The fall of the Wilderness King, part II John Sassamon

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Christopher H. White
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, spokeswomen 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.
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 respective 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 mood you may--
But... Aghh... 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 ad-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.

What no understand?

POTUCK
No tell no understand.

8
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.]
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 indifference
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 shook loose by now,
Like August cherries long past prised
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 Saltonstell 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 discoundent 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'rs 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 Indian...

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 Wasassumen 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...?
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...

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

Why'n'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'rable 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.
The Indian? Judging by his haste
His friends left him and let him sleep.

'Sen'gant Cockburn
'Ten-hut. About face. Right march. And
left,
And left...

[Execut military corps; moment Saltonstall, Pritchett, the prisoner, and Sassamon.]
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 armed? 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 Narragansett. 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 armed 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 estimation of his realms: 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 jewelled-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.
CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Ah glad these friends have found our tongue;
Hope our verses they'll soon have sung.

[Exit following them.]

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
Exile the race of Ham to Wilderness?
Why, if this Ind'yan 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

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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.]

Deserters? There's only one deserter here.

Pritchett
(Pointing down to Sasonson.)
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 subordinate try various strategies—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 putrefies 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 harma’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; sergeant et al.

CAPTAIN UNDERHILL
Do you follow me, soldier?

SERGEANT COCKBURN

[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 bejewels 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 caduceus.
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 Narragansets 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
Of 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.

[Sussamon 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 Sussamon and Princess X.]
Scene 2.04

(Scene: The scene. 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 bears 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, COCKENO.]

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 comes?
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'ly--
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 Sussamon 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 foresee 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? Mih.

FIRST SOLDIER

Injian.

THIRD SOLDIER

I c’n shee. P-Pee-ked?

FIRST SOLDIER

Naysir, one-a ours.

THIRD SOLDIER

Who give’ms th’ English rags, ‘r whatever.

JOHN SASSAMON

Good day.

[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 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.]

FIRST SOLDIER

Whoa.
What, are they mad?

SECOND SOLDIER

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

THIRD SOLDIER

Nay, enough out of you.

SECOND SOLDIER

I'll wring 'r neck.

THIRD SOLDIER

He's bleeding.

FIRST SOLDIER

How bad?

SECOND SOLDIER

Bloody bitch.

THIRD SOLDIER

Let's put him t' bed.

SECOND SOLDIER

We were only sportin'.

FIRST SOLDIER

[Exeunt soldiers.]

[Princess X hands the bloodstained knife to Sassamor.]

[Exit Princess X, manet Sassamor.]
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. A 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.]

WAMSUTTA

[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

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.]
Scene 3.04

[Scene: Sussamon returns 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 Sussamon 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 Sussamon's place at one of the tables and talks about Sussamon 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]
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 Sassamun’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.

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JOHN ELIOT
(Aside.)
For certain, you always do, dear John.

[Exit Eliot.]

PETER TALMON, SR.
Say on. For it lies hereabout.
You may skip the whereass 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
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.
(To tavernkeeper.)
He cheats me my birthright which by this
hand I earn.

BENJAMIN THOMPSON
Words are only words, which as often bend and twist

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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 Talnon, 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. Intemperateness 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.]
JOHN COTTON
Of course, by all means, yes. We must promote the general peace, if only to assure that tranquillity we must enjoy.
Without which we cannot build in God's image; I say: The righteous must stay for righteousness. For far too often we temporize.
And fail to secure the uprights to God's City as would we were we to stand them on a firmer ground. Thus we post ourselves near inverted, tilted in such fashion by our weakness, and by our weakness.
Grow like swamp-thirsty cedars toward Satan, where we should r'buff that angle.
And grow toward heaven. Why should we let befall us to appear sodden with the dank and evil spirits of the fen.
And ripe for toppling in a wintry wind?
What weakness else than vacillation contrives t' so put us out of character?

JOHN ELIOT
What harm comes it first to fathom, thence to mold as God wills?

JOHN COTTON
I ask you: do the equivocators equivocate so well?
I answer: "Nay, and they do not." For even equivocators know well enough that to yield on trivial circumstance leads them t'ward capitulation on substance. I have walked among their kind and heard them say, "if we let our clerics discipline our drink or forbid us a woman teach a man, they will misprision us in a doctrine tainted of works that will nullify our private faith."
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 crix 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
frightened 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.]

How do you, John. **JOHN ELIOT**

Yes. **JOHN SASSAMON**

You are angry? **JOHN ELIOT**

Should I be? **JOHN SASSAMON**

You are angry. **JOHN ELIOT**

Why think you that? **JOHN SASSAMON**

What’s the matter? **JOHN ELIOT**

This. **JOHN SASSAMON**

What? **JOHN SASSAMON**

This word. **JOHN SASSAMON**

Does it not mean ‘to give up, to render null and void?’ **JOHN ELIOT**

[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 contemporaire. 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

Turn 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 are 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
78
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 remnant 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 fet.

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--

SONCONE
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.

PALPH COCKBURN

Which way Boston?

ARDERMAN

(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;
Their 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.

SONCONENWA
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 beator.

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 Sassamom.) What you talk? Who you think you are?
You ain't no white man, man.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What, you're a book?

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...

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

Only they come through the barrel of a gun.

That's some kind of love.

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 to 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 ‘emselves. 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

(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 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 Sunconewha 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,
   Metacommet, 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

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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 anesthetic 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.

SONCONWAMA
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.

ANNAN
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; manel Sassamon through the scene change.]
16. Scene 5.01

(Scene: Sassaamon 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 Sassaamon 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—ineptly 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 blue line 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 Sassaamon’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 Sassaamon 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 Sassaamon. 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.

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 octogonol  
And here you say orthogonol--  
-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 orthogonol.  

[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 -agon- 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'rnno  
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 barely nil.  
Therefore x relates to y.  

SIMON BRADSTREET  

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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
Despised of all humanity,
Save only those most moist and dear;
And He Himself degraded, shamed,
Red with the torture of the lash,
And blistering 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 temporal 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, orthogonal,
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 with 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 our Bibles
Expressly forbid and castigate?

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

SIMON BRADSTREET
How is it wrought then?

BENJAMIN THOMPSON
By suffering.

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’rers 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 scrims; 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...]

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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 corpses lunges and forces him back.]

BETTY

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 rund eeh. 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

[Exit Betty walking backward.]

JOHN SASSAMON

[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.]

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[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?
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 denounced?
I see. In your eyes.
Go boy. Good boy. Fetch it?
The blood you rai 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 PEIER 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’rable, 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
Villify 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
withholds
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’ rewness 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; remain 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

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 redbeard, 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' Wachusettts 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 beggars the truth which thusly falsify 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

Enmity?, when I bring none.  

SONCONNEWHA

Bringing hope's 
spoilage, 
Such as you bring worse.

METACOMET

What goes here?

SONCONNEWHA

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.]

SONCONNEWHA

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.

SONCONNEWHA

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.]

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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
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 damnedest places.

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 Talmor.]

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

COLONIST TWO
Good Peter Talmor. 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

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: 2.31.)
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, even, own, 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 Metaconet’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 Metaconet; Sassamon; and Underhill and Cockburn hidden from Metaconet.}

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.

[Coeburn, 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 Coeburn 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, 'tis 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 several 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 wealty.

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 glare. Would you believe? An evil wind stirs.

[Exit Sonconewha.]

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[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.

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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...

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; marzet 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.
That's not possible. They don't even know what to ask.

I tell you, they know. They know. Tobias. He...

Who?

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.

Tobias? Isn't he the one who...

I hate him. Hate him. Full of questions. You don't know.

John. You're upset.

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.

What?

Put me up this night.

Oh John.


Jimmy might stay-- to work up Revelation. But you could...

Forget it. No. No, thanks. It's alright.

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 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.
Life wears for some, John, hard: it is what it is. But it pleases, you look so well. I hear you prosper.

I'm sorry for all what my heart has carried these...

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.

Bless you. Bless you. For all these years I've thought...

Nay, and a man may become what he will. Always remember that.

That I will....

[SOUND CUE: A catbird whines.]

Listen, will I find you here?

I walk in, and I walk out; as I wish, I do.

I... We must talk. I go within-- to secure my lodging for the night. May God's will yet smile on both of us.

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 accommodations 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 comfort 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.

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[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, how can I accommodate 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.

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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....
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 unsentient 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.

[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 in 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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