.

JOHN SASSAMON
So is 't. May I your pardon beg.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
At ease soldier. It's them who count.
No need for you to fear from us.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
Nay, none from us at all.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Just help us mend this letter-- torn,
By a madman shredded, we surmise--
Before we could interpret it.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
Yea, tell us what it means.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
Take this piece. Match it to its
neighbor.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
Or another like itself.

JOHN SASSAMON
I regret I don't decipher it.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Does that mean you make no sense the whole?

(A bugle sounds, offstage.)

Or none such of its parts, the words?

JOHN SASSAMON

I'm sorry, but I must go.

[*Exit.*]

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Damn. Did he read, or just match the shapes?

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

He seemed to know which joined with which.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

He would've told, had you not disturbed 'm.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

He could've assembled them by chance.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

Because of you we'll never know.

[*Exeunt.*]

4. Scene 2.01

[Scene: A clearing adjacent to a Narragansett hunting lodge. Bugles and drums: enter Underhill, Cockburn, Sorenson, Saltonstall, Pritchett, and Sassamon with English soldiers; enter also a contingent of NARRAGANSETTS, including CANONCHET and MIANTONOMI, opposite them.]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Greetings from our great and glorious
father,
He who sends the winding ships that fly
the sea.
For we, his servants, serve him who
serves the Father,
Lord and Protector of us all.

CANONCHET
Your worsh-
pips.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Why come you armèd? There stand you
arrayed for battle.

[Discussion in Narragansett dialect.]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Come boy, yes you. Pick up your tail
feathers fast.

[Sassamon steps forward so that he overhears the Narragansetts. He pulls from the small secretary strapped to his shoulder a piece of paper on which to write notes. This secretary recalls the larger one from which he emerged in the opening scene; and its occurrence here carries forward a motif that repeats in various sizes and shapes throughout the play.]

PRIVATE PRITCHETT
(Aside to Saltonstall.)
There, see how your friend advances.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL
(Aside to Pritchett.)
Not him at my expense.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Boy: make us sensible to these natives
here.

JOHN SASSAMON
You he hears. He says the humble bee
Comes armèd too, yet labors after
sweetness.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Ha, that's as sweet a thought as hoped we
to hear.
But tell him the viper ports his defense
too,
Yet labors aft' nothing sweeter than his
venom.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

Not t' mention th' product of his tongue,
The multitude of fallen brides
Descended th' mother of us all.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Nay, that thought rises too rarefied for
them.

(To Sassamon.)

Now boy, say to him we come as friends,
But that we wish afresh intelligence
To know what makes them stackpile arms
against us.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

(Aside to Saltonstall.)

He tempts the devil with his breeze.

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

(Aside to Pritchett.)

It's like our captain to bluster thus
Embattled against unlikely odds.

JOHN SASSAMON

He denies their war chest means to make
offense.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Ah, there's meat in that denial. But
before
We sup on it, let's try another course.
Tell them we hear the Pequots broke bread
with them.
See what he says, as I observe his looks.

PRIVATE PRITCHETT

(Aside to Saltonstall.)

By how much do their numbers overwhelm
ourselves?

CORPORAL SALTONSTALL

(Aside to Pritchett.)

The devil does not always languish 'n
detail.

JOHN SASSAMON

He says they fear their ancient enemies,
The Pequots, but that their heritage of
fear
Restrains their jealousy and makes them
treat
Their embassies no less than grudgingly.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

A politic answer, cunning and politic;
Who would have thought them shrewd and
capable?
We must re-group and till a deeper layer
then.
Tell them that in the blessing of our
king,
Our head of Church and State, we come
regaled.
Then catalogue an est'mation of his
realm:
His forts and armories, his store of
guns,
His towers, dungeons, battleworks, et al.
(Speak as if your heart depends on it.)
Describe the trappings of our sovereign
too,
His orb and sceptre, his jewel-studded
cape and crown,
And all the gold and inlay denoting
empire
That the world's great craftsmen lavish
on his throne.
He would not deign to wear their wampum
rags--
Those trinkets these idolators hold in
awe.
But most important: see if you can
impress
On them the value of his scrolls and
parchments,
These th' symbols of his treasuries, his
lands,
And, not least of all, his high
authority--
For on just such a one as this we wish t'
secure
The mark of their approval....

[Sassamon tries to withdraw with the Narragansetts, but they rebuff him and speak aside.]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

They reject...

Tell me what do they say? Translate them,
boy.

JOHN SASSAMON

I hear, but cannot overhear the words.

MIANTONOMI

They give us reasons. Our nation cannot stand on
them alone.

CANONCHET

Quite right. But we need the means to enforce our
livelihood;
We must have guns, and these English provide our
way to them.

MIANTONOMI

Careful: by turning toward the tempter your feet
alone will plead his case.

CANONCHET

Fear not: I know their tricks. If they dare wave
papers at us once again,
We know which way our steps will tend. I'll not let
him use me
The way the Pequots do their enemies. But still:
this points
The way to honor our leaving backwardness behind.

MIANTONOMI

If so, who among ourselves speaks for us with them?

CANONCHET

Why not

you.

The imperfections of your speech will cover the
fluency of mine.

MIANTONOMI

Let us set the pattern, then, and show them where
you begin.

[The Narragansetts break from their huddle.]

CANONCHET

You all welcome.
Point we our thumb
Past bracken dodge.
Talk in hunt lodge.

MIANTONOMI

We mean th' index finger--
Small point, so let's not linger.

[Exeunt into lodge .]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Ah glad these friends have found our
tongue;
Hope our verses they'll soon have sung.

[Exit following them .]

[Exeunt Narragansett warriors and English soldiers .]

JOHN SASSAMON

Nor to the left nor right am I inclined,
But hold to th' center with all my heart
and mind.

[Exit .]

5. Scene 2.02

[Scene: A granite outcropping overlooking a forest glen. The concussions of battle echo in the distance. Enter below the Narragansett sachems, Miantonomi, Canonchet, and MASCUS.]

MIANTONOMI

Cruel to twist a tortoise's defense to the
 advantage of his devourer,
But such are the agonies of war. So have the
 English leveraged the Pequot shell
Into the tooth and talon of their adversaries.
Their stockade, meant to stand impregnable,
Roasts them where they thought themselves most
 sacrosanct;
All this we may call the ill-luck of warriors and
 dismiss it from our thoughts,
But not when children fail to stir their English
 hearts,
And innocence itself excites nothing more than
 ghoulish enmity.
I hold we need not pause when the mighty have
 fallen,
And the infirm must rise to take their place.

CANONCHET

I saw as much-- and more we need not dwell upon--
 yet, I say,
We must turn back. Honor binds. To the English we
 gave our word.

MIANTONOMI

Never mind our word. By these butcheries the
 English forfeit
All our oaths. The tyrant Pequots never sunk to
 such crimes.

MASCUS

I affirm you both, but suggest another way.
I say we honor honor more to break our oaths
And make our cutthroat friends our enemies.
I, too, bid our return: not as feckless cousins
To this tragedy, but as its avengers.

MIANTONOMI

Had we only the choice. But they have baited us
 with fool's promises,
And we have strung them into tawdry prizes to fool
 ourselves.
We cannot march on them with our forces divided--
Half here in complicity, half at home sublimely
 ignorant.

MASCUS

We could join the Pequot forces north even if,
For honor's sake, we must befriend enmity itself.

MIANTONOMI

What chance have we to make our rivals suddenly
 embrace us?
Word of this horror outpaces our remorse as quickly
 as heaven's light
Subdues the false light fired by these ravages. Let
 us not, then,
Fare the fury of those Pequots before they
 distinguish us
From their once, but falsest, friends.

MASCUS

Far better that we coalesce our might
Lest the Pequots reprise this hell on us.

MIANTONOMI

Or worse, that divided from our roots these English
 demons make our rebel thoughts
Pretext, and sever the limbs which bear our green
 and tender generations up.

MASCUS

For their sake let us make our return in haste.

CANONCHET

Above all else. Agreed.

[*Exeunt.*]

6. Scene 2.03

[*Scene: The same. Songbirds sing. Close on the heels of the departing Narragansetts, a PEQUOT BOY enters, his hands bound with rope. He hobbles across the clearing below and hides on the edge of the forest. On the outcropping above enter Pritchett and Saltonstall.*]

PRITCHETT

Does he go there?

SALTONSTALL

Where?

PRITCHETT

There, where the leaves
bestir.

SALTONSTALL

'T is only the dove of peace fled this way

[*The songbirds cease their singing.*]

SALTONSTALL

Hear her panic: she flies her sanctum
As if in constant flight she might
Find refuge. How have you lost our prey?

PRITCHETT

I don't see where he could have passed us
by.

SALTONSTALL

If we cannot track one fake,
However would we track one real?
And this Indian's only half as wild
As he is half domesticate.

PRITCHETT

Our mark we've overshot. And by that
measure
We undersell our skills. Have faith. Look
there.

[*Enter Sassamon below in disarray.*]

SALTONSTALL

He comes...? I'm almost of a mind
To let him pass, such numbing horrors
Have we witnessed against his breed.

PRITCHETT

Heaven will never beckon like this to drive

Your lesson home.

[*Very sick, Sassamon exits into the woods leaving his gear and secretary behind.*]

SALTONSTALL

And yet I shrink from it
It's not his Indianness which maddens me,
But that he presumes still to mix with us.
It is not natural. Every sign from God
Tells us He would forbid it: did He not
Banish the race of Ham to Wilderness?
Were not his sons the swarthies of Put and
Egypt?
Why, if this Ind'an knows not his slavish
place,
Should I compound his sin with one my own?

PRITCHETT

Since when keep you account of God's wages?

SALTONSTALL

Not God's, but those His sinners 'cumulate.

PRITCHETT

But would you call it sin to devastate
These redmen for carousing in their
villages?
B' that measure do you question God's
righteousness
And wrath, nay, even the rightness of our
course?
Were not Ham's sons also the Canaanites
Whom God reviled for superstition and
wick'dness?

SALTONSTALL

I know not of His affairs, nor of His
wrath,
Nor can I tease the latter from my own.

PRITCHETT

That shows how much God confounds himself
in you.

SALTONSTALL

Nay, if it is of God we speak,
It proves me alien to His Kingdom.

[*Re-enter Sassamon to clean himself and his belongings.*]

PRITCHETT

Soft, now. He's stepped into the clear
again.

Would you wish to wound him then? What mark
Of shame might we inflict? Let him brag
Of that while in his thumping greybeard
 years
He spends an evening stewing in his cups.

SALTONSTALL
Nothing that we imprint upon his flesh
Will score him near what already sears his
 mind,
Why should I let the redman appal me so?--
When I do not know where in God's plan he
 stands,
But that the slaughter I've already seen
Surfeits me this day. Enough, I say.

[The Pequot boy re-emerges from the forest.]

PEQUOT BOY
Hey, English, you Indian?

[Sassamon shoots the boy. Enter Pequot warriors in among the woods. The sound of arrows whirring and striking trees follows.]

PRITCHETT
What goes there? Call you this God's wrath
 or Satan's?

SALTONSTALL
It takes a devil to know one like himself:
It's him they want, not us they cannot see.

PRITCHETT
D' we rescue him?

SALTONSTALL
That far I cannot go.

[Sassamon turns to escape, but as he does Pritchett shoots at him from behind. Unable to retreat Sassamon stands and fights.]

SALTONSTALL
Good God, man, whatever try you to do? For God's...
Do you never think before your impulse urges you?
My mood swings a hair and you put ballast to it:
The rocking pendule, nestled in its curve,
Would crack the confines of its arc were you
 bestride it.
You defy all things mathematical and of sense...

[A party of PEQUOT WARRIORS enters. Two of the warriors attack Sassamon, wrest his gun from him, and withdraw. As they retreat one of them picks up the dead Pequot]

boy. Enter the vanguard of an ENGLISH BRIGADE very drunk. They fire a disjointed volley and re-load.]

SALTONSTALL

Answer me. What thought moved you when you moved thus?

PRITCHETT

I do not know of any opinion that made me fashion it,
Only that...

[Another round by arriving soldiers; it's out of synchrony even more than the first volley.]

SALTONSTALL

That's not good enough.

PRITCHETT

We are joined. Take you no note of it?

SALTONSTALL

Do you trifle me?

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

(Off.)

Fire at will.

[Now the English side fires all at once.]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

(Off.)

Christ, now they volley.

PEQUOT WARRIOR

Their fuel is spent.

[One of the Pequot warriors rushes upon Sassamon, stabs him, and runs before the English can re-load.]

SALTONSTALL

I have a right to know.

PRITCHETT

It's only as I move when I discover what I think. I crept forward from you, thus-- for safety as I think-- and swivelled on my toe. This I think for friendship-- to shield you from the enemy. I shouldered up my arms-- I think for honor-- and then I shot-- for what?-- for God?, for country?, or for friendship too?-- otherwise he would have stolen to the woods...

[Enter above Sergeant Cockburn and a handful of English soldiers.]

SERGEANT COCKBURN
Seize them. Those two. Bloody deserters!

[*The soldiers tackle and bind Saltonstall and Pritchett.*]

SALTONSTALL
Deserters? There's only one deserter here.

PRITCHETT
(*Pointing down to Sassamon.*)
He means him, sir.

SALTONSTALL
And we come after him.

SERGEANT COCKBURN
A shame you don't take after him.
Look at you, not a hair out of place; him wounded.
You a coward; him a hero as ever I saw.

PRITCHETT
You'll not let a salvage fool you, will you, sir? He could
have found his wounds as well by falling from his duty by
just this height.

[*A bugle flourish distorted by distilled spirits. Enter Captain Underhill with Davy Sorenson, now LIEUTENANT SORENSON.*]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Cease fire. [*Sporadic shots persist.*] I said hold
your fire!

SOLDIER
Sir, our man's wounded here.

SASSAMON
They only grazed me glancingly, Captain.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
(*Motions to a surgeon.*)
Better have it looked after. Surgeon. Here.

[*Sergeant Cockburn, above, aside to Saltonstall.*]

SERGEANT COCKBURN
Does he not bleed like thee?
Does his blood not flow as red?

SALTONSTALL
I want no part of it;
You will not coax me thus.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON
Do we pursue them, Captain?

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Nay, we've had our fill.

[Enter a small detachment of Narragansetts.]

LIEUTENANT SORENSON
As you were, gentlemen.

[Captain and lieutenant, aside to each other.]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
What's this? Some Narragansetts left
behind?

LIEUTENANT SORENSON
Not all knew enough to flee.
They do not know their brothers left.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Easy, lieutenant, cast not your eyes at
them.
Daggers shall not carve them to our liking.
That's good. We have a message by them to
send:
We have inflicted much on... well, their
kind.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON
Do they not see we've risked ourselves
In taking on their enemies?

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
But they have their steady rituals of
battle,
Not like ours in steadiness of purpose--
So now it's up to us to ease a bit:
We've shown the clenched and dextrous fist
of war,
Let us now might's left arm and counterpart
Unfold and boast that half an even hand.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON
I yield, but how do we do so, then?.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
We'll improvise a way. How 'bout this?
We'll laud this Indian boy who wears our
stripes...

[Commotion above.]

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

Here, sergeant, can't you control your men?

SERGEANT COCKBURN

(*Above.*)

With a little liberty, sir,
I might with these here d'sarters, sir.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

This plays into our hands. (*To sergeant.*)
Carry them down.

SERGEANT COCKBURN

Aye, sir, with pleasure, sir.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

They've seen us wield the stick, enough of
that
Except to prove our own subject to it.
Let's brandish the carrot t' our audience
And chase away misapprehension:
Our little scene will seem a balm,
A soothing poultice to their eyes,
Stung by the smoke of resolution
Which singed their nostrils and bent their
wills.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

We'll move them of their own accord
To make of our resolve their own.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Take care, though. Quick. The Narragansetts
stir...
Nay, though: I'll undertake them by myself;
(*Pulling out a flask.*)
I have this fellowship to share with them.
You stay and put these two t' impartial
trial.

[*The captain joins the Narragansetts, aside; re-enter Sergeant Cockburn and soldiers driving in Saltonstall and Pritchett.*]

SALTONSTALL

Cockroach. Vile and crouching cockroach.

PRITCHETT

You dare, you stinking dog, you.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

Sergeant, shut them up.

PRITCHETT

You filthy, kneeling insect...

SERGEANT COCKBURN

Their tongues are not so readily bound as are their limbs.

[Sergeant Cockburn and his subordinates try various stratagems-- headlocks, pieces of rope, straps, etc.-- to stop the following speeches.]

SALTONSTALL

Crawling worm. I'll not get into this with you.

PRITCHETT

We had it made, but no, not for you, you mad-dog, you flea-bitten scoundrel. You're a bleeding louse, and you know it.

SALTONSTALL

Ha! I tell you, I tell you all: There is no worse enemy on God's earth than a spoiled friend, a friend gone sour, a friend gone bad: it clogs the pores, it putrifies the breath, it roils the bowels. How's that for bleeding?

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

Shut them up, I said.

[Sergeant Cockburn takes up discarded bandages from the surgeon working nearby and stuffs it into Saltonstall's mouth. After pushing him forward to the lieutenant, the soldiers approach Pritchett with a similar gag, but....]

PRITCHETT

Oh well, well yes. My lip is buttoned, I'll say no more.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

Press him forward, too. We'll run him through the gauntlet of our scrutiny as well.

PRITCHETT

(Moving despite his bonds.)

Sir, a word. With liberty I'll tell you what I did. I know up there I stepped and put myself in harms's way for honor's sake; that then I lifted my piece and set it to my shoulder, thus (this for duty did I do); that next I fired, and though my aim went poorly-- this boulder here, or rather there, encumbered my line of sight. Still, I did affright the enemy and alert our troops. Oh: this I know I did for love of country. And finally, I turned upon my toe and asked my friend, did we want to rescue him who wears our uniform against the heathen? For does it not say...

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

What say you, sergeant?

SERGEANT COCKBURN

For me his gun speaks loud enough. Sir, I say, even if the hot air streaming from his lips could play ventriloquist on us, still his puppet here speaks up for him.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

Quite right. Unless my senses mistake me, this barrel wreaks of smelted sulphur, not of breath.

SERGEANT COCKBURN

In this other's you'll find no such testament. And him I saw retreating when every other foot advanced.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

Fine, let's loosen him who serves our cause. This other mouse take out and paw with the cat-o-nines.

SERGEANT COCKBURN

Aye, sir. With pleasure, sir.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Oh, sergeant: Take care how you claw him. Another corpse would only mar this glorious day.

SERGEANT COCKBURN

Your lesson's well put, sir, as will be his.

[Exeunt Saltonstall and Pritchett escorted by soldiers; manent sergeant et al.]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Do you follow me, soldier?

SERGEANT COCKBURN

Aye. Yes, sir. Aye, sir. I do, sir.

[Exit sergeant.]

[Enter female PEQUOT CAPTIVES under guard.]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Oh, just in time. Bring them in....

CHORUS OF PEQUOT CAPTIVES

Kind sar... Hear our plea... Good and sorry knight... They pain us, dear sire... This young girl, they do sorry sight...

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

No, they can wait.... This is what we're looking for....

[A soldier hands him several garments of wampum. Then, indicating Sassamon, he says:]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

But first and foremost we must bless our
friend,
Him who serves example to us all.
Lest we forget how our victory honors us,
And only what we lost, let us recall
The lofty purpose which bejewells our
friendships:
Have we not excised the Pequot middleman
Who fed upon our substance; how does it
feel
To no more nourish the Pequot worm of
tribute?
Friends, close your eyes, feel lifting the
Pequot yoke:
Their walls have tumbled like mighty
Jericho:
This signifies that here a new day dawns
Yea, despite th' encroaching of the evening
sun.
Do you not sense the import of what is
born,
Or is the infant still too new today?--
For from Bretton Wood to London's City fair
Shall stretch our temple to free and
lib'ral trade.
Regard now th' phoenix on which we pin our
hopes:
Ah, look, he rises, dizzied by his wounds.
Here walks the paragon, the exemplar of our
youth;
Behold him, the center of our expectancy:
Of our two peoples-- our wills, our works
entwined--
He is the emblem and cadeuceus.
Let us, then, adjust the present to his
spirit:
Just as the totem of our enemy
We bear away-- his wealth, his authority,
Th' ornament and symbol of his pride,
We do ourself much honor extending it:
So let us set aside some part our wealth
To bestow on him who risked his all for
all.

[After he gives a wampum belt to Sassamon, he leads a Pequot maiden to each of the Narragansetts and gives them wampum vests as well.]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

And here's for you, what we deem the crux
and standard
Of our adopted land. And you, this vest,
You shall not want for wanting it.

Take these, the tokens of our newborn age;
We'll not detain you more. Go tell your
breth'ren
What you have seen, what we fashion here
today.

[*Exeunt Narragansetts.*]

[*As the last of the Narragansetts leaves, he abandons his tribute; but the Pequot maiden bestowed on him retrieves his wampum vest and runs off with him. Several other Pequot maidens try to join them, but soldiers turn them back.*]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

All's well, what we put well. We are alone.
Let's hope the scion we graft here takes t'
the stem,
That our two peoples confederate as one
Lest that they join the Pequot rump at
large.
That prospect would surely daunt us. But
still I think
Our little show went well from what I saw.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

And when those three walk roundabout to
camp
With wampum shells and laden with their
squaws,
I do not doubt they'll shift their minds a
bit.
By that example, it emboldens me to say
Such news may make our elders wish us well
Indulge our senses, bereft these many days
Of pleasure in the course of our campaign.
Did not the domestic man enjoy so much
While we, as soldiers, marched in open air,
Endured the rigors of the rough-hewn path,
And, by exposure to the whoop of war,
Shook thus our fists at our mortality?
Who would deny us then our dram of comfort?
Let us, then, from this spoilage at our
heels
Succor the weariness which crowns our feat.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

I thank you for your thoughts. But we must
go
Or Night befalls us, and we left
undisposed.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

But if I may, back to what concerns us...

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Th' unclad temptations standing before us
here,
These for our Crown we claim as property:
Let us, like the better sons of Noah
Cloak their nakedness and see what God
Will bring us for our pains.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

We are no Hams
For sure, not we. But Ham's brethren had
not our challenge:
They had two cloaks to cover one drunken
crow
While God expects we clothe above a
hundred:
Unless we propagate our coats like loaves
Or fecund fishes, we'll have to choose but
few.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Quite right, though them to our
Commonwealth we owe.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

Pity that we give away those blessings
Our Commonwealth would least know the way
to savor:
Such fruit fills not our Elder's appetites
As would it ours, but their senile desire
Desires only what labor they might extract.
For think, if labor alone shall satiate,
What labors we would nudge these ladies
towards.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Such talk lieutenant undervalues us.
I will indite our elders in a letter;
For sure, in triumph our leaders would
grant us slack,
But let us not take and squander it in
excess:
For this we need proceed in measured steps.
We do our best, perhaps, to make a trial or
two:
Let's venture small to see how well it
takes:
We'll bless with one our little hero here.
For him I see, by the look that weighs his
eyes,
Took Cupid's tincture in through th' Pequot
dart.

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

It seems he stares, unwise what way to win
her.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Tell him wrap her in his cloak, he's
halfway home.

[Underhill drapes his coat on a Pequot woman and leads her away.]

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

You would do well to follow his example.
See? Warm her cockles, and you thaw her
heart.

*[Sassamon lays his coat on the shoulders of one of the Pequot maidens, PRINCESS X.
She betrays no notice of the action.]*

LIEUTENANT SORENSON

See? Warm her cockles, and you thaw her
heart.

*[Underhill signals to Sorenson with his eyes; he, in turn, alerts the English forces with a
nod, and they edge into the woods forcing the Pequot captives ahead of them. Then the
bugle blares a sour note.]*

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Nay, who advertises us? Blow not our horn
Too proudful when we wish Heaven avert its
eyes.

[Exeunt soldiers and captives; manent Sassamon and Princess X.]

7. Scene 2.04

[Scene: The same. Dusk. Princess X. and Sassamon remain from before. The performers, without words, improvise a scene arising out of the situation the characters presently face. Through this improvisation they gradually build toward the scene's single line of dialogue and its objective of uniting the characters .]

[For example, at the beginning of the scene Sassamon's coat might slip from the shoulders of Princess X. He replaces it. When she continues not to notice the coat or her surroundings, Sassamon coaxes her to drink water. Perhaps now she awakes from her trance and recoils from him. She then tries to break away, but Sassamon restrains her. After struggling with her for awhile, though, he releases her. Next, he gives her the wampum belt bestowed on him in the previous scene. She takes it, passes her hand over it, then examines its burn marks and bloodstains. Suddenly, she beats him with it. He snatches it from her and flings it out of the clearing and into the woods, perhaps beyond the imaginary fourth wall of the stage. She retrieves it. Meanwhile, Sassamon packs up his gear. At the last moment he leaves her a ration of food. Then, just as he rises to leave, he turns to look at her. Their eyes meet and lock. They begin moving toward one another. She speaks .]

PRINCESS X

You... You weep for me?

[They approach and nearly touch one another when :

Lights fade to blackout .]

8. Scene 3.01

[Scene: A palisaded alley leading to a Boston thoroughfare. Participants assemble here to join a victory parade already in progress. These include musicians and soldiers (including John Sassamon), but also some local curiosities as well. Enter two puritan divines, Rev. GEORGE SEWELL and Rev. JOHN MATHER, amidst the cheers and martial music offstage.]

GEORGE SEWELL

I hear the antinomians, so apt to question
us,
Subtract us from our triumph owing to what
our captives teach;
And this equivocation in our ranks could
hinder us:
For I fear they'll beard us Spaniards for
aping them in atrocity.

JOHN MATHER

That slander proves them lawless, yea, and
therefore aptly named:
For nowhere can you scramble eggs without
you break them first.
Remember: the Commonality at large
possesses not cunning,
Nor skill, nor subtlety enough to challenge
our rank or place;
So let us not bring unnecessary question on
ourselves.
Besides, our Reverend Cotton speaks for us
and when he speaks,
He makes light work of the darkest hour to
turn their heads around.

[Exeunt elders into the common.]

[As the elders disappear within, the offstage crowd murmurs. A hiss or two flares up, but quickly aborts. Enter John Eliot and his assistant, COCKENOE.]

JOHN ELIOT

There, we come upon him, our Wasassamon, our hero,
Christened-- in whose name but mine own-- in war.
Mayn't I christen him in peace as well, this...
This our new John, th' receptic' of our hopes and
mores?
Ho, my tongue slips and slides where it will.

[A few cheers resume in the crowd offstage.]

Ubi

summus?

Where are we? Ubi summus, young man? Ho, yes,

I baptize thee in the name of John... No, no, lest
I blaspheme:
I baptize thee John *in the name of* our Lord and
Saviour.
Oh, blah, blah, blah, but I'm of a whimsical turn
this morn.
Let me hold my peace. You speak. But here,
Here is my Cockenoe. Let my Cockenoe blow Gabriel's
horn,
All the more as the occasion befits. What? Nothing
cometh?
Why then, unfurl in your own tongues as you will;
Mine I'll caulk in my own throat.

[*More cheers.*]

What? Silence
still?
I implore you. Well, if you cannot, you cannot.
But unless you impart me in your own tongues, it
befalls me
That I must impart myself. (*To Sassamon.*) We
congratulate you and your confreres.
We hear you return a great warrior... All to our
liking, my boy--
Young man. All to our liking. But tell me, before
you go--
Verily I'll be nimble, though let me press this
token to thee--
Come, join us. That you've proven yourself in
battle no one contests.
But bodily courage belongs in its place; now let us
make of you
A hero of the mind. You show us promise in the
kingdom of the heart.
Come. See me. Trinkets of war are as nothing to the
gifts of the soul,
And all there for the *seizing*.

[*Exit Sassamon with his company.*]

JOHN ELIOT
Ha, ha! How did we do? Why need we ask. Fine, fine,
we did fine.
Come, let us go 'round and cheer him on the street.

[*Exeunt Eliot and Cockenoe.*]

9. Scene 3.02

[*Scene: The same. On the other side of the alley wall soldiers and a chorus of Elders, including Reverends JOHN COTTON, George Sewell, John Mather, and John Eliot, climb the scaffold within. This makes them visible as they address the unseen crowd below them.*]

JOHN COTTON

This will not serve... Brethren. It serves
not...

Friends and neighbors. Countrymen... And
wives.

Ho, ho, hoo there. We'll come to order!

Thank you....

There lurk amongst us those who outface
Vict'ry

And find in her the blemish of defeat.

D' you call this service? Answer not.

Reflect

Before you speak. Does not God confide in
us?

Do we not shape th' dark places of th'
earth

By His own image? Have we not his Word

For all that we perform in His good name?

Does this not show our faith and zeal in
Him?

Our soldiers, heart and lung with glory
full,

Return to us with hardly casu'lty--

Except a handful felled by fraternal fire:

Then what make you of those who question
conquest?

Call you this service to our cause?

What paths that righteousness must surely
take

This rebel strain amongst us would shirk us
from.

What call you this? Service?

CITIZEN ONE

(*Off.*)

Nay, not I.

CITIZEN TWO

(*Off.*)

Nor I.

JOHN COTTON

Nor I neither. The thorny trail
Of virtue our Lord in heaven bids us take.

CITIZEN THREE

Aye.

CITIZEN ONE

(Off.)

Who betrays us?

CITIZEN TWO

(Off.)

What traitors lie in
wait?

JOHN COTTON

Yea.

VOICE

(Off.)

Is this the rebel strain you fear?
If so, then let me show it you.

(The crowd stirs.)

Let go. I will be heard. Unhand.

JOHN ELIOT

Should we withdraw her now, she wins
without an argument;

But arguing, she'll twist her thesis to its
counterpoint.

GEORGE SEWELL

Yea, trust in the logic of her hysteria to
make our case.

[Enter ANNE HUTCHINSON.]

JOHN COTTON

Take care. She will envenom them, and next
we bear the sting.

JOHN MATHER

Yea, that she will: this Eve unsavors
heaven's forbidden fruit

Since she acquired the serpent's tongue and
his appetite for souls.

ANNE HUTCHINSON

Question not the testimony of your eyes:

I am a woman: as you see, I am with child;

Here the future enjoys repose; but you have
come

To celebrate the past: past deeds, past
lives, past wisdom...

(The crowd jeers.)

This I will not challenge; this I
recognize.
For here I come to you not to speak in my
behalf
But for them in whom mischance of time or
race or rank
Imposes silence.
I grant the past retains
its place;
But let us not so cherish it that our
backward glance
Disorder the stately ebb and course of time
itself:
Should the songbird pitch her tune against
the wint'ry gale
And, thwarted so, pack up and leave her
treetop station
When dulcet spring arrives? We'd blanch to
have it so.
Imagine tilling under the fulsome ear of
corn
Only to harvest the osseous stubble when we
should plow.
How forlorn we'd make this world. Where
would ambition thrive
Should we direct that special province of
the young,
Their forward tending dreams, unto the
sterile past?
Would you have it that time engender what
it lays waste
And nothing more? Your elders seem to think
it so...

GEORGE SEWELL

What are we, then, to let a woman interpose
on us?

JOHN ELIOT

Better for our making she do her speech and
make her own undoing.

JOHN MATHER

Come again? Why let we loose this woman
with slattern tongue
To despise us from her slick but sanctified
marriage bed?

ANNE HUTCHINSON

Far worse than what you see before you, a
woman swollen
With maternity, is that reactionary strain

Bent where it cannot *conceive*, much less
reproduce,
That would suck dry the very bones of our
existence.

JOHN MATHER

What?-- has this suckling sow no brood at
home to call her own,
But that she must leave them famished there
to sow dissension here?

ANNE HUTCHINSON

Yea, I am a mother basking in time's
forward flow,
Nor for the world would I have it shunted
otherwise,
Or they would have my other offspring crowd
my womb
Desp'rate to flee the deprivations of the
present.

JOHN COTTON

What deprivations you speak of belong to
God and not ourselves:
He alone bestows on us the trials we must
endure.
But when we show ourselves the equals to
his tribulations,
He deputizes us to His mighty hand and
righteous wrath.

ANNE HUTCHINSON

They say God's might makes right-- which
for themselves they do;
God does not speak this way, I tell you--
all I hear
Is God's silence...: where do I hear his
voice in this?
And that doth trouble me: for either He
cares not,
Unless He is not, a proposition too
horrible
To contemplate; or He awaits His own good
time
To smite us all by our own self-inflicting
hands.

[Several of the Elders prod Hutchinson from the front of the speaker's platform. The crowd murmurs disapprovingly. Meanwhile, a trumpet flourish sounds. Enter Captain Underhill at the head of a file of soldiers that includes Sergeant Ralph Cockburn.]

JOHN MATHER
(*Aside to Hutchinson.*)

Since when have you hand in our affairs
when God uncoils in us
And shows no hint of righteousness in all
of womankind?

ANNE HUTCHINSON
Nay, good sir. The weaker vessel t' which
you allude
Did once contain you and all your kind. Now
let me speak.

[*Two of the elders begin edging her away.*]

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Stay, madam, if it does not displeasure
you.

ANNE HUTCHINSON
'T is neither that God's will nor my own
removes me, sir.

[*Re-enter Sassamon atop the scaffold at the end of the file of soldiers. Sassamon and Hutchinson converse aside.*]

JOHN SASSAMON
Dear lady, I find myself by your speech
much moved.

ANNE HUTCHINSON
Lord God, a man of feeling; now must you
act by this.

JOHN SASSAMON
That that I would, I oft'n cannot because
Confusion makes me more alien than I am.

ANNE HUTCHINSON
Worse shame to them who make you foreign to
yourself.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Come, hear, listen to a champion of our war
who 'n himself
Disproves the very fear held most against
our enterprise:
The common culture which we enjoy still
lives and beats in him.
(*Aside to Sassamon.*)
Look to, boy. Now do we wield the weapon of
words to prevail in peace.

JOHN SASSAMON

Beg pardon, sir. What theme shall I mount?—
— no one drilled me t' it.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

Why, to the occasion son, and all is well.

[Underhill and Sassamon confer. Two soldiers take Hutchinson into custody on the platform.]

GEORGE SEWELL

Why dwells he with this heathen boy?

JOHN COTTON

To some
haste we put our captain,
And so he seized what lay at even hand.

JOHN SASSAMON

Christians, for so I wish to honor you...

JOHN ELIOT

Sh, what
does he say?

JOHN SASSAMON

Your honors... Dread not me. Why look you
so?
Nay, people, you shall not see me in your
pulpits.
I know my place: I am a praying Indian,
And to praying Indians I do belong.
This fear you make of me bespeaks one
larger,
Such a one we ever tremble to express;
Thus stand I salient to a deeper cause
By the difference nature marks in me.
For do we not dread, in th' peace that
follows war,
The rupture of our conjoint peoples most?
This that we enjoy, this amity,
Defends us more: for has it not tutored you
In a harsh and distant clim'e, and bestowed
on us
Th' refining tenor of a Christian tongue?
Why then, who sound in mind would smite
asunder
This saving grace of Christian souls and
lives?
Not the Narragansetts, with all their
hosts,

Who could have tilted th' outcome which
 flatters us,
 If only they professed neutrality.
 But they devised an ingenious attack;
 That, undertook in the cover of retreat,
 Gave us the strategem to win this war.
 Nor could our side prevail without that aid
 Which comes by those who simply acquiesce--
 I allude to the nations familiar with this
 land:
 The Pennacook, Pocumtuck, Squakeag
 Sakonnet, and Wabaquaset who subscribed our
 cause--
 Or, so I gathered from the wealth all
 shared
 Misprisioned in the Pequot treasury
 Which, pried loose by raging Victory
 herself,
 She gave as alms to all God's supplicants.
 If in God we trust, we should not then
 lament
 The passing torch of Pequot hegemony
 But celebrate this rising new world order--
 Sans terror, sans impediment to trade, sans
 Pe...
 We shall outrival our rivals to the
 north...

[Enter Princess X in the alleyway below.]

JOHN MATHER

Say on, say on, my boy. Whose young man is
 this? Say on, I say.

JOHN COTTON

He belongs to Reverend John, John Eliot, if
 to be believed.

JOHN MATHER

Had he shown the Pequot menace he would
 have closed his point.

[Exit Sassamon by descending the scaffold stairs.]

ANNE HUTCHINSON

Let us not take this potion they proffer
 you lest we,
 Blind sheep, confuse the road to hell with
 Heaven's path.
 Oh, do you not have minds to exercise your
 wills?
 Then must you use these faculties, or th'
 innocent

Will shoulder the wrath that rightly should
 befall the mighty
And reap the maelstrom that our foolish
 shepherd's sow.

SEARGEANT COCKBURN

(Aside to Hutchinson.)

Because it cuts and makes us bleed,
Should we forswear the surgeon's knife,
Abjure the physic that makes most well
Because some few find harm in it?

ANNE HUTCHINSON

The few forsee th' harm before the blunted
 many
Who will forsake their vision for the
 common eye.

[Exit Hutchinson to below escorted by two soldiers.]

JOHN COTTON

Haste you, please. An empty palette gives
 them food for thought:
A paradox, but turn they unruly as thinking
 makes them so.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL

I have no words to fill them with. My
 reservoir is tapped.
But their own souls will slake them, should
 they pray to your own liking.

[Re-enter Hutchinson shoved by soldiers into the alleyway below. They then shut and bar the gate against her.]

JOHN ELIOT

Let's bow our heads in humble prayer for
 the blessings that we take....

[Enter THREE SOLDIERS below behind Princess X.]

[Hutchinson picks herself up and exits.]

FIRST SOLDIER

Here, gitcha, gitcha.

THIRD SOLDIER

Wanta drink? 'S alright. More t' myself.

[Exit Princess X.]

[Sassamon unbolts the alley gate and enters.]

Whash this? Hih. THIRD SOLDIER

Injian. FIRST SOLDIER

I c'n shee. P-Pee-ked? THIRD SOLDIER

Naysir, one-a ours. FIRST SOLDIER

Who give'm th' English rags, 'r whatever. THIRD SOLDIER

Good day. JOHN SASSAMON

[One of the soldiers, the drunkest of the three, shoves Sassamon. Re-enter Princess X.]

You lookin' at me? THIRD SOLDIER

No, I was... No, sir. JOHN SASSAMON

You going to a-let them? PRINCESS X

Not now. JOHN SASSAMON

You-a hit, you hit-a back. PRINCESS X

Sounds like someone needs a spanking. FIRST SOLDIER

Put 'r in 'r place, or y'r never secure th' peace 'r azzure domestic tran- tranquillity. THIRD SOLDIER

Answer. Answer back. PRINCESS X

If he won't, we will. THIRD SOLDIER

[As they lay ~~their~~ hands on her, she grabs Sassamon's knife from its sheath and slashes the third soldier.]

Whoa. FIRST SOLDIER

SECOND SOLDIER
What, are they mad?

THIRD SOLDIER
Take that she-wolf out 'v here before...

SECOND SOLDIER
Nay, enough out of you.

THIRD SOLDIER
I'll wring 'r neck.

FIRST SOLDIER
He's bleeding.

SECOND SOLDIER
How bad?

THIRD SOLDIER
Bloody bitch.

SECOND SOLDIER
Let's put him t' bed.

FIRST SOLDIER
We were only sportin'.

[*Exeunt soldiers.*]

[*Princess X hands the bloodstained knife to Sassamon.*]

[*Exit Princess X, manet Sassamon.*]

10. Scene 3.03

[Scene: While Sassamon remains onstage from the previous scene stagehands remove the palisade wall and scaffold to expose a portion of the town square. In the middle of the street bordering the square, stage right, sits John Eliot's house. As the scene opens, the lighting shifts to create an otherworldly aura. MUSIC appropriate to the mood begins. Enter WAMSUTTA and METACOMET fully regaled in wampum vests befitting their rank. They walk down the street opposite in direction from Sassamon and grin playfully as they pass him.]

WAMSUTTA

Hey, English, you Indian?

[Sassamon reflexively reaches for his knife, but quickly checks his movement; they continue as before--walking, turning, grinning. An EAGLE FEATHER drops from Wamsutta's headdress. Sassamon drops down to pick it up. He begins to move in their direction with it, but when he looks up, the music stops, and the lights revert to their previous pattern.]

[Exeunt Wamsutta and Metacomet.]

[Sassamon holds the eagle feather up to the light and examines it until noise within Eliot's house distracts him. Enter Cockenoe descending the stairs from Eliot's house.]

COCKENOE

Crazy. Loco. Completely out of his mind.

[Enter Eliot from inside the house.]

JOHN ELIOT

Cockenoe. Cockenoe, come back. Let us confer.

[Exit Cockenoe.]

JOHN ELIOT

How do you, John. Welcome. Welcome back.

JOHN SASSAMON

Yes.

[Sassamon enters the house and reappears on the second level with Eliot. This level has no walls, but suggests them with door and window frames and some structural members. Otherwise, the audience's view remains unencumbered. He crosses the room and sits at a writing table, a standing version of his secretary. Meanwhile, foot traffic and hand-drawn carts cross the square outside. In the midst of this traffic the characters from the next scene begin to deposit furnishings and props appropriate to the upcoming scene.]

JOHN ELIOT

I hope you're not angry.

JOHN SASSAMON

Why should... should I be...

JOHN ELIOT
He'll be back. I promise you.

JOHN SASSAMON
What makes you think that?

JOHN ELIOT
Where else would he go?

JOHN SASSAMON
When?

JOHN ELIOT
I didn't hear him say.

JOHN SASSAMON
Would anyone have heard him say?

JOHN ELIOT
You are angry.

JOHN SASSAMON
Uh, I... Why should I be..?

JOHN ELIOT
What's the matter?

JOHN SASSAMON
Nothing. This.

JOHN ELIOT
What?

JOHN SASSAMON
I don't know. This. All this. How would I know what all this means?

JOHN ELIOT
All in good time.

[*Exit Eliot.*]

[*Sassamon carves a nib at the tip of the eagle feather, dips it into an inkwell, and writes. Enter JAMES PRINTER. He removes Sassamon's manuscript pages and delivers galleys; then he departs. Pedestrian traffic continues below. Printer re-emerges at Eliot's front door and deposits the manuscript material in a cart. Then he gathers a new load of galleys, disappears briefly within, and repeats the exchange with Sassamon.*]

[*Exit Printer; manet Sassamon.*]

11. Scene 3.04

[Scene: Sassamon remains in the interior of John Eliot's house. Onstage opposite him a tavernkeeper, BENJAMIN THOMPSON; a MAIDSERVANT; and PATRONS, among them, SIMON BRADSTREET, have already entered and established much of the set during the previous scene; door and window frames suggest the outline of a building; a few tables and chairs fill in details of the interior space; and a cart laden with a keg of ale arrives. Finally, the set also includes a writing table and implements identical to those at the station where Sassamon sits.]

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Interdiction never works, my friend.
The authorities may try, but they never manage
To cut it off complete. The authorities,
If you want to know-- Fact is, th' authorities
Know a lot less than we give them credit for.
That's why it's forever a game of cat-in-mouse.
Sometimes they give in a little; sometimes a little
They yank us in. They loosen, and then they
tighten:
It's all in the spirit of the moment. But they
never learn:
Interdiction is the eternal fantasy of authority.
And by the time this wisdom penetrates a few of
them,
Here come a whole new generation of authorities.

[Enter two elders who stop to converse on the street outside the imaginary boundary of the establishment. Inside, while the maidservant distributes pints of ale, a patron approaches Thompson at the bar. As he speaks, he indicates Sassamon's place at one of the tables and talks about Sassamon as if he were sitting there.]

SIMON BRADSTREET

What sort of man sits there
And you entertain him, sir?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

A queer one, I admit, even for an Indian.

SIMON BRADSTREET

Why, t' what use endure him then?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

He asks no more than for a tin of cider or cup of
tea
And a place to warm his hands or keep his papers
dry.
Besides, he comes to us of our late war
Where by all account he acquitted well:
They say he made himself a hero there.
But for all of that I care not a jot:
All men who cross that threshold find a welcome
here.

[Enter an indentured servant, PETER TALMON, SR. At first the patrons try to hide their pints, and Thompson slips out the back door. After nearly bumping into the strolling elders, Thompson retreats back inside after:]

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Good day, reverend sirs.

PETER TALMON, SR.

Greetings and good cheer.
A round for all, and all,
I trust, for a round.

PATRONS

(Dully.)

Here, here.

PETER TALMON, SR.

The hour blesses me.
Today am I re-born.
Do you puzzle at my saying?
Then I will tell you all.
For, as some of you might guess, I've
 labored in full
My indentured year. Behold you all: see
 here
The hands that despots bound and would have
 idled
In a dungeon still had not some magistrate
Marooned me to this coast to fashion new
 life--
And by these hands-- out of the abysm of
 the old.
Oh, true enough, in alienated toil
I've spent my year, but by the grace of
 Heaven
I have gained; for though my hands were
 tied to service,
Yet could I feel myself a thief again--
This time, you see, for virtue, not for
 vice--
As each day's unbroken labour stole me
 closer
T' the terms my contract took: unbeknownst
To me the outward motions of my hands
Carved herein a new self where none such
 self
Any man before beheld. And here: I'll show
 you
The paper which gives it proof. These
 instruments

Of parchment, these deeds, these documents
of man--
Call them what you will-- supplant any
wrought
With denser stuff: they have power no one
dare
Deny to take th' prerogatives of nature
And put them in our hands. By what other
measure
Could a man rise and turn mother to
himself?
Where else but in this new-found land could
a man
Leave behind the carcass of his former
life,
And, by his own redeeming hands, deliver
Himself, new-born, through this, the womb
of service?
Come, peruse my indenture. It proves me
freeman
Like yourselves. Here, take my hand; call
me
Associate, full partaker of your cause.
And God bless this our colony. But for now:
Let someone read and voice it loud and...
What?
No takers? Come, it proves my worth to all.

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Let someone else. I must turn th' tap and make the
spirits flow.

PETER TALMON, SR.

You there, you sir, will you
But read it to the rest?

PATRON TWO

Not I. The darkness herein
Puts too odious a strain
Against my sense of sight.

PETER TALMON, SR.

Tedious did you say
Or insist you on 'odious?'

PATRON TWO

I do.

PETER TALMON, SR.

I'd say 't would strain
Another organ too.
Sir, you?

PATRON THREE
Who but a don
Could decipher the careless hand?

PETER TALMON, SR.
I see. Sir? Surely you.

SIMON BRADSTREET
I put by my spectacles
Not long before I came.

BENJAMIN THOMPSON
You would do well to ask our scholar there.

PETER TALMON, SR.
The natural man? I have
No time for such a jest.

BENJAMIN THOMPSON
You would better t' keep your counsel. He may not
blanch his skin
By candle, the way our elders do in place of
working in the sun,
But for a scholar, I tell you, no one surpasses
him.

PETER TALMON, SR.
I thought their gifts confined them to
wilderness.
How comes it they obtain a skill which only
Flowers from the bloom of our civil life?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON
Ask not the why, but ever keep to your counsel,
If you know what's well. For if you want it read,
It's well not to offend. Read you so much?

PETER TALMON, SR.
Your point I take. I will show you
humbleness
Itself.... (*To Sassamon's empty chair:*)
I crave your pardon if I may.
Would you-- if it shall not vex you
overmuch--
Would you read a codicil which most
int'rests us?

[*Enter Eliot, above, to collect some papers:*]

JOHN SASSAMON
(*From aside at his secretary.*)
I'll do my best, should you please t' point
it out.

JOHN ELIOT

(*Also aside.*)

For certain, you always do, dear John.

[*Exit Eliot.*]

PETER TALMON, SR.

Say on. For it lies hereabout.

You may skip the whereases and the

herebyes, the parties

Of th' first part along with the party of

the second,

And move to what pertains on us the most.

JOHN SASSAMON

Mean you atop this section?-- where "Said

indenture

Shall own no property, but all effects

Ow'd to his person, as clothing, shoes, and

sundries..."

PETER TALMON, SR.

Yea, but nay, that does not concern us

here.

Pass to the codicil which sets me free

When that I am five years taken into

service.

(*Aside.*)

Look, he reads without his lips.

JOHN SASSAMON

I see.

But you want to be seven years taken into

service.

PETER TALMON, SR.

Seven years? Wherefore say you seven?

Ha, seven is no handsome number here.

Seven for plague or famine, but not for

service.

JOHN SASSAMON

I say not seven; I give only what I read.

PETER TALMON, SR.

(*Totavernkeeper.*)

He cheats me my birthright which by this

hand I earn.

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Words are only words, which as often bend and twist

To fit the particular; they're never so hard as
cast in stone.

PETER TALMON, SR.

Who thinks he to tell me I have more to
serve?
The contract engages me for five, not
seven.
That's what I was told.

JOHN SASSAMON

You ask me read;
I read the words; I do not make them up.

PETER TALMON, SR.

Who teaches these Indians to read and
write?
Does it not disorder everything we do
When those deserving least lord it over
Those who master them? How can a man
Know where he stands when every advancement
he wins
By sacrifice then turns to nullity
By those who, by whatever means, escape
their station
And stand upon the shoulders of honest
service?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

I tell thee, this works no favor for congenial
drink.

SIMON BRADSTREET

I, for one, I think I see his point.
How well would the universe fare to come
untuned
And each planet indulge a separate chime at
will
And call it harmony? Even warlike Mars
Dreads the primacy of God's most splendid
orb
And wittingly contents himself to feed
Upon his crumbs of light. How, then, can
we,
As men, hope regulate ourselves if we
Ignore the harmonies of Heaven's spheres
Which, by their very pattern, decree a
place
For all, and all for a place, from high to
low?

PETER TALMON, SR.

The man speaks aright. Whenever do you see

The hen stalk the fox which makes his meal
of her?
Nay, you do not; no, nor do the lambs
gather
To surround a pack of wolves, but they unto
them.

[At his desk Sassamon takes up a letter opener. The gesture startles, and then activates the patrons and barmaid into activity, first cleaning and then dismantling the properties which comprise this particular set. Meanwhile, Thompson draws Talmon, Sr. away from Sassamon's table and leads him toward, and eventually out, the downstage door.]

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

You cast yourself in the right, sir; that you well
may do,
But you make yourself impolitic in saying so. Think
on this:
Our establishment thrives-- not on controversy--
but on what common ground
We wrest from the wilderness of incivility.
Intemperate-ness of speech
Dry rots us to the timbers of our house, and as
often gives us our bad name
As intemperateness of drink. Nay, do not provoke
him more,
But come aside for what I'll show you else.
Authority is like this vine
Called bittersweet which has not backbone enough to
reach
Its own way to heaven, but must entwine in the
branches of its host,
To choke and kill it if it must, in order to
promote itself.
Better is it to snip the bittersweet at its knees,
for who,
In honesty, looks forward to the homely pretense of
its flower?
But far better yet to deny it soil and wish it fare
so ill
That all life else teem about it and shade it to
oblivion.
As I say, we do not thrive here on intemperateness,
authority does.
The less intemperateness, whether of mind or speech
or drink,
The less cause for authority, and the less
authority,
The better for us all. Now, inside I'll go and wish
you fare-thee-well.
For you would do well and remember, where and when
you will,
To cast out authority, sir, not cast in yourself to
its rank.

Then might you overshadow it, lest that it
overshadow you.

[Exit Tavernkeeper.]

[Enter two STRETCHER-BEARERS hauling a shrouded form. A skeletal limb appears to dangle over the edge; they stop, set down their burden, and re-arrange the cargo. When they resume their passage, they do so after shuffling through several combinations of disorientation between themselves and with respect to the direction they take as they depart. In this confusion they drop their cargo and proceed for awhile without noticing they have left it behind. Then they return to pick it up.]

[Exeunt Stretcher-bearers.]

Yea, I have heard them thus, as if unto
this land they come
For freedom, only to forget our business to
build God's City.
If that you doubt, take notice sometime how
these, these equivocators,
Prevaricate on all else, but on the crux of
their equivocation
They stand solid. How comes it, then, we
display intransigence
On all matters else, but fall to pieces on
that which matters most?

JOHN ELIOT

But do not God's commandments serve as
brick and mortar to His City?
We should not wish, therefore, to de-
construct what comes from heaven
To construct His earthly monument. That way
reaches not toward Him.

JOHN COTTON

Yea, and for God's work you must have
brick, not merely a type of
mortar,
Forever stirred by unruly instinct, which
therefore never sets.
You cannot build a wall where its
constituents roam and migrate.
For that alone, I tell you, God does not
apply his Word
To the wild man any more than does He to
beasts of wilderness
Or to the fishes of the sea. He reserves
not His compassion
To lavish on the idle nomad, but on them
whom He created
After the image of His person. Let me tell
you: doth God
Look like the darkling whale or Jonah whom
the whale would swallow?
More like Jonah, you would say. But this
does hardly do Him justice:
For you must take your sight from the
whale, and many, many rods
beyond,
And with Jonah as your bead, you only begin
discern His presence.
Now, understanding this, please take no
offense at those who wonder
At th' Indian you keep. It confounds my
wife you let him wander

About the house: she will not call on you
for fear she'll find
No place to sit, for, as you must admit, no
matter how plain
You dress him in our English habit, you
cannot buff him clean.

JOHN ELIOT
I thought I saw that window closed when we
arrived, and now
I see it ope'd.

JOHN COTTON
It could not, and we not
hear the while we spoke,
For as we spoke, we spoke not loudly, as I
think. But, ha!
Yes, I joked to reassure my wife that to
sit he had a way
To lean upon his tail, but still it
frighted her to know
He'd dallied there.

JOHN ELIOT
But yet I could have
sworn I saw it shut,
For as we came I thought the clouds
glowered forebodingly,
But that it reassured me to see my window
closed against them.

JOHN COTTON
Then have the clouds, like inept generals,
spent their strategy
In bluster, so when that they gather and
send abroad their rainy soldiers,
They would indeed have forfeit' all
advantage of surprise;
For by then you will have long since sealed
your front against assault.

JOHN ELIOT
Of so much and more have I taken note, and,
once noting, then discount'd.
I must in and bolt the door.

[Exit Eliot.]

JOHN COTTON
Yea, do not
bother tarry, then,
Ev'n if you do not heed my humor.... For
myself I have no shame

In taking your advice; I'll wend my way
toward home as well,
The sooner to seal myself against whatever
menace comes.

[*Exit Cotton.*]

13. Scene 3.06

[Scene: The interior of John Eliot's house. Sassamon remains as before at his standing secretary; Eliot enters from the previous scene.]

JOHN ELIOT
How do you, John.

JOHN SASSAMON
Yes.

JOHN ELIOT
You are angry?

JOHN SASSAMON
Should I be?

JOHN ELIOT
You are angry.

JOHN SASSAMON
Why think you that?

JOHN ELIOT
What's the matter?

JOHN SASSAMON
This.

JOHN ELIOT
What?

JOHN SASSAMON
This word.

JOHN ELIOT
Does it not mean 'to give up, to render null and void?'

[Exit Eliot.]

[Sassamon unties the band in his hair and shakes it loose; then he removes several articles of his English clothing. In another part of the house Eliot reappears and shuts a window against the gathering storm.]

[Blackout.]

14. Scene 4.01

[Scene: A wilderness gorge with a sylvan pool center stage: The impending storm of the previous scene unleashes its full ferocity. Enter a chorus of Indians who dance with abandon during the storm. As the storm subsides they meld into the rocks and trees and fallen logs of the set in a way that blurs, as much as possible, the distinction between inorganic, vegetative, and animate nature .]

[Manet chorus .]

15. Scene 4.02

[Scene: The same, a forest glen with a tranquil watershed pool. Enter former soldiers Sergeant Ralph Cockburn and Captain John Underhill now dressed as land speculators. Cockburn carries the bulk of their belongings. Both are soaked from the storm. In the course of the scene they sit, stand, kneel, and lean on the actors shaping themselves into components of the natural environment.]

RALPH COCKBURN

Here and no further, sir. I can't go on.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Call me not, 'sir.' I am your equal and contemporaine. These Indians will sense a plot if we reek too much of rank.

RALPH COCKBURN

I try, sir. But old habits die hard as royal charters do.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Try harder, then. The times call us to it, and thus must we bend to the age's authority.

RALPH COCKBURN

So much for the dull bloom of peace which blossoms from the more savory stench of war.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Aye. Aye. Still, it serves us better to re-make ourselves in commerce with the times. The sooner we bend ourselves to it, the sooner we cut and seal our first deal. And for that we must find our boy and somehow bring ourselves to call him 'man.'

RALPH COCKBURN

(Taking out a compass.)

To 'sir' him, sir, does him well enough.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Nay, do not unpocket that: it loses us, and points us not at our man but near t' every friggin' tree in His creation.

RALPH COCKBURN

Oh, sir, how I miss the oaths of war. You tame me with your diction more than ever woman could. How I hate this peace.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Nay, nay, quiet... Ah, look to it. For th' compass points not so much our way, as it makes a pole which draws our man to us.

RALPH COCKBURN

He comes, he comes just as you say.

[Enter PETER TOBIAS.]

JOHN UNDERHILL

Draw you out the glossary, and do it fast. For I will 'tempt him in his own tongue. Do it now.

RALPH COCKBURN

Patience, sir.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Tum quammy sumway.

RALPH COCKBURN

Nay, sir, you say it in the stately Pequot drawl and they are unsettled. He is a northern man; you would do well to clip your speech like his.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Quite right. Na-toc-wo-may-tonny-tay-wam. How am I doing?

RALPH COCKBURN

Very well, sir. You speak his tongue. You will see your way to him. Soon you will have him eating from your very palm. (*Pulling a parchment from his satchel.*) Do you wish the scroll now?

JOHN UNDERHILL

(*Taking the parchment.*)

When I present it him, look he recoils at it.

RALPH COCKBURN

He thinks it dangerous; then must we accustom him.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Look here, boy. Roe-quam-son-nay-ti-na. It does not harm, it does not bite, it does not explode. Speri-nay-wamp-tor-mi-til? Good God, boy, it's only a piece of paper.

RALPH COCKBURN

Look, still he rolls his eyes, even when you unfurl and show it harmless.

JOHN UNDERHILL

A fool, a drivelling fool if ever I saw one.

RALPH COCKBURN

His mark alone would suffice, sir.

JOHN UNDERHILL

So I say myself. But he lacks the brain for it.

RALPH COCKBURN

Take care what you say, sir, or he may hear us.

JOHN UNDERHILL
Nay, he looks too dumb for that.

PETER TOBIAS
But not so deaf, sirs, as you might wish.

[Exit.]

RALPH COCKBURN
This does not bode well, sir, no, not for our enterprise.

JOHN UNDERHILL
Nay, but we have no time for that. We must persevere.

RALPH COCKBURN
Remember our friends who outfitted us-- how easy they told us this would be. A few trinkets here and there and then they sign.

JOHN UNDERHILL
I have done with them and all their 'how-tos.' From now on we forge our own... Trinkets? How did we forget the trinkets?

[Noise from an advancing crowd encroaches from offstage.]

RALPH COCKBURN
So we did, sir.... I hear voices.

JOHN UNDERHILL
I hear them too. But our senses must deceive us this far into the wilderness. What says your compass?

RALPH COCKBURN
This way north.

JOHN UNDERHILL
Quite right. This puts us elsewhere than we thought, in no-God-fearing-man's-land.

RALPH COCKBURN
Oh, for a passel of men at our command, sir, and all subservient to the cause of battle. How I hate this peace.

JOHN UNDERHILL
You may come to love it, and as soon as they should find us.

RALPH COCKBURN
While I think on that, let us remove ourselves from sight.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Nay, a better plan: you stay and work the crowd, while I prepare our arms.

[He climbs a ledge on a steep rock outcropping. From here he drags up their parcels with a rope strung over a limb.]

RALPH COCKBURN

Let me go too; I thought us equals, sir.

JOHN UNDERHILL

We are, but in this I alone can better regain and load our arms. To that end I take to the escarpment here, while you pass me up our freight. But by all means keep these, for this time you must ply them with our trinkets. Let us not forget.

RALPH COCKBURN

No, sir.

[Drums; shouts and fanfare. Enter WRESTLERS and their friends from the Wampanoag nation. Their numbers swell immediately with the dancers of the previous scene emerging instantaneously from the natural environment into which they had receded.]

RALPH COCKBURN

Captain, you will not leave me here, naked as to arms?

JOHN UNDERHILL

Fear not. I'll have both our weapons powdered, balled, and primed. Let them lay a finger on, and I will make them think the combined hand of all th' United Colonies lays upon them. I'll keep a watchful eye.

RALPH COCKBURN

Please, sir, I abjure you. Let down the rope to speed my climb; that way cements our strength, for nothing weakens worse than divided equals.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Stand fast. Be bold for peace, for they bestir themselves.

[The wrestlers engage. Those around them shout encouragement: "Get behind him." "Pin his arm." "Watch out for his left" "Unfair hold." "Trip him" "Don't quit now." "I'll lay odds on him for the next match too." "Give me my winnings now." etc. Cockburn passes among the spectators trying to interest them with items from his bag of trinkets, but all ignore him.]

[John Sassamon's secretary abruptly enters the scene followed closely by John Eliot. The wrestling stops, wampum discreetly changes hands, and the wrestlers and their seconds slip away. The remaining crowd shuffles into an attitude of prayer. Eliot speaks directly to the secretary.]

JOHN ELIOT

Stay. Let us be driven by less heat and more
temperance.

JOHN SASSAMON

(*Off.*)

Nay, have you not said a preacher speaks from his
own heart?

JOHN ELIOT

Yea, and he speaks from his heart, not to it.

(*To the assembly.*)

Good even' to you all. Leave us this moment
To confer and in good time we will conduct you.

(*To Sassamon's secretary.*)

I thought, therefore, of Job for the substance of
our reading.

[Enter John Sassamon in a hybrid of European and native dress. He stands across the stage from Eliot in the approximate location where he was last seen in Eliot's house. From here he converses with Eliot through the audience as if looking at him through a distant mirror. Eliot does likewise.]

JOHN SASSAMON

And I still of Jacob, for they have just witnessed
the wrestler's craft.

Therefore I wish to speak Jacob unto them who
wrestled with his God.

JOHN ELIOT

They be not with you as to Jacob. You are with
Jacob,

They are not. Therefore will we speak unto them of
Job

For, as you speak Job unto them, you will be Jacob
in your heart

And wrestle with him who mends you: Remember this:
the shepherd

Takes not to the hills and leaves his sheep behind
him,

But speaks to the level of his flock. Go forth,
therefore,

Speak unto your flock of Job, and be you one to
wrest the name of God of them.

[Eliot withdraws into the trees.]

RALPH COCKBURN

Tsst... What brings you here? Do you know us, Reverend?

JOHN ELIOT

Of course. I know your characters in any guise.

JOHN UNDERHILL

How comes it your are waylaid so deep into the forest?

JOHN ELIOT

Waylaid? I am not lost. From where you crouch, you stand
not above three miles from Boston.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Three... what? Not so. Not as our compass shows.

RALPH COCKBURN

My master's right. It cannot... Not Boston...
Unless from my back I've dragged it behind me these
hundred miles of hinterland.

JOHN UNDERHILL

You walked this whole way, and that with the burden of
your age?

JOHN ELIOT

By the straight path so I did. Yea, and I an old man if
you mind not.

RALPH COCKBURN

Nay, and you must be a spirit and fly as the crow flies.

JOHN ELIOT

Not at all. I am as bound to my flesh as the crow to
his,
Though less eagerly. Come you all; I will show you.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Nay, not yet. [*To sergeant.*] See you what I see?

[*Sassamon, speaking in the Massachusetts dialect, passes out copies of his manuscript.*]

RALPH COCKBURN

Sir, is that not our boy, our Waw..? The boy who
translates, our Wassa-- what was it?--
Wassaman.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Nay, for I think this one larger than our boy, though he
looks way like.

JOHN ELIOT

Mean you John Sassamon?

JOHN UNDERHILL

Even him, if that is he. How does he then?

JOHN ELIOT

In the balance, mostly well, though his soul roils with
turmoil.
But with his Bibles he now serves his God as well as
once he served his country.

JOHN UNDERHILL
You say he sells them...

RALPH COCKBURN
Bibles?

JOHN ELIOT
Oh, but he does more than sell; he writes them too.
He gives them God's Word in their own tongue;
And for that they reward him as God moves them.
Listen, I will impart him as I can.

[*Sassamon continues in the Massachusetts dialect.*]

JOHN ELIOT
He speaks of Job, did you hear? He's crossed the ford
At Jabbok and now he wrestles with his Maker;
For now you hear him, that he contends as Jacob
Even as you think he speaks of Job.
Yea, he tells of Job's blessings in this life
Which God allows the devil to remove,
Who then upon him lays pustules to his flesh,
And enkindles foul combustion to his breath.
Then that disaster befalls him, that Job keeps faith:
For 'no godly reason but that we cannot know the mind of
God.'

They stir. They disavow Job's argument.
They say they do not like white men's stories
Because they use them to impose themselves;
And that one argues with his neighbor, for he says such
stories weaken them;
And that one too, he seconds him, the speaker:
"Tell such parables to the English," I think he says.
But look. He relucts. He relucts. There now,
You see he walks through Job's dilemma.
Oh, this shows quality; I fear not for him now.

JOHN UNDERHILL
Would he help us then, when God can spare him?
For we give these red men trinkets as for alms,
And though we ask nothing for it, we urge,
From time to time, for th' enrichment of their souls,
To yield us parcels of this wasted wilderness...

RALPH COCKBURN
In short, would you help us help ourselves to him?

JOHN UNDERHILL

He means by this small grace he would extend
God's Commonwealth and thereby His glory, not our own.

JOHN ELIOT

Why there he is, and for the asking he'll hear you
surely:
But why not direct your appeal to Him whose aid will
help you most...?
And now then, by your light I'll to Boston in advance of
night.

RALPH COCKBURN

Shall we escort astride you as you walk?

JOHN ELIOT

Nay, and I fear no man, for God's grace enkindles all
our people:
If He should see aught amiss, he will protect. Good day.

JOHN UNDERHILL

And God be with you, Reverend, all your way.

[Exit Eliot.]

[Birdsongs and sounds of other fauna filter into the scene. Sassamon speaks to a portion of the praying Indian assemblage now breaking up.]

JOHN SASSAMON

I hear you, but do not despair if one tale, Job's,
mislikes you;
We will find others to your spirit, as when Jacob
wrestled naked with his God.

RALPH COCKBURN

Jobe, job, Jacob, Jabbok: I hear not a word of sense in
all he says.
They jabber too quick to make a tittle of sense.

JOHN SASSAMON

Elsewhere we explore this. For now let us look to our
brethren.
I'll join you shortly.

[Exit rump congregation.]

JOHN UNDERHILL

Quick, now's our chance. Hail. Hail, friend.

RALPH COCKBURN

Remember us?

JOHN SASSAMON

Captain. Sergeant. Yes, of course. How goes it with you?

JOHN UNDERHILL

You've grown up, filled out. A specimen you make.

RALPH COCKBURN

He does.

JOHN SASSAMON

(Looking into the pool.)

I always thought I am as ever I was. But we stand too close to each increment of change to observe ourselves.

RALPH COCKBURN

There. And with some help he'll soon see more than himself.

JOHN UNDERHILL

We come to make you an offer with no catch or strings attached. Tell him.

RALPH COCKBURN

You tell him, sir. I'll to the trinkets.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Forget the trinkets. We're looking for a partner, and we think you're it.

RALPH COCKBURN

Someone who interprets us to your kind, so we're not so misunderstood.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Like the old days except we shan't 'boy' you; you'll be our partner and confrere.

[Re-enter Peter Tobias, with ALDERMAN, ROWAN, and SONCONEWHA, all members of a Wampanoag hunting party.]

PETER TOBIAS

What do you call this?

ROWAN

Freezes dead like a 'possum.

ALDERMAN

No, man, 'possums is smart, smart enough not to walk and talk when they sleep.

SONCONEWHA

A mouse maybe.

PETER TOBIAS

Could be. A very large mouse. A mouse with ambition. The kind of mouse who squirms into a boat's hold and travels the sea. A mouse so big and fat he isn't even a mouse anymore.

ALDERMAN

Oh yeah. Mmm. An imported creature. Like a rat. Man, a rat who imports himself.

ROWAN

A rat who coils his tail with candlewax.

ALDERMAN

And that imported too.

ROWAN

And pinks his face with fat.

PETER TOBIAS

And thinks he can make himself a pig, a newcomer pig.

ALDERMAN

That's thinking big. From mouse to rat; from rat to pig.

ROWAN

What kind of creature is this?

ALDERMAN

We got a pig-rat or a rat-pig or a--

SONCONEWHA

Maybe he's looking for a cup of English tea.

JOHN UNDERHILL
(*Aside to Cockburn.*)

I got that. Did you?

RALPH COCKBURN
(*Aside to Underhill.*)

We better clear out of here.

PETER TOBIAS

Friends of yours?

JOHN SASSAMON

I know them passingly.

[*Underhill and Cockburn continue aside.*]

JOHN UNDERHILL

You should have brought our arms.

RALPH COCKBURN

You said you'd undertake them, sir.

JOHN UNDERHILL
Don't let them hear us. Ask them where we are.

RALPH COCKBURN
Which way Boston?

ALDERMAN
(*Pointing.*)
Go!

[*Exeunt Underhill and Cockburn.*]

PETER TOBIAS
Are they fled?

ROWAN
Heh, for all they're worth.

PETER TOBIAS
Good. (*To Sassamon.*) Now maybe we can talk. Know you
those birds?

JOHN SASSAMON
As I say, I know them not well.

PETER TOBIAS
Then tell him,
sachem.

SONCONEWHA
Of course I merit no such mark of authority-- except
in the sense
That humors these, my friends-- unless they think it
possible
To beguile me with their flattery. Though far-famed
Massasoit fathered me,
Yet would I not trace his footsteps in the realm of
action as did my brothers,
Wamsutta and Metacomet, each an engine of Massasoit's
legacy.
And so I speak to you as one like in ambition,
if unlike in mind.
As shaman to the English-- and to those our
countrymen
Who pitch their tents with them-- you may not see the
underbelly
Of their mission. But this you should know to gauge
the consequence
Of what your voice conveys. For where action goes
untutored,

We find no moral choice that we can either praise or
censure.
But once informed the doer renders honest the scale
by which
We measure him. And so, by your response, we measure
you.

JOHN SASSAMON

So may I prove me worthy, and so do all to make you
like me.

ALDERMAN

Tell him what they're up to.

SONCONEWHA

With this preamble
past us, that, we will.

ROWAN

They've grafted a poison tree to our shores,
And now it goes to seed.

SONCONEWHA

Let's let him speak that
we may lead to that.

JOHN SASSAMON

I can give you no reasons to justify my life: what
man can?
I can only share the vision which occupies my
heart.

ALDERMAN

Oh, ho. Does he expect us to listen to some vision
jest?

JOHN SASSAMON

Why waste words on them who cannot tame their
appetites;
Those for whom impulse rules and ideas languish
Will never grasp the subtler shades as you their
shaman might,
And so I will speak alone to you; but first, to
them I say
Your words ring hollow, so hollow they barely
sting:
Think on this: your words travel only so far as you
can shout,
And even then you will admit the limits of their
coinage
Which strays not far from their mint in locality
and clan.

But in the English words I bank, I bring a currency
imparting strength
In that world order where words conflate with
strength itself.
Your words-- your words reek of weakness; your
words die
As soon as they are spoke: theirs survive the
vastness of the oceans
And all the frictive tides which pulverize the
ages;
Theirs move nations; theirs destroy tyrannies;
theirs build cities
Where none before them lived. They honor us,
therefore,
When they share their words with us.
(To Sonconewha.)

And now, let
us speak apart:
To you I say that if, in time to come, all our
nations as one
Combine, will we not draw from this eventuality
more strength
Than could ever those who now presume to tutor us
foresee?
For do we not know ourselves as much as them, while
they know none of us?

SONCONEWHA
So you would have us forego our Algonquian pride
for expedience
Believing the English will one day bow to our
ascendance?

ALDERMAN
Oh, man, look at this: he gonna pull wool right
over Sonco's eyes.

ROWAN
Nah. Not possible. But what if? Who's Sonco? He
don't have no power.

ALDERMAN
No way, man. You got it all wrong. He got 'lotta
power.
Look at it. He's a powaw, man. Sometime they got
more power
Than the sagamores do. Did you ever see 'em doin'
anything
Without goin' to the powaws first, gettin' their
okay?
No one wants to mess with no medicine man, man.

PETER TOBIAS

Ease off, or the rocks will not collude with us and
amplify their speech.

SONCONEWHA

Sacrifice? Ho, sacrifice. I've heard that before.
Only fools fall for that.

JOHN SASSAMON

Then do you think it foolish to comprehend the
occasion
Which so elevates our age? When but in our time do
you see
The meeting of the peoples who advance upon the
rising sun, ourselves,
With them who pursue it where it sets? For aeons
two spirit strains
Have migrated against their common source, and now
they merge
And interlock, and you think this a fool's dream
not worth the sacrifice?
Think on how our nascent race formed in the howl of
chaos,
Then, sooner than it saw the light of day, sundered
from its inmost core
And, rootless, fled across the expanse of land and
sea
Only to find our lateral'd and alien'd parts thanks
to the roundness of th' earth.
Do we now forego the very newness which defines the
times
And fly this promontory, this wood, this continent
where opportunity now stands?
Oh, how should we then excuse our primal crime of
separation
Made then in the fog of innocence, were we to
repeat it in our mind's full competence
And majority? Even the mother who bore us all could
plead her youthful influence
Which skewed us at our birth: For did not Nature's
polarity
Once run West and East and induce us contrariwise,
like iron filings,
To parallel the pattern of the sun?; but since the
poles have righted
And found their perpendicular, North to South, who
would grant us
Her extenuation, now that she has reached a sober
age?
And if we cannot claim a wayward parent, nor our
own untutored impulse,
What spirit, what god, what heaven can we claim to
foster us?,

How countenance the severance of peoples or the
discord of our common culture?
It urges us, even in the face of injustice, to
sacrifice for the aim
Inherent in the time: And for that must we imbibe
the Word as they bear it us,
Even if by their deeds the English seem to prove
the Scriptures false:
Then shall we outstrip the messenger himself and,
by our character,
Prove the message true, despite the falseness of
the bearer.

SONCONEWHA

And herein lies the very
argument
Which proves you false: for if the God whom they
fear
Does not restrain them, what force of humankind or
Nature will?

[Faintly at first, human calls expertly disguised as the sounds of birds, chipmunks, and crickets begin.]

JOHN SASSAMON

If by that you mean their gunpowder, their plows,
their tools
They crumble as dust against the ramparts of the
Spirit.
Let our rival exceed his grasp, and so much the
more
Will he oblige himself to us. But trust me:
He will not do so as his future lies, every bit,
with ourselves:
Our several cultures shall meet and rise together
like opposing waves
(Have you not noticed we have already gained by the
lifting?);
And as he could not survive our harsh and angry
winters without us in the past,
So shall he 'meliorate the winter of our soul in
time to come.

[Sounds of the local fauna intensify.]

SONCONEWHA

I am called. I do not agree. But I must go.

[Exit Sonconewha.]

ALDERMAN

(To Sassamon.)

What you talk? Who you think you are?

ROWAN

You ain't no white man, man.

ALDERMAN

We got to make him see himself. Got to show him who he is.

PETER TOBIAS

We heard praying Indians before, but he's big-daddy wolf of them all.

ALDERMAN

Tobias, you go on. Tell 'em this turkey don't fly. We'll take it from here.

PETER TOBIAS

Sonco will tell them. They don't need me for that.

ALDERMAN

Whatever. Let's get down to it. (*To Sassamon.*) Who d' you think you are?

JOHN SASSAMON

I... This is me. This book. This is what I do. And that should do for the likes of you.

ALDERMAN

What, you're a book?

JOHN SASSAMON

If you'll let me finish: I'm known as a minister, a purveyor of christian doctrine, a doctrine of love... if you know anything about...

ALDERMAN

Oh yeah, love. We've heard about those shootin' arrows of love.

ROWAN

Only they come through the barrel of a gun.

PETER TOBIAS

That's some kind of love.

ALDERMAN

Let me tell you something. Here you are talkin' 'bout love, and you don't even know what's going on. So I'm goin' tell you something. You know why those folks invented christianity? I'm goin' tell you why. They invented

christianity because they had to. That's right. Had to. They invented christianity to socialize a people with no known natural civility. Keep 'em from tearin' themselves up, from cuttin' one another's throats. Well, we got no need for that. Hear me? We don't need no prayin' Indian comin' 'long here t' harmonize us, tell us about helpin' one another-- something we know all about. We take care of our own; we take care of others too. We even took care of that vermin spillin' off the boat when they come here, middle of the winter, not knowin' what the hell they're doin'. Couldn't even take care of 'emselfes. So don't talk to us about no book of love.

JOHN SASSAMON

Then you're right, I won't. As I would not waste my words with you before, I will not waste them now.

ROWAN

(Blocking Sassamon's way.)

'Ey, where you goin'?

PETER TOBIAS

Looks like he still hasn't a clue who he is.

ALDERMAN

And we're running out of ways to make him see it.

ROWAN

Here's where he'll see himself.

[Sassamon shoves Rowan aside. Rowan drags him toward the small pool, and Alderman soon joins in the effort.]

ALDERMAN

I thought you were supposed to turn the other cheek, chaplain.

ROWAN

Make him kneel here.

JOHN SASSAMON

(Looking off.)

I see. I see myself, alright?

ALDERMAN

No, take a look. I want you to take a long, hard look and tell us what you see.

PETER TOBIAS

Leave off, Alderman. He's not going to see anything if he doesn't have a mind to it.

ROWAN

I can't get him to face himself.

ALDERMAN

Face himself? This Injun's never going to face himself. He's got to look on the inside. Only way he's gonna get a grip on the outside.

[Alderman plunges Sassamon's head into the water and holds it there.]

PETER TOBIAS

He doesn't have any air; you'll kill him.

ALDERMAN

Come on, Tobias. You can't take the light, stay out of the sun. Now, take hold here. Goin' t' let you take him up. Then when I give the word, you push him back down again.... Not too soon. Give his ass time to think.... That's it.... Oh yes, pushin' bubbles. I like that. Let him up.... *(To Sassamon.)* Now tell us who you are.

JOHN SASSAMON

I- I- I'm Re- Rev...

ALDERMAN

Push him under.

JOHN SASSAMON

...-er- end Joh...

ALDERMAN

He still doesn't get it. Under.

JOHN SASSAMON

Joh- John... No!

[Tobias and Rowan push Sassamon under again. Rowan steps back and Tobias continues to hold him there.]

ALDERMAN

He's not hurting any. Don't let him fool you.... See what he has to say now.

JOHN SASSAMON

Nuh-nuh-nuh-no-no more...

ALDERMAN

Not good enough. Under. Under, I said....

[Sounds imitating the natural world recur. Re-enter Sonconewha with Metacomet and ANAWAN.]

SONCONEWHA

Tobias, what the hell? Have you lost your mind...?
We need him.

[Tobias releases Sassamon.]

ALDERMAN

All in good sport. See? Tobias meant no harm in it.

SONCONEWHA

Do something, Alderman. Help push the water from
his lungs.

[Sassamon rises, spluttering and coughing.]

ROWAN

(To Sonconewha.)

What pulls you down? Or do we imagine some change
in you?

SONCONEWHA

A change indeed. And you prove yourself astute to
notice it.

ROWAN

What could have befallen you in so short a time?

SONCONEWHA

News... News that shatters and divides us from all
that went before:

By all our ancestors who anteceded us, and all our
offspring yet to come,

It staggers me to speak what cannot be, much as we
fear what is.

Our sachem, paragon of our nation, son to the
venerable Ousamaquin, known to all as
Massasoit,

And only then brother to me and my elder,
Metacomet, here...

METACOMET

He means to say Wamsutta, by forced removal, is
taken from us.

ROWAN

Captived?

PETER TOBIAS

What?

ALDERMAN

Forced by whom?

ROWAN

The Pequots, our ancient enemies threaten us no
more. The Narragansett?

METACOMET

None of these. English.

PETER TOBIAS

English?

ALDERMAN

At Boston? That I could
believe.

METACOMET

No, those we thought most clasped to us.

PETER TOBIAS

Not Hartford whom we regard indifferently. Then
Providence?

METACOMET

Not Providence, though neither do I trust their
vaunted Mr. Williams.
Plymouth.

ALDERMAN

Not so. No.... How possible?

PETER TOBIAS

Plymouth? They once were our babes and we the she-
wolf who nursed them.

ROWAN

They would take him who harmed them not at all,
The son of him who helped them most: Wamsutta?

SONCONEWHA

Unlike Massasoit who, like ripened fruit, lapsed
from the tree which bore him up
After long, productive life and gently merged with
fertile earth...
But Wamsutta-- they have torn him from his limb...
No.
More: he is the limb... the branch, the trunk, the
tree.

METACOMET

The mighty oak; and they have yanked it, roots and
all, from its wellspring
Struck deep 'to th' inmost caverns nourished by th'
abiding Earth.

ANAWAN

Here should I stand forth and speak to the occasion
lest that
The natural reticence of warriors should reveal too
haltingly our state
And confuse the deliberations the moment calls on
us to make.
We need not call on those most injured here, these
brothers,
To forego that anasthetic silence-- which even
heroes we entitle to--
And expect them to give voice to words, words
entwined with thoughts,
And thoughts commingled with that private grief the
present crisis
Would have them shun: therefore will I acquaint you
with those few facts
That now we know, and honest sources to us confirm:
that the underscum
Of Plymouth, led by the wayward son of Edward
Winslow, took hostage
Our brother, friend, and sachem with drawn and
pointed guns
And marched him thence with several of his aunts
and cousins
And mother's friends, and once there accused him,
and through him us,
Of possessing that which any creature owns that
breathes in air
Or takes in nourishment: by that I mean no more
than the means
Of our self-defense. Beyond this we know little
else,
Though we hear of rumors that young Winslow and his
friends
Have tortured, starved for drink, or even killed
our Wamsutta
To make some show of zeal and purpose to their
elders;
But on such hearsay we cannot rely and therefore
cannot act,
Unless the respect of habeas corpus they deny, or,
should they dare it,
Only the cold, extinguished embers of his life
return to us.
But for now let us better assume that Wamsutta
still lives,

That honest brokerage will bring him back to our
embrace,
That all of Plymouth does not stand behind this
monstrous crime,
And that they will punish this upstart and renegade
faction
Which nullifies our mutual covenant and so
disgraces them.

METACOMET

Anawon speaks to the point: we must keep cooler
heads than they,
And by our attribute of honor release him from
their tentacles.

SONCONEWHA

That they release themselves held hostage by this
cowardice:
That touches why we've doubled back: we need
someone with some ease
And entry among them to speak on our behalf. Hear
me Sassamon?
Will you chance it for Justice' sake, not merely
ours or theirs?

(Sassamon raises a hand lamely.)

Good. That serves the purpose to which we all
aspire.

ANAWAN

That leaves but one more thought before we go.
We have all resolved to put on our best face to
salvage what we can,
But this much more should we know to temper our
senses true:
That if ever such a deed should stand, it would
henceforth
Miscarry us: For betrayals such as this, struck
deep into th' vitals,
We cannot readily undo: not a sea of vengeance can
succor it,
Nor the healing might of time's far horizon bring
solace,
Much less offer cure. For where betrayal of such
scale prevails,
All Nature takes offense at, and creatures of every
stripe and hue,
Which rightly should disperse in horror, find
themselves and all their fellows
Tilting instead into the swirling eye of primal
crime.
And we, the injured, who have witnessed this, will
discover ourselves

The more entranced, and therefore most prone to
play that kind of victim
Who rehearses the victor's crime within himself.
And thus
Will the knife of treachery, which yet hangs
steaming at our backs,
Prove the instrument which harms us most, years
hence,
When we have long forgot our enemy and him-- though
I swear not--
Him whom now we press with all our might to rescue.

METACOMET

Even the god they worship, their ancestors famously
betrayed;
No wonder they imitate that pattern in themselves
on us.

ANAWAN

Let us take care, therefore, to temper our grief
and all else about us;
Otherwise, we fare like those unseen particles
which compose the stars
Whose charged opposites rove the Universe to
annihilate the extreme between them.
For though it may not seem so, great imbalances
Nature abhors
Much more than emptiness. And where extinction
proves the only remedy,
We should not too hastily rejoice that theirs will
surely come,
Lest that ours, and laden with the insult of our
own helping hands,
Take unjust precedence to it.

[*Exeunt Sonconewha, Metacomet and Anawon; manent Sassamon, Alderman, Rowan,
and Tobias.*]

ALDERMAN

Has Anawan now lost his mind?
What makes him think betrayal's chain
Will bind our union to despair?
Does he not know this I'd not allow?
Ha! link by link I'd shatter it,
And with my gums alone, should ever
I shed my teeth in helpless age.
If saying ever made so a thought
I'll after and unsay him straight--
Although to better make our point
Let's clasp our shoulders, arm in arm,
And model that solidarity
They might not hear from us in words....

[*Exeunt Alderman, Rowan, and Tobias singing; manet Sassamon through the scene
change .*]

16. Scene 5.01

[Scene: Sassamon continues to slump over the pool as if still recovering from his encounter in the previous scene. As he does so, he remains oblivious to the set change proceeding around him; now an assortment of characters from the play and STAGEHANDS in modern dress remove the wilderness set. They leave only a few tree trunks which they turn 180 degrees to serve as posts in the town square of the upcoming scene. With the stage stripped the audience sees the technical apparatus underpinning the play: actors in various stages of undress, some reviewing their lines, some playing cards, or eating or about to smoke; others submit to a dousing of pancake powder from the make-up artist. Meanwhile, members of the TECHNICAL CREW, the sound man and the electrician, attend to details of their respective crafts. Even a GARBAGE MAN enters through a backstage door and drags a plastic barrel out while calling to a passerby. Some of the cast and crew acknowledge their exposure; others proceed indifferently. Among the latter group is a contingent who watch Sassamon as he remains in place. One of them begins to approach him, but the others restrain her. She looks at the audience, opens her mouth to speak, but finally hesitates and withdraws.]

During this moment yet another group coalesces around a miniature model of the stage set belonging to the upcoming scene. The group, composed of a stagehand in modern dress and two actors in period costume-- colonial English in this case-- incompetently lean the pieces of the miniature against one another; but they never manage to make the components fit together properly or stand on its own, not even when one of them rushes off and returns with a blueline drawing. Eventually, though, they drop this effort and turn their attention to a mid-sized version of the same model. This they assemble only slightly better than the miniature and, after some voiceless discussion, abandon as well. Next, they will haul in and try to assemble the full-sized stage scrims of Sassamon's one room house, business that will occupy them through part of the following scene.

But before they do a member of the crew enters wearing headphones with an attached mouthpiece. First she signals several members of the stage crew to erect a palisade wall across a portion of the upstage area. Then she motions several others to follow her, and she directs them to wheel in the fountain of the town's central square to replace the woodland pool. With the fountain in place she prepares to nudge or smack Sassamon with her clipboard, but she eventually checks herself and marches off.

Enter Tobias and Alderman, both staggering. They lean against the fountain, and one of them, Tobias, begins washing his face until he notices Sassamon. Then they slink away to another part of the town square while turning, pointing, snickering, whispering; then they eventually settle into a hand-drawn haycart opposite.

Enter the stretcher bearers walking backward. They carry a mid-size model of a straw pallet which will appear full-size in the upcoming scene. As they meander around the stage Tobias and Alderman hide under a canvas cover on the cart .]

[Exeunt stretcher bearers .]

[Enter Simon Bradstreet and Benjamin Thompson as prosperous merchants. Having appeared backstage changing into costume they now emerge, still refining details of their dress, on the upper deck of the palisade protecting the town square .]

SIMON BRADSTREET
Orthogonal? Of course. It means...

It means to frame a figure, a rampart,
A building of eight as many flanks...
Or no: no-no: that's *octoganol*
And here you say *orthoganol*--
-agonol?-- can you spell it me?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Nay, and I care not for the spelling,
As such therewith I do not well
So much as do I for the saying
And, still more, for the understanding:
So saying, say I *orthogonal*.

[As they continue, they descend from the palisade to the level of the town square.]

SIMON BRADSTREET

Orth- or *ortho-* meaning right?--
Or straight in vulgar Greek or koiné;
And *-ogon-* does that stand for side?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Nay, *-agon-*, that for angle. Hence...

SIMON BRADSTREET

Hence, right *angle*: therefore a square
For rightness in ev'ry angle there:
Rightness in the number four--
For four of them; and rightness braviss'mmo
In the rightness of its equal sides...

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

And herein come you close, but stand to
And I will raise you a rung: observe:
Here lies the horizontal,
Herein the vertical
Herein the axis *x*
Herewith the same of *y*.
Think now: how value *x* will function
Gen'rally conjoint with *y*:
Increase *x* and *y* advances--
Or, th' inverse, thereupon descends.
Tinker thus with *y*, and *x*
Reciprocates in kind.
Take a population, squirrel--
Or chipmunk, polecat, what you will--
Strew them a raft of acorns and what
Befalls?: next spring their numbers rise.
Look, when I take the same away
Their numbers trail til narely nil.
Therefore *x* relates to *y*.

SIMON BRADSTREET

This much a fool could see.

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Indeed.

Then here's a thought to grasp: imagine:
Axis x has no consonance
With that of y . Stand to: again:
Herein th' horizontal,
Here still the vertical--
But imagine now they never meet:

x has no effect on y ,
Nor, for its part, y on x :
Advance the one, and neither increase
Nor decrease on th' other shows:
That is, it is orthogonal.
Let's take our squirrel to show you why:
Imagine the population squirrels
To martins mating: let them tumble
In th' hay 'til Domesday, they shall not
spark

A prodigy of squirrels, much less
Put forth one single breeding pair
T' supplant what squirrels well do
themselves.

Nay, and I know you smile, so be 't,
But this, the concept orthogonal,
Does not so readily yield to use
As it describes the sharp disjuncture
That severs the universe of spirit
From this our world empirical;
Thus, have you th' orthogonal distill'd.
Again: the plane of x ; the plane of y .
Here the earth and earthly matter;
Above it spirit, the realm of Heaven,
Brought to union by our Lord.

But that anticipates our story.
Consider Him who is our Lord and Saviour
In the post and beam of crucifixion.
At first he drags Him horizontal--
His self and the burden of his cross.
Forthwith, note here the plane of earth,
Our Lord in the person of a man;
But not just any man, but one
Despisèd of all humanity,
Save only those most moist and dear;
And He Himself degraded, shamed,
Red with the torture of the lash,
And blist'ring from the crown of thorns,
Yea, ev'n as a hanged man accursed by God
For that way lies His destiny.
He drags Him, for He's as mere as matter,
He yields, for ev'n th' low-ranked soldier
Stands astride Him, His temp'ral lord.

Before this he has prompted Him
Through the flat streets of Jerusalem
And across the plain to Golgotha;
Now he beckons Him to place
His feet to th' pillar of His burden.
Our Lord obeys without a word.
The nail, He hinders not.
No more will He walk the plane of earth.
He is as immobile as the tree.
Likewise for arms, outstretched like
 branches,
Subject to the vagaries
Of dust and sun and wind and rain.

SIMON BRADSTREET

Then He dies in the likeness of a tree,
The symbol of the wilderness.

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Yea, but nay, I know not much of that,
This symbol comes not to my preferment:
At least care I not so much
For wilderness, as for the tree
Of life incarnate from earth's dross.
Consider that this ersatz tree--
The cross, this instrument of death,
Its trunk severed from its roots,
Itself killed and, lifeless, re-assembled
To serve the purpose of its foes
(That is, to kill our Lord and Saviour)--
Consider that this former tree
Drew breath from His vitality,
Even as life ebbed from Him.
Does not the soldier's gash t' His side
Prove this cohabitation true
From th' wat'ry sap which issued there?--
And has not this myst'ry confounded since,
For death brings Him everlasting life
Borne still by His companion cross:
Therefore, where also He has risen,
Does He not resurrect the tree?

SIMON BRADSTREET

And call you this orthagonal?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

To th' extent that He infuses it.
Upright they stand Him, orthagonal,
Though yet He comprehends it not;
Already has He bade forgiveness
To them who know not what they do,
And now He cries out His despair:
"Why hast Thou, Father, forsaken me?"

"Eli lama sabach-tha'-ni?"
Remember: He has assumed the province
Of a man, the lowliest of us!
But God hath not forsaken Him:
Like lightning He lifts the earthly plane
As He beholds His Child's agony,
One moment brute as a dismembered tree,
The next He exalts Him to the heavens:
For herein lies th' immortal moment,
Glorious in its occurrence then,
As in celebration evermore...

SIMON BRADSTREET

I grant you your orthagon's appeal
But care you not that some may charge
Idolatry which that our Bibles
Expressly forbid and castigate?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

I will argue that it carries not
So rank and catholic a taint
As does pervade the common mind;
For that which is orthagonal
Occupies the interstices
We fail to see in common things.

SIMON BRADSTREET

How is it wrought then?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

By suffering.
Suffering has ever made man wise.

SIMON BRADSTREET

And why must we suffer for this wisdom?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

We need not suffer so ourselves.
Have we not Christ's mission on the cross?--

-

Or these many christian centuries
To refine our sensibility?
Sure man has pulled himself up th' ladder
Of Eternity-- at least those who swear
By christian tracts: must they then die
A thousand deaths stamped identical
After th' pattern of their Maker?--
And stanch the free-flow of thought with
pain?

Nay, I think not, for forever after
The axis of his sacrifice,
We who follow apprehend
By other means; we need not acquire

His message on our own account;
We can observe it in the struggle
Of lesser orders, lesser forms
To occupy that space for us.

SIMON BRADSTREET

Just so, in part it likes me well.

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Better to like you in whole than part.
Allow me then an anecdote
Which does some credit to our caste.
Upon a time not long ago
I stood in the tower of our church
As lab'ers set to th' building thereof
As they had not yet finished it;
There, from my perch, out I looked
Nigh th' dell in Farmer Fletcher's field
And behold, there, in the lap of spring
A cow gives birth among the rest.
And then, at th' very moment, rare,
I say, and simultaneous,
A carrier pigeon, this one dressed
Somber as a mourning dove,
Smacks hard against a pane of glass
The workmen had install'd beneath.
Following this clap the bird
Staggers in an ovate course
'Round th' floor of our Lord's house,
Before he hemorrhages too grim and dies.
At once all this comes clear to me:
The calf caught in horizontal birth,
The bird in vertical demise;
Here life, here spirit in transfixion:
The perfect essence of my discourse.
Have now you my orthagon in mind
In th' comfort of our company?

SIMON BRADSTREET

Yes, as I say it likes me well.
But yet it betokens much too much
The superstitions of these heathens
Of whom I've heard it that they name
Their babes by some ephemera
Of nature their eyes observe outside
The moment th' infant hails its birth,
And they peer out their teepees' portals.
Yet, rightly we disdain that awe
Which they behold in synchrony.

[*They see Sassamon slumped over the town square's fountain.*]

BENJAMIN THOMPSON
They do nothing but waste away with
spirits.

[Retreating, they cross the square and only notice the drunken Indians when Alderman sits up in the haycart, looks around, and waves.]

SIMON BRADSTREET
Jesus!

BENJAMIN THOMPSON
Is there no place safe?

[They withdraw upstage and continue their conversation in pantomime.]

PETER TOBIAS
Follow me; or draw from the flagon there that you
should seem
More what we must feign to soothe their spirits
here.

ALDERMAN
Their spirits? I'll have at their spirits if you'll
point me there.

PETER TOBIAS
Chut, chut: I tell you no: but that you must follow
me
And show a different kind of Indian. That way our
welfare lies.

[They tuck themselves back into the haycart. Two colonists enter and draw the haycart backstage.]

[The stagehands, meanwhile, resume their inexpert attempt at assembling the walls of Sassamon's house. At times they occupy a significant portion of the stage, and therefore command the audience's attention-- as for example when they try to prop up a downstage scrim or flat for the usually imaginary "fourth wall." At other times they recede into the background-- as when they try to fix the stage left scrim but discover that it hangs precariously over the edge of the proscenium. This occasions considerable silent "discussion" and efforts at repositioning the scrim, all of it ineffectual. They continue in this vein, re-locating scrims and shuffling stage properties out of their way: much of this they do without apparent design or intention; yet eventually they happen to establish the center stage wall of the house and furnishings appropriate to the scene they have unwittingly prepared. These include a straw pallet adjacent to the center stage wall, a cedar trunk, and a portion of a closet. Some residue remains of their effort to establish a fourth wall too, a window, for instance, or a portion of the wall supporting it. During the apparent flux and uncertainty of the transition two characters, revealed below, will surreptitiously infiltrate themselves into a component of the set or a stage property, so that they seem to materialize from the set itself when they enter the next section of the scene. The house they will occupy, however, remains incongruous and ephemeral, its volatile perimeter displacing a portion of the town square much as the earlier tavern did in a previous scene.]

Re-enter the stretcher bearers still walking backward. They carry a twisted blanket on the stretcher. They time their entry so that the stagehands bump them with one of the scrim; as a consequence of the collision the blanket flies off the stretcher onto the pallet. Exeunt stretcher bearers.

Sassamon stirs. He reaches and places his palm on his reflection in the fountain. Pulling back he notices to his right someone sitting at his writing table in the same stage location it occupied formerly in John Eliot's house: the Pequot boy he killed as a young soldier stands and grins at him. Dressed in scarlet the boy pushes aside his red wampum belt to reveal a green mass oozing from his mortal wound. Sassamon stands and backs away from both his reflection in the fountain and the boy.

SOUND CUE: A recording of a laughing man of the kind typical at a carnival or funhouse begins and cycles repeatedly. (He sounds like the 1920's vaudeville comedian and singer Billy Murray.)

A young woman, Sassamon's daughter, BETTY, enters the darkened main room of Sassamon's house from her onstage hiding place and closes the window. She leaves the room and takes up the task of churning butter near center-stage.

Sassamon backs into the space imperfectly reserved for his house after opening an imaginary door and letting himself in. He kneels beside the straw pallet, pulls aside the blanket, and observes the body of his now deceased wife, Princess X. He then retrieves two coins pressed against her eyelids. After a moment of silence he pockets the coins and backs away and out through the door. The Pequot boy reappears, and Sassamon shrinks from him. He climbs a ladder set against the wooden palisade to its upper level.

The recorded laughing continues, only more loudly now. The partially decomposed body of Wamsutta (possibly a life-sized model or marionette) steals upon him and restricts his movement on the narrow walkway. Sassamon tries to retreat; when he can't, he pulls out a handkerchief and gags .]

WAMSUTTA

(Recorded or played off.)

Smell...? Bad...? You think I smell... bad?

[The corpse pushes a book at him, one of Sassamon's own manuscripts. Sassamon tries to flee, but the corpse blocks him, pokes him, tickles him until he eventually yields: he accepts the manuscript and, in a reverse transaction, exchanges the two coins he picked up earlier. The corpse allows Sassamon to pass; as soon as he does, though, the corpse drops the coins indifferently over the pickets at the top of the barricade and resumes its pursuit. Sassamon stumbles down the steps and disappears behind the upstage wall of his house: it is now more or less in place, though still subject to movement and revision by the stagehands. But instead of Sassamon, the Pequot boy bursts through the empty door cavity after opening the upstage wall's still-imaginary door .]

[SOUND CUE (Offstage.): A woman's shriek .]

[Exit Wamsutta's corpse .]

[The Pequot boy stops short at the straw pallet just as Sassamon's wife rises. She screams, but voicelessly, only aspirating air. The Pequot boy backs away, turns, and tries

to exit through the door. But by now the stagehands have installed it and it blocks his way: he fumbles with the handle, rattles it, bangs on the door, then tries the handle again and again several times before the door finally opens .]

[Exit Pequot boy .]

[The door slams behind him, and it continues to open and slam a few times with a BANG. Now a DRUMBEAT picks up the rhythm of the banging door. Meanwhile, the stagehands remove the upstage wall, all except the door and window and just enough lumber to support their frames. The door swings open again. Instead of the Pequot boy-- who exits when the stagehands remove the upstage wall-- a STAND-IN for Sassamon lurches away from the house holding his ears .]

[Exit stand-in .]

[On the upper level of the palisade re-enter Sassamon the instant his stand-in moves out of sight; immediately thereafter Wamsutta's corpse continues to dog him as before .]

WAMSUTTA

Hey, Indian. You English?

[Re-enter Betty. She backs into the room and ministers to her mother who is heaving and writhing .]

[Betty crosses to the slamming door and shuts it. It slams a few more times, and she shuts it again, definitively. The BANGING diminishes, but continues more subdued in a distant drum or cymbal beat. Meanwhile, Sassamon turns the corner on the palisade runway and retreats from the corpse upstage so that he stands one level over the domestic scene between his wife and daughter .]

BETTY

Is that you?

[Betty lights a candle; she talks to Sassamon as if he stands in the room .]

JOHN SASSAMON
(To the corpse .)

Back!

[Sassamon advances and tries to edge around the corpse; then he retreats. Betty also reverses the order of her activity, and this reversal reflects in her speech .]

BETTY

Is it thou, Father? Rethaf, outh ti si?

JOHN SASSAMON
(To the corpse .)

What do you want from me?

BETTY

Can't me. Help you see?

[She shines the candle on her mother.]

JOHN SASSAMON
(*To Betty.*)

Not you.

[Sassamon advances again, but the corpse lunges and forces him back.]

BETTY
What? Father? Eem to keeps.

JOHN SASSAMON
Go on. Get off my back.

[The corpse playfully steps back and forth. Now Betty's behavior and speech seem to reflect this oscillation.]

BETTY
But she needs... Tub... But... Tub... But, she lives, I'd ton
zud esh. Redder are spil her neve.

JOHN SASSAMON
Get... Get out, out. Out of my sight.

BETTY
Too someone has to... Too someone...

JOHN SASSAMON
Not you, I said.

BETTY
Olleh, Rethaf. Hello, hello. Olleh, Father? Olleh, olleh,
olleh.

[Exit Betty walking backward.]

JOHN SASSAMON
No, child. Child. Come back. O, God, come back.

[Exit Wamsutta's corpse.]

[MUSIC. Princess X rises from the pallet and performs a wild dance. As she does so, the stagehands remove Sassamon's house and furnishings. Enter center-stage right a smiling DANCE TROUPE of colonists. Some wear costumes of black with white collars and white-face make-up; others wear all white with black collars and black-face. At first subdued their dance begins in isolation from that of Princess X; but as the dance proceeds, they begin to adopt patterns and movements initiated by her. Opposite Princess X, stage right, Goodman Talbott, dressed as a stagehand, enters carrying a large step-ladder. Two Indians in period costume follow him with a trunk. One of them is all green with red-face and a red wampum belt; the other is all red with green-face and a green wampum belt. They set the trunk.]

[Exeunt Indians.]

[Enter a colonial in period costume. He assists Goodman Talbott in removing from the trunk the limbs and torso of an INDIAN EFFIGY. Then they begin to assemble it.]

[Princess X gradually integrates her dance with that of the chorus. They circle around her, lift her, set her down, and she resumes her dance as they dance in place. They circle her again, lift her, and toss her in the air. They catch her, and she disappears for awhile in their midst. They toss her and catch her again. Then they repeat this, but on this occasion they do so with a RAG DOLL dummy of her. And once again: but this time they throw into the air only the dismembered parts of the rag doll.]

[Exit Princess X surreptitiously.]

[Goodman Talbott hoists by rope the partially assembled Indian effigy with the help of the colonist so that it hangs from a beam protruding from a retail facade stage right. The dancers pass to him pieces and patchwork from the rag doll, and Talbott adds these to the effigy to render it cross-gendered and grotesque. It still lacks a head, however. Enter James Printer-- his hair streaked with gray, his face deeply lined-- laden with a sack.]

JAMES PRINTER

Chip chitta-chitta
Cheep chitta-bong,
Jaggada-Jaggada.
Dost thou toy with me?
Pih! Ladies. Gah.
Strange fruit. And gentlemen:
An' you will have me?
Mistresses you will not
Eat of it? Not one?
You sir? You? In my
Veins you scorn me
The blood of a denominated?
I see. In your eyes.
Go boy. Good boy. Fetch it?
The blood you call savage?
Jaggada-jaggada.
Allow me, will you? Savage
I will show you. Loyalty
I will show you. By whatever
I will show you. Pallor.
Paleness. Death. What means
I will show you to mean
An English man. Necessary
To mean me: one, James Printer,
Who solemnly swear, who
Who printed your Bi-boles. This
Thirty years an' you degrade
Me thus to this? Your Bibolized
Bretheren and your kin?
To prove my worth? My worth?
An' you will look at it.
You think t' impose notions
Of savag'ry on th' forest?

You will conjure from your own
Idylls of savag'ry and con-
Tort the forest to it?
But the forest will not bend.
The forest will not twist to it:
Nay, not even the treeless wilderness.
Chitta-bongada. Chitta-chitta.
Jaggada-jaggada.

[He takes a decomposing Indian head from the sack and tosses it into the air. The dancers catch it and pass it, hand-over-hand, to Goodman Talbott.]

[Exit James Printer.]

[Talbott places the head atop the effigy. He continues to attend to the effigy while periodically breaking from this task to change into articles of his 17th century costume. Bradstreet and Thompson advance downstage.]

[Exeunt all but two of the dancers.]

[The two remaining dancers, both dressed in white, stand at attention in oblique angles to one another.]

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

And look what's coming here, young Peter
Talmon,
One of the newer generation, and he,
By all accounts worth taking, its *non pareil*.

SIMON BRADSTREET

They thrive, do they not, in the vapors of
these shores,
And th' sun shining comparatively more.
How does 't, Peter Talmon?

[Enter PETER TALMON, JR.]

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Why, what ails thee,
you?

PETER TALMON, JR.

My bottom land. That ails me. And right you
are
To note it. My health does well. Here, take
the measure
Of my grasp against the standard of your
own...
(Shaking hands with each in turn.)
My wife, my chattels, my perishables too...
And you... Of these I offer no
complaint....

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Quite hon'orable, I think, and he not a man-

-

No-- made robust by nature, but by will.

PETER TALMON, JR.

Strong wills conquer and un-nature Nature.

Except where Nature by design outwits us.

Thus, rightly do you look deep through

these pools

For my eyes to swim in, t' see my heart's

malcontent:

My bottom land offends me-- never mind

That there most farmers stake their

preference--

I will not like my bog, my fen, my swamp--

Not in winter when that the blast of icy

winds

Confines us to our quarters, and th'

swollen moon,

For spite, sets the brackish tides t'

backflush;

Not in spring when that I stand base-deep

in mire

Astride my oxen and we pretend to plow;

Not in summer's haze and heat bled white by

insects;

Nor yet again in fall when hurakanoes

Vilify the oceans, make stir hostile

Whitecaps over th' inky depths on which

they idle

Joining them as wayward scriveners who,

Thereupon, free-write on all our pastures--

Past contentment one would think, but no--

They then, receding from this drunken

spree,

Probe our outbuildings to test them

seaworthy...

[The stagehands wheel out cube-like platforms or pedestals, and they position them near Bradstreet and Thompson. One of them is black, the other white.]

SIMON BRADSTREET

But hold, good Peter Talmon, do you not

describe

The tribulations God whets our spirits

with?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Yea, and shall it not follow that what He

witholds

His hand shall soon relinquish unto thee?

For what He hath held dear, you may well
 come
 To reap in th' cornucopia of this land.

PETER TALMON, JR.
Crops which grow in such conditions know I
None, except, as may, the tartful bogberry
Filling, care I not, how many our
baskets...

SIMON BRADSTREET
Then what would you suggest; what shall we
do?

PETER TALMON, JR.
And I told it you, you'd take offense.

[Thompson and Bradstreet each step onto cube-like pedestals.]

SIMON BRADSTREET
Offense? What? How offended, Peter Talmon?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON
If only you should bring yourself to ask,
No doubt our answer will with you accord.
Wherever else though we might disagree,
Stand we here two bodies with one mind
between.

[Stagehands wheel the two merchants somewhat apart. Then make-up and costume personnel form two crews to attend to them as they continue standing and talking on their respective pedestals. One crew applies white-face and exchanges whatever costume changes necessary to make Thompson all white; the other crew does likewise with black-face and black articles of costume for Bradstreet. When they have completed their task, one merchant appears all white like a marble statue; the other, all black like one in cast-iron.]

PETER TALMON, JR.
And then I thank you for your confidence.
But you have heard the story of my land:
So much could I not contain; how think you,
then,
I feel when I look out upon the forest
Yonder from my field that's forbidden me?
And why? And for what? My crops would march
me there
Could I only say the word...

BENJAMIN THOMPSON
Good Peter
Talmon.

We must not covet what belongs not unto us.

PETER TALMON, JR.

You encaption the very article I fear'd.
But these natives I know you have in mind
do not
Possess this land: where do you find their
contracts
Their liens, entailments, dowries, bills of
sale?
Scan their camps, you will not find them
there stashed,
Nor in the reeds and woodlands they
habitate.
They hold no more rights than do the fishes
to own
The sea merely because they swim in it,
Nor th' birds to own the air through which
they fly.

[Though the backstage crews may continue to work on them, the merchants begin to stiffen and harden into poses. This belabors their speech .]

SIMON BRADSTREET

But acquire their land, this we cannot do:
For we have promised and entreated it.

PETER TALMON, JR.

Why bother to entreat these Indians?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

It behoves us both for mutual assurance.

PETER TALMON, JR.

We should not beg for that which begs the
taking.
Check, sirs, your scales and you would see
it so:
For when we no longer need the
counterweight
Of principle t' constrain our foes, why
forego
Advantage brought by th' newness of th'
times?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON

Brave new words, yet dares he utter them.

PETER TALMON, JR.

We need not place such burden on ourselves,

Not when we can cast it off and forthwith
discard
Not just the burden but the balance too.

[From now on Thompson and Bradstreet remain more or less frozen as statues, although from time to time they will assume different postures as they react to subsequent events under their purview. But for now they remain locked in place as the stagehands wheel them further apart and set them at oblique angles to one another. Peter Talmon continues as before, approaching and speaking up to each in turn.]

PETER TALMON, JR.
(To Benjamin Thompson.)

Why, when we serve as living validators
To those, our elders, we choose to emulate,
Do they scruple us toward paucity and
limits,
As if they chose to render us ephem'ral
The heft and spirit of their legacy?

PETER TALMON, JR.
(To Simon Bradstreet.)

Did they not voyage west themselves to
prosper?
Did they not cross the sea to tame their
wilds?
Why then deny that standard to them who
follow?

[With a modern hand-truck stagehands wheel in more members of the chorus also dressed in white. Like the other pair they stand straight and rigid. The stage crew aligns all of them and turns them face forward so that they appear like a series of posts.]

PETER TALMON, JR.
(To Benjamin Thompson.)

D' these niceties with heathens move them
truly,
Or d' they thwart us owing to their
jealousy?

PETER TALMON, JR.
(To Simon Bradstreet.)

Tell me by what deed, what charter, what
quit-claim
These Indians have t' possess this
territory?
They do not tend, they do not prune or
shape:
Such land, therefore, God, for want of
higher purpose,
Hath derelicted and made of namore import
Than a urined street where city paupers
tread.

[Exit Peter Talmon; manent Thompson and Bradstreet as statues.]

[John Sassamon remains at his position on the upper runway of the palisade. The stagehands introduce a small hut center stage. Enter Metacomet, shivering.]

JOHN SASSAMON
I bid you warm welcome. Come. Enter.

METACOMET
Touch me not.

JOHN SASSAMON
But you seem to tremble at the cold.

[Exeunt stagehands.]

METACOMET
Lay not a hand
on me.
I care not for pity, nor care I a feather for
myself;
Yet caring for my people ensnares me in self-
regard,
As if two elves taunted me in the crannies of my
skull,
And one crying, "none thrive unless I thrive,"
The other with, "unless all survive, nothing of
yourself."
But though I chase them through my darkest
corridors,
As if by capturing I could master them, yet still
they ebb and flow
In tandem, as if bound to some vanished point which
eludes me
But takes up hill and vantage in the bosom of our
enemy.
Do not therefore think I fear when for fear such
creatures
Flee me to further captivate myself.

JOHN SASSAMON
Ah, sachem,
Throw off this morbid humor. Come close, and we
Will close the door; you'll find more sanctu'ry
within
Than will you without.

METACOMET
I'll not be handled.

JOHN SASSAMON
Then you shall not.

[Goodman Talbott continues to shed his modern dress and don articles of his costume. Now, with his assistant, he raises the effigy over the doorway of a building facade. Simultaneously, Sassamon descends-- or is lowered-- to the main stage level.]

METACOMET

No: Ha. Except by hilt and dagger
In the manner of the daunted little redbear,
Standish. You will unhandle me. I come and go
as will I will.

JOHN SASSAMON

Please: count on our bona fides here.
We waste time otherwise.

[Enter Sonconewha.]

METACOMET

What brings you? I asked
that none follow.

SONCONEWHA

I have lost one brother thus, I will not lose two.

METACOMET

Then let us agree: for I say they shall not have
conjoint
Two sons of Massasoit to reduce by a single act of
infamy.

SONCONEWHA

To that end let's briefly go therein. For
ourselves, once divided,
Must keep a single mind, and I have more to
tell....

[Metacomet stalls at the door of the hut.]

METACOMET

I have already heard as much. But we are not th'
Wachusetts
Who could plead no precedent to their betrayal:
Therefore we must not hazard to trust them there.

[The SOUND of approaching forces in the distance.]

JOHN SASSAMON

You need not worry here: these dogs may bark,
But it signals no prelude to their bite.

SONCONEWHA

Sassamon? You? Tilted to the other side? Or have
you..?

METACOMET

Doubled.

JOHN SASSAMON

I do not deny myself. I stand before you.

SONCONEWHA

And what of your great fellow feeling, your destiny
of man?
The future of the wayward races?

JOHN SASSAMON

I hold no such
brief and never have.

SONCONEWHA

What? So soon forgot? You never said, "Our several
cultures shall meet
And rise together like opposing waves?" Have you
forsaken these ideals?

JOHN SASSAMON

Had I spoken so I would remember it, but not
remembering such
I could not so have spoken.

SONCONEWHA

Your syllogism begs
The very truth it dodges: Had you not so spoken,
You would as soon forgot, but not forgetting you
could only so have spoke;
And thus your contradictory proves as true as it
should false,
And beggers the truth which thusly falsifies your
proof.

JOHN SASSAMON

I'll not pace your train of thought; I have no time
for such.
Henceforth, I give no place to sentiment; from now
I'm all expedience.

SONCONEWHA

Then we stand in great awe indeed, for we thought
time
Not crucial to our commonweal, but that we stood to
prosper
Even on the cream of that insinuated hope you now
disclaim;
But nothing could strike our senses with more
offense as when,

With the brusqueness of summer's foul-breeding air,
Sweet friendship curdles to sour enmity, and all we
 thought benign,
Turns t'ward rancid putrefaction. Thus, we linger
 here
In greater peril than ever we thought.

JOHN SASSAMON

How say you?

Enmity?, when I bring none.

SONCONEWHA

Bringing hope's

 spoilage,
Such as you bring worse.

METACOMET

What goes here?

SONCONEWHA

Enough you know by what you've heard. The rest
 later.
For now let us lift our actions yet another notch
 to match
Our understanding, though we have not long to
 ponder them.

[*The CLAMOR of approaching forces intensifies.*]

METACOMET

Let's move: and, most cunningly, in separate ways,
 for we have mind enough to split.
You: wend your way through the tamaracks through
 which you came;
And I: I'll follow the stream I know that lies
 nearby.

[*The chorus, still standing in place, extends their arms and grasp hands as if to form,
now, the posts and stringers of a fence.*]

SONCONEWHA

But ho! Wait. We have no time for that. Better yet
 to go within,
While I myself make my way without and draw them
 thither.

METACOMET

But you have not this. You'll not make it armed
 like a faun.

SONCONEWHA

But yours will only blood them and thence unslake
 their thirst.

My defenselessness arms me better as my best
defense.

METACOMET

Remember them who could plead no precedent to the
treacheries
They endured. We must not aspire thus, I tell you.

SONCONEWHA

But the way without bodes more treacheries than the
same way in.
Come, brother, or danger apprehends us. I'll see
you past the threshold.

METACOMET

Go. Go now, if go you will. Great Spirit be with
you.

SONCONEWHA

And so with you.

[Exit Sonconewha.]

[Metacomet hesitates at the door of the hut, then withdraws from it.]

METACOMET

I'll take my refuge in the open air
Where th' crude outcropping scribes me ottoman and
chair,
And the moss which drips from it makes me my
cushion,
The lichen here my antimaccassair;
If the oak stand by, so much the more for me
Endowed and sheltered there: for its acorns feed
The game which gives me food and hide, its limbs
Defy the thunderbreak, then fuel my fire.
Above, let the polestar dangle like a bauble
To mark the pivot on which the stars revolve;
And may Great Bear, who cycles 't 'round and
'round,
Extend his office to an earthly gyre
And turn 'round on that same spindle as my tree.

JOHN SASSAMON

(Aside.)

And you call yourself a leader? Get in. Go. You
fabricate danger
Where none exists, and numb yourself thereby to
those that do.

[Enter John Underhill and Ralph Cockburn dressed in tattered and sooty top-hat and
tails, like nineteenth-century chimney sweeps.]

RALPH COCKBURN

Ha, I hear civilization.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Think it our customer base. How do I do?

RALPH COCKBURN

You've looked better, sir. In all honesty.

JOHN UNDERHILL

Then how's that?

RALPH COCKBURN

It will do. Nicely, sir.

JOHN UNDERHILL

There now. Let's look to yourself. I say we've still a chance to make our mark. Though your coat needs mending, which we have not tooth for, your hair mends for a coating and these few teeth. *(He spits on a relatively toothless comb and drags it through Cockburn's hair.)* Step to the light.

CROWD

(Off.)

Ah-h-h-h-AH!

[Enter a mob of colonists. They stream through an opening in the "fence" carrying farm implements: scythes, axes, pitchforks, and so forth. The colonist assisting Goodman Talbott joins them. Then the components of the fence reactivate as members of the mob and join the others in a semi-circle around Metacomet. As the crowd approaches him, however, they fall silent and subdued.]

METACOMET

Inside-- what is this inside that they pander?
They shrink at life, its bounty, its mystery;
And so they shutter themselves from it indoors
Where not a particle may show volition:
Oh, you should see them tremble at a mouse
As if they had no gender, but that all strove
To climb inside their wives' and daughters' skirts;
Or watch them cringe in the presence of a spider
Which bethinks them of the hair which blots their
shins.

Wherefore, then, this immotion inside? Should not I
know?

For were they able, they'd turn their inside out
That no creature'd stir except at their command.
Give them the means and they will probe and tunnel
Ev'ry pore and root and rock of earth to seize
Th' seventeen year locust in his sleep,
Even him and all his billion brethren too,
And then to all life else unseen besides.

[Finally, one of the colonists, a young woman, breaks free of the paralysis of the crowd; she steps forward and wraps her arms around Metacomet's leg.]

METACOMET

You'll let it go, miss, or you make me shake it
loose.

[Goodman Talbott, who has been attending to the Indian effigy at the top of the ladder, has just completed his change into period costume.]

GOODMAN TALBOTT

Violence! O, violence!
He threatens violence. O Lord!

[He descends the ladder and joins the rest of the crowd.]

CROWD

Grab him! Seize him!

GOODMAN TALBOTT

O shame!

[They swarm over Metacomet. Sassamon skirts the crowd looking for an opening.]

JOHN UNDERHILL

(Aside to Cockburn.)

Ah, look who's about. Doesn't he turn up in the damndest
places.

JOHN SASSAMON

Don't touch him.

RALPH COCKBURN

(Aside to Underhill.)

Fancies himself high and mighty. Won't even talk to us now.

JOHN UNDERHILL

(Aside to Cockburn.)

Getting too good for his own good, I'd say.

JOHN SASSAMON

'Scuse me.

RALPH COCKBURN

(Aside to Underhill.)

Deserves taking down a notch or two.

JOHN SASSAMON

Let me in.

COLONIST ONE

Get your hands off me!

JOHN SASSAMON

No, don't. Let him go.

COLONIST ONE

I said shove off, Indian.

JOHN SASSAMON

Sir, please....

COLONIST ONE

Looking for a fight, red man?

JOHN SASSAMON

Let me through.

[The colonist punches Sassamon.]

JOHN UNDERHILL

(Aside to Cockburn.)

We'd better look after our boy.

[Two colonists grab hold of their belligerent and lead him away; Underhill and Cockburn do likewise with Sassamon.]

JOHN UNDERHILL

Easy now. We'll handle him from here.

[Re-enter Peter Talmon.]

PETER TALMON, JR.

Good news. Good news have I. Come hither,
Come one, come all. Look sharp, I say.

COLONIST TWO

Good Peter Talmon. Just in time.

COLONIST THREE

Here have we caught one. Come and see.
Our finger snagged him by the toe.

PETER TALMON, JR.

Nay, and never mind old business,
Not when that I bring new. Come 'round,
Each and sundry, that to all
I may proclaim: I shoulder here
Snug in the corner of my purse
A deed-- that's right you'd never guess--
It says here-- and do I have your ear?--
It says-- and you may overread me--
Does it not say for a certain parcel
Near Swansea, bounded on the north
By a tribute to Assowampsett Pond;
On the east by a virgin hemlock glade;

And by the south three and twenty
Rods along the Mystic stream,
Another six beside the fence...

COLONIST FOUR
Nay, you'll find there sixteen writ.

[Underhill and Cockburn converse with one another aside.]

JOHN UNDERHILL
Oh, smoothly. See you how it's done.

RALPH COCKBURN
I like it. They eat from out his palm.

PETER TALMON, JR.
Ah, so it reads: sixteen along
The old stone fence, and thence the miles
Of muddy trail and fen till 't find
Its western border on the sea.
That said land shall transferred be
T' one Peter Talmon, himself, his heirs,
And any and all of his assigns.

[Underhill and Cockburn continue aside. One colonist, however, eventually overhears them.]

JOHN UNDERHILL
He serves a crock. He's made that up.

RALPH COCKBURN
Well said, sir. I thought the very same,
But couldn't trace the words to frame 't:
I know a con when one I see.

JOHN UNDERHILL
How lamentable should he win o'er
The gullèd mass of common folk,
And on the rest our backs succeed.
That territory of which he speaks
Belongs still to th' Pokanokets;
Yet claims he here to hold their deed.
But this, their source and legacy,
Met'comet would never set his mark to.

COLONIST FOUR
I heard Wamsutta, or Alexander,
King and sachem of their tribe,
Writ' o'er some land before he died.

RALPH COCKBURN
Oh, but he poisons smoothly, sir.
They gape and not a one dares laugh.

JOHN UNDERHILL
Perhaps our boy will help us now.

RALPH COCKBURN
Indeed: hope flees us otherwise.

JOHN UNDERHILL
(*Aside to Sassamon.*)
Let us profess ourselves your servants,
Lest sin prosper by our neglect.

JOHN SASSAMON
Why should I care, caring not at all...

RALPH COCKBURN
Sir, look to your kind if not your kindred.

JOHN SASSAMON
Why should I tender aid to such a fool
Who lacks an eye to his own benefit?

[*Underhill and Cockburn remonstrate with Sassamon. Meanwhile, a woman whispers into Talmon's ear.*]

PETER TALMON, JR.
You're holding whom? What? Here?
And no one stirred to tell me?

COLONISTS
(*Serially: 3,4,2.*)
But we did.... We tried.... We pleaded.....

PETER TALMON, JR.
You say you have him bound,
Trussed, and thus delivered?
No one thought to shake me?

COLONIST TWO
Sorry, Peter Talmon.

PETER TALMON, JR.
(*Aside.*)
This rings golden for opportunity.
(*Then:*)
Where then do you keep him tethered?

COLONIST THREE
Why, with us and you may find 'm
And craft him with your looks.

PETER TALMON, JR.
So please you, would you draw him out?

[*While several colonists go to fetch Metacomet:*]

COLONIST ONE
We should put out his eyes
And pocket him with glass
To cock his vision fixed
At some more soothing angle
Which more befits our own.

COLONIST THREE
That shall make him ponder
Before he stockpiles arms
Against a people chosen.

COLONISTS
Yeah.... Aye.... Do it... etc.

PETER TALMON, JR.
Nay, harm him not that he may prove
My point and, so, legitimate me.

[*Colonists drag in Metacomet and place him before Talmon.*]

PETER TALMON, JR.
Shall we repeat, or have you heard?

Your silence seems to answer us.

Do you verify his mark?
 (To the crowd.)
Good. Silence confirms us once again.
This mark King Alexander made...

JOHN SASSAMON
 (Pushing forward.)
You shall not prod an answer by such
 means....

COLONIST ONE
Take care, lest he bear arms.

JOHN SASSAMON
Though you miscast his silence to prove
 your point,
This sum of leading lies does not make
 truth.

GOODMAN TALBOTT
O Lord, another outrage!

COLONIST TWO

Trouble comes in pairs.

GOODMAN TALBOTT
They're cut from a single cloth.

COLONIST THREE
Caution, Peter Talmon,
Or you'll play into his hands.

PETER TALMON, JR.
He'll not show himself so nimble
As t' 'guile and trip his master.
(*To Sassamon.*)
Come, come, my friend. You jest.
Would you deny the seal
And imprint of our king?

JOHN SASSAMON
He stands closer to his king, which is
himself,
Than you who come not near a thousand
leagues
The distant strand of yours. This we say
first.
As for your king's seal and imprint you
know it false:
To render so crudely his Lordships's Privy
Seal
Reveals th' contempt you bear your
audience....

COLONISTS
(*Serially: 2,3,1.*)
Hear, hear.... Slander.... Prove it....

JOHN SASSAMON
Correct. I cannot prove it on the spot;
I have not the means nor evidence at hand.
But discrepancies enough abound you'll see:
The muddy trails he speaks of come not near
The bound'ries descried and meticulously
marked
By th' straight-edg'd surveyor with transit
and his stakes:
A map a man creates from out his mind
Conforms not to God's creation nor His
plan.
Though from here this too you see not
readily,
Grant me leave to show you proof you can.

COLONIST ONE
Rise, Peter Talmon, speak.

Have you not had your fill?

PETER TALMON, JR.
Aye, I've had enough.

COLONIST FOUR
But he harms not with his railing.

COLONIST TWO
Oh, let him have his say.

[Sassamon pulls several documents from his secretary.]

JOHN SASSAMON
I show you these parchments here, this one
 new
This other old. Now which compares with
 his?
The new you say? How does it happen, then,
King Alexander, dead a dozen years,
Affixes to a document new-minted?
Or that David Manning, now notorious,
Here signs himself a citizen of substance
Though he had not then attained majority?
Then take a look at Alexander's mark:

COLONIST THREE
Not me. I've not my glasses.

JOHN SASSAMON
Does it not match the hand that wrote the x
In *next*, *exact*, *oxen*, and *sixteen*?

COLONIST TWO
It looks the very same.

COLONIST FOUR
(*To Peter Talmon.*)
We wish to stand with you,
But we cannot stand on this.

[Much of the crowd disperses and leaves.]

COLONIST THREE
(*Now guarding Metacomet.*)
What do we do with him?

PETER TALMON, JR.
I'm all for letting go.
 (*To Metacomet.*)
You too are cause of this.
So off, be on your way.
 (*Metacomet walks.*)

And run, if you know what's good,
For we take up our gun.
If you fly not fast enough,
We'll maim you for our liking.

[They aim their guns at Metacomet's feet. After walking a few paces, he turns and stares steadily into their eyes. They lower their guns eventually and slink away.]

PETER TALMON, JR.
God's grace o'ershadows us for now,
But He shall not shelter you forever.

[Exeunt Talmon and supporters. Manent Metacomet; Sassamon; and Underhill and Cockburn hidden from Metacomet.]

METACOMET
Against false witness silence only makes retort;
Now that falsity disperses, let us unclasp the
tongue of truth.
You have placed us forever in your debt:
How can we ever recompense you?

JOHN SASSAMON
Where you give thanks most, you undertake your own
protection:
Leave not to others to make you flee when you must
fly,
Nor force them to make you dodge when you must
jump.
And if you will not master the art of letters,
Which functions as the lifeblood of our age,
Then will you not enlist such talent as will aid
you?

RALPH COCKBURN
(Aside to Underhill.)
What says he? I strain to hear?

JOHN UNDERHILL
(Aside to Cockburn.)
Oh-- that he cannot buffet back
The world without he have some help.

JOHN SASSAMON
Then affix your mark to some such document as
protects
Th' interest of your people; you do not think
tradition
Binds th' world: it surges too lively to succumb to
that.
Therefore, if you would optimize your place and
function,
Contract and channel the dynamics of the age.

And do not fret about the blankness of the page:
We shall stamp it next in the shape of your desire.

RALPH COCKBURN

(Aside to Underhill.)

By God, let's count our stars;
He's treating us aright.

JOHN SASSAMON

You would do better to finesse him by a different
route:

Let's say you put the frontier of your neighborhood
in friendly hands,

What you regard as useless sylvanage beyond your
hunting grounds

Could serve as buffer: as th' English will not
cross

Your English friends to probe and parry you.

[Cockburn, aside to Underhill, overrides Metacomet's response.]

RALPH COCKBURN

English? Did he say English?

I heard him something say.

JOHN SASSAMON

That's true: you'll put that Goodman Talmon in his
place.

But for that you must help me help you your mark
trace.

METACOMET

No way, I'll never leave my mark where I,

At least, could draw my name.

*[As he writes, he gnaws gently on his tongue. Sassamon uses this time to converse with
Cockburn and Underhill, aside, in their hiding place.]*

RALPH COCKBURN

Does he stop his ears

The way he stops his mouth?

JOHN UNDERHILL

I would not trust it so.

JOHN SASSAMON

I urg'd him sign that way t' secure

New English friends against them old.

JOHN UNDERHILL

What says he, then, to this?

RALPH COCKBURN
Oh, do not dash my hopes.

JOHN UNDERHILL
Look see, he bites our bait.

RALPH COCKBURN
Oh, 't is a pretty sight.

JOHN UNDERHILL
Go, he thinks you within.

JOHN SASSAMON
I will. But where go you?

RALPH COCKBURN
Where we our spirits take:
To town, to celebrate.
Come soon, you'll find us there.

JOHN UNDERHILL
We'll show you our pen's might
When with twice a hundred acres
We show our thanks to you.

JOHN SASSAMON
Quick, I must not loiter.

RALPH COCKBURN
This taper lights your way.

JOHN UNDERHILL
Go then and remember
The age's new currency.

[Exeunt Underhill and Cockburn.]

[Sassamon joins Metacomet at the hut with the candle. Metacomet passes the document to Sassamon.]

METACOMET
You admit this commits an evil we hope forestalls
one greater.

JOHN SASSAMON
Let us hazard this against what light we make
within.

[They enter the hut. The glow from the candle and their shadows play upon its walls from inside. The hut is then wheeled into the offstage darkness.]

17. Scene 5.02

[The stage remains dark. Sonconewha and Tobias enter from opposite directions.]

SONCONEWHA

Who goes there? Tobias, how comes it you bear an
English flare?

PETER TOBIAS

The English chimneys have smote the moon, the
stars,
And Borealis's Aurore-- and with that my senses
too.

SONCONEWHA

Then let me conduct you as your guide, if you'll
just put that out.

PETER TOBIAS

And I too will play guide, if my observation has
much worth.
My contact, one James Printer, himself a praying
Indian
Who claims allegiance to the English, confirms
suspicions
That Sassamon has served himself in serving us: two
hundred acres
Of our commons he reserves himself of sev'ral
thousand kept
And divided amongst his friends: I myself have
overread it
In Printer's company while he, for his honor, wrung
his hands
Appalled as me. Moreover have I learned from other
routes
That Sassamon carries secret a portfolio where, in
his wide-ranged travels,
He poisons the ears of our allies: the
Narragansetts and Sakonnets,
Most recently, to blunt devotion to our common
wealthy.

SONCONEWHA

I must tell you we shall not likely forbear in
this, not when he
Who would stab us from behind, knows where to
pierce most mortally.
I'll take flight from here, if I may borrow your
messenger wings,
But leave to you your English flare. Would you
believe? An evil wind stirs.

[Exit Sonconewha.]

[Enter Alderman and Rowan.]

ALDERMAN

What's up with Sonconewha?

ROWAN

Why the long face?

PETER TOBIAS

Does Sassamon know of our council conclave?

ALDERMAN

Why not? Who knows what he knows? Who can fathom him?

ROWAN

What's wrong with Sass', moving among the powers of our age?

ALDERMAN

In fact, he tags behind us now. Here comes he new from Providence.

[Enter John Sassamon.]

JOHN SASSAMON

Ah, Tobias: you wander alone? How will you
negotiate the dark?
Even I must strain to manage it, though I know
ev'ry inch
From where I come. The Narragansetts seem quiescent
now,
But you know their numbers-- and for that they
inspire
Terror in their neighbors. Now that we speak, can
you give some sense
The Pokanoket strength in arms in case the English
need to call on you:
I ask informally, of course.

PETER TOBIAS

To take the
Narragansetts on?

JOHN SASSAMON

We speak in theory-- only to get some sense.

PETER TOBIAS

In theory?-- in that very sense I hoped to speak.
You might help with what has long puzzled me-- in
theory.

Tell me now: your English friends, do they worship
Christ?

JOHN SASSAMON

They do.

PETER TOBIAS

Do they not disparage him a Jew?

JOHN SASSAMON

For this
They would not disparage Him: He is their Lord.

PETER TOBIAS

But you admit they still revile the Jew.

JOHN SASSAMON

Like you I may have heard remarks from them.

ROWAN

What is a Jew?

PETER TOBIAS

For that, that puts me to asking
him.

JOHN SASSAMON

They revile him because, they say, Jews put Christ
to death.

PETER TOBIAS

I thought the Romans did. Do they despise the
Roman?

JOHN SASSAMON

No.

ROWAN

Good night, but this turns my head.

[Exit Rowan.]

JOHN SASSAMON

A

Jew...

It's quite simple. A Jew steals converts of the
Christian.

PETER TOBIAS

Like the Massachusetts when your English
backsliders intermarry them?

JOHN SASSAMON
Not like them-- you know damn well. Jews worship a
single god.

ALDERMAN
Now my head turns too.

[Exit Alderman.]

PETER TOBIAS
Do not the English worship
one god too?
And if they do, why do they ignore His commandment
'gainst manslaughter?

JOHN SASSAMON
Jews betrayed their Lord and Maker. Betrayal makes
the Jew a Jew.

PETER TOBIAS
I see. Then when the Mohegans betrayed the Pequots?
Ah, but the Jew believes in a single god: that
makes him different
In his betrayal. The French: now, they believe in a
single god;
If they betray does that make them Jews? But they
do not call themselves
A Chosen People the way the English do. Are then
the English
Jews? When Boston betrays Plymouth, or when
Providence betrays Boston,
Are they Jews? When an English lends a merchant
gold for terms,
Is he a Jew? When an English defies his Maker's
proscription
Against murder, or when he finds a Roman to murder
for him,
Is he a Jew?
Perhaps you will think on this and answer me when
next we meet.

[Exit Tobias; manet Sassamon.]

[Set change; a short MUSICAL INTERLUDE begins. Then Sassamon runs off, then on,
to begin the next scene.]

18. Scene 5.03

[Scene: The door to John Eliot's house stands ajar. John Sassamon runs to it. When he opens the door he pushes into someone behind it.]

JOHN SASSAMON
Printer, what brings you?

JAMES PRINTER
(Offstage.)
Delivering papers.

JOHN ELIOT
(From above.)
James? Is that you?

[Lights come up to reveal John Eliot in his upstairs office. James Printer remains partially obscured behind the door.]

JAMES PRINTER
I do my job-- to the master-- just like you.

JOHN ELIOT
Come up, come up.

[Sassamon climbs the stairs and re-enters above. Eliot sits at Sassamon's standing secretary.]

JOHN ELIOT
How do you?, John.

JOHN SASSAMON
Yes.

JOHN ELIOT
You are angry.

JOHN SASSAMON
Why think that?

JOHN ELIOT
Is something wrong? Why won't you tell me?

JOHN SASSAMON
They... They know.

JOHN ELIOT
Know? Know what?

JOHN SASSAMON
Everything.

JOHN ELIOT

That's not possible. They don't even know what to ask.

JOHN SASSAMON

I tell you, they know. They know. Tobias. He...

JOHN ELIOT

Who?

JOHN SASSAMON

Tobias. Tobias. He knows. He knows, they all know. They're all nodding and winking and making signs to one another. I go to their make-believe councils, and then they hold the real ones in secret.

JOHN ELIOT

Tobias? Isn't he the one who...

JOHN SASSAMON

I hate him. Hate him. Full of questions. You don't know.

JOHN ELIOT

John. You're upset.

JOHN SASSAMON

Probing, always probing. He asks questions. He fully knows the answer. But he asks them anyway. He feigns drunkenness. And then he'll get up and laugh it off. Oh, you don't know him. In there digging, digging, digging.... I need a place to stay the night.

JOHN ELIOT

What?

JOHN SASSAMON

Put me up this night.

JOHN ELIOT

Oh John.

JOHN SASSAMON

What. Oh John what.

JOHN ELIOT

Jimmy might stay-- to work up Revelation. But you could...

JOHN SASSAMON

Forget it. No. No, thanks. It's alright.

JOHN ELIOT

You could always...

JOHN SASSAMON

No, no. Never mind. It's fine.

JOHN ELIOT

But...

JOHN SASSAMON

I said forget it. Don't...

[Enter James Printer, above, in greenface. He carries in a sack, a smaller version of the one he brought into an earlier scene. His old and tattered clothes now seem fresh and new; and his black hair no longer holds streaks of gray.]

JOHN ELIOT

James.

JAMES PRINTER

The Misanthrope docked this morning. Here, some sailor boy gave me these. Strange fruit. *(Giving a coconut to Sassamon.)* This one's for you.

[Sassamon drops the coconut, runs to the stairs, descends and re-emerges on the street.]

[Manet Sassamon on the town square.]

[The house darkens and workmen-stagehands reconfigure it for the upcoming scene.]

19. Scene 5.04

[Scene: At the Plymouth meetinghouse. SOUND CUE: The hoot of an owl. Workmen wheel the statues of Bradstreet and Thompson before a stockade wall. Snow falls on the cast-iron one; soot on the other. One of the workmen, an artisan, remains with stencils and chisels to carve letters into the base of the statues; all the other workmen depart. Colonists enter and pass the statues on their way into the meetinghouse. When MUSIC begins from within, the stragglers hasten their step. All ignore Sassamon until the SEWELLS enter.]

MISTRESS SEWELL

An Indian on our flank.

GOODMAN SEWELL

Assume more than th' stray we see.

MISTRESS SEWELL

I like not when at night
They go abroad to pray.

GOODMAN SEWELL

Drunk too, I'll wager odds.

MISTRESS SEWELL

Let's hasten ourselves inside.

[Exeunt Sewells within.]

[SOUND CUE: The chattering of red squirrels.]

[Sassamon passes the base of one of the statues. The artisan working there appears severely crippled and disfigured.]

ARTISAN

John. Dear Lord. John Sassamon. You.

JOHN SASSAMON

You know me, Englishman? You know me not.

ARTISAN

Most certain I know. God leaves to me an
eye,
Though He takes another. That one turns
within,
You see; th' other clear out to my heart's
content.

JOHN SASSAMON

Saltonstall...? You? No. Can it be?
The split tooth-- that I recognize, nothing
more.

ROGER SALTONSTALL
Life wears for some, John, hard: it is what
it is.
But it pleases, you look so well. I hear
you prosper.

JOHN SASSAMON
I'm sorry for all what my heart has carried
these...

ROGER SALTONSTALL
Nay, nay, do not: I've reaped my just
reward.
Be they these many a year, I've made
amends.
The balance sheet is clear; God will judge.
For my sake, forgive yourself and say no
more.
God gives me this much life-- all what you
see--
And this I praise Him for.

JOHN SASSAMON
Bless you. Bless
you,
For all these years I've thought...

ROGER SALTONSTALL
Nay, and
a man
May become what he will. Always remember
that.

JOHN SASSAMON
That I will....

[SOUND CUE: A *catbird whines*.]

JOHN SASSAMON
...Listen, will I find you
here?

ROGER SALTONSTALL
I walk in, and I walk out; as I wish, I do.

JOHN SASSAMON
I... We must talk. I go within-- to secure
My lodging for the night. May God's will
Yet smile on both of us.

ROGER SALTONSTALL
And so He may.

[The walls of the meetinghouse are removed to expose the interior.]

ROGER SALTONSTALL

If He should will it, so He may, good man.

[Exit Sassamon within.]

[A small crowd, including the BAILIFF, mingles in the vestibule of the building. The crowd gradually disperses into the main hall of the meetinghouse offstage.]

BAILIFF

Hup! You there. Where you think you're headed, Injun?

JOHN SASSAMON

I request a place of refuge, that is all. The night will do me.

BAILIFF

We've no accomodations here. Now leave. I'll not have you upset our brethren more.

JOHN SASSAMON

I ask a place to rest. I dare not travel home tonight. If you will not risk me, tell young Major Winslow. He will have wished to comfct me, for I have served him in the past; and I will serve him yet if you will aid me bring him fresh intelligence.

BAILIFF

Well, which purpose would you have me serve?

JOHN SASSAMON

By all means the intelligence prevails. If you like, I admit I said it wrongly; I meant it otherwise.

BAILIFF

Nay, I've heard the like a thousand times before. This smells too rank for me. Now out. And do not wrest the door. You'll not make a fool of me.

ROGER SALTONSTALL

What happened, John?

JOHN SASSAMON

He-- He would not see me in.

ROGER SALTONSTALL

That strikes me odd. Here, let me show you: the way in takes no longer than the way out.... *(Picking up tools.)* Nay, and I shall carry it.... Come, fear not. I say come, come straight forth.

[*They enter the vestibule of the meetinghouse. CHORAL MUSIC begins.*]

BAILIFF

A friend of yours?

ROGER SALTONSTALL

John and I go way back. Do we not, John.

BAILIFF

Eh, weh, how can I accomodate you, sir?

JOHN SASSAMON

I must see Major Winslow presently. That will do-- it.

BAILIFF

Very well. John.

JOHN SASSAMON

I thank you, sirs.

[*Exit Bailiff.*]

ROGER SALTONSTALL

Reserve your praise for God's greater favors. There. Did I not speak truly? Now, if you will excuse me, I join the singers. When they need a voice, they look not askance at how God clothes it.

[*Exit Saltonstall.*]

[*Music continues offstage. Hearing laughter and voices above him Sassamon crosses upstage to a stairway leading to the chamber over the vestibule. The chamber remains dark, lit only by the embers in the fireplace. Because only the outlines of John Underhill and Peter Talmon appear in the shadows for now, their voices alone identify them. Throughout the scene, however, JOSIAH WINSLOW remains in a position which reveals only the outline of his form.*]

JOSIAH WINSLOW

The doldrum of peace makes us not

notorious:

It takes the gust of war to fashion our
advance.

Who r'members now th'equivocal Henry Vane

Whose pacifist ways and hatred of

contention

Lost him his head when he return'd to
London?

But my father, John, who supplanted him

with war,

His name they whisper in households far and
wide:

Winslow: the very name, like Windsor,
 Windham,
Winthrop, if you like, begs that twinship
Of qualities, Vict'ry and Turbulence,
That mixes wind with-- winnowing-- and
 winning--
And assures our surname shall be whisper'd
 still.
So we seal the pattern of our aspiration:
We do not shy from th' instrument of war.

[Music continues; then:]

 VOICE OF PETER TALMON
I've often heard soldiers in th' past
Who one minute thump their chests and
 boast;
Then sigh the next when they complain
Their brethren who have toiled for peace,
Who've quelled the fumes and sparks of
 conflict
While he amasses strength in arms,
Presume themselves thereby entitled
To bind the route that history takes.
Then, captivated by their virtue,
In all eyes they make themselves essential
And squander the soldier at full strength.

 JOSIAH WINSLOW
What may apply to some would slander us:
For those whom we think indispensable in
 peace
We read'ly admit expendable in war:
Do we hoard the stalk of corn which through
 the summer
Served us bearing up our sustenance
And sun him like a houseplant by our fires?
No: for all his service we abandon him:
Forlorn, he wavers in the wint'ry wind
His feet unshod and frozen in the snow,
And all his loftiness by us forgot
When by spring we break his bones and turn
 him under.
Speak not to me, then, of past utility
When we would sooner disengage from it,
But that of which aids us in our present
 course.

 VOICE OF JOHN UNDERHILL
Ev'ry generation has its war,
And woe to those whose cohort falls
 between....

[The bailiff re-enters from the meetinghouse hall below.]

BAILIFF
I ask'd; none find him here.

JOHN SASSAMON
Seek you no further: I hear his voice
above.

BAILIFF
Ah, I see you know it, then.
Pray, let me lead you thither.

JOSIAH WINSLOW
Where did that bailiff go? To maul a stump?
Did I not tell him fetch another log?

BAILIFF
Oh, good God, I near forgot.

[The bailiff grabs several sticks of firewood and ascends the stairs with Sassamon.]

VOICE OF PETER TALMON
Shall I stir what embers lie at hand?

BAILIFF
If you'll excuse me, sirs,
I bring John Sassamon
And-- what was your reason, then?--
A-and his intelligence.

JOSIAH WINSLOW
Intelligence indeed. What news, dear John?

JOHN SASSAMON
No news, but that news which advertises me:
Those whom once I reported, report myself.
I hope, therefore, you'll grant me haven
here,
For by their laws and customs I have
transgressed
Giving me cause to dread the remedy.

JOSIAH WINSLOW
They do not judge; they lack authority:
They have no standing to decide
transgression.

JOHN SASSAMON
I doubt they will accept this argument,
But think ourselves subject their hegemony.

JOSIAH WINSLOW

Not they, but we decide our sovereignty:
By all measure these lands belong not unto
 them,
But by law and custom we hold as our king's
 domain,
And he of God Himself derives this duty.
Bask, therefore, in the web of our
 protection.
Go forth, also, and find your home a haven
Happy in the order we uphold.

[SOUND CUE: *The hoot of an owl.*]

JOHN SASSAMON
It feels too like a gamble with my life.
The Chain of Being has its comforts with
 all,
From un sentient matter to divinity,
Stepped and arranged in priority and place;
But for some, who gather not my mission's
 work,
It will not shield me if I reason thus.

[*The fire catches and throws light into the room. Underhill and Talmon emerge from the shadows; Winslow remains in obscurity.*]

JOHN UNDERHILL
You know yourself they would not bring you
 harm,
That Anawon prompts them too shrewd for
 that.

JOSIAH WINSLOW
We do not toy at games of hazard here;
Not where Calculation serves us our
 ferryman.

JOHN SASSAMON
May events not prove your calculation
 false.

JOSIAH WINSLOW
This fear entices you to forsake balance,
And once forsaken, feeds upon itself.
Therefore, you judge not wisely your
 circumstance.
Go home: speak thus t' your groundless fear
 and note
How quickly this demon diminishes and
 flies.

BAILIFF
It's time we went below.

[*The bailiff begins descending the stairs .*]

JOSIAH WINSLOW

(*To the others .*)

Come 'round, now, I'll tell a Roger
Williams story,
Much at his expense, and not his glory.

[*The MUSIC RESUMES; the bailiff nudges Sassamon .*]

BAILIFF

I think it's time to go.

JOSIAH WINSLOW

Bailiff: refresh our tankards with more
ale.

BAILIFF

Aye, sir. Anon I bring 't.

[*The Bailiff and Sassamon descend the stairs. A choral passage of the music swells from within. The chorus hums softly during:*]

BAILIFF

It would best be you leave.

[*Then the chorus continues its full vocalization of the melody. When the instrumental portion resumes, CALLS FROM THE NATURAL WORLD outside commingle with the music. The bailiff opens the door:*]

BAILIFF

A cold wind blows.
Our warmth escapes.

[*The sound of wind begins to prevail over the music. The wind diminishes, and sounds from the natural fauna inappropriate to the season override it-- the hoot of an owl, the song of a robin, the enchanting melody of a warbler .*]

BAILIFF

John, th' door.

[*Sassamon, at the threshold, turns to the bailiff .*]

BAILIFF

It's time.

[*Spotlight on John Sassamon. He steps out into the cold night. The bailiff shuts the door behind him. Sassamon turns back just as the bailiff bolts it from the inside .*]

JOHN SASSAMON

Wait....

[Spotlight on Sassamon's torso. Calls from the natural order continue with genuine fauna almost indistinguishable from human imitation.]

JOHN SASSAMON

The grieving Earth witholds her weeping
Her rivers damm'd, and streams bled dry--
Displacing Her and Her child, Day,
Who alters tenure because of Her...:

[Spotlight on Sassamon's face.]

JOHN SASSAMON

All Nature sings out of Season.

[Fade to Blackout.]

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Born in Los Angeles, Christopher H. White did undergraduate work at Georgetown University and the University of Maine. A recipient of the Milton Ellis Award in English, the Presidential 3.5 Academic Achievement Pin, and a member of the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society, he graduated from the University of Maine with a B.A. in 1995.

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