“OPEN THY MOUTH WIDE, AND I WILL FILL IT”: SEXUAL DISCOURSE IN THE PURITAN EXECUTION SERMON

By

JUSTIN R. GRANT

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2012
This project is dedicated in memory to my grandmother, Evelyn Wittek
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my committee, Jodi Schorb and Kim Emery for their impeccable guidance and support during the research and writing of this project. In particular, I would like to extend my unyielding gratitude to Jodi for working with me every step of the way to get this project into its final polished form. Finally, I wish to thank my mother, Claudia Grant, for always encouraging my academic endeavors.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | .................................................................................................................. 4 |
| ABSTRACT | .................................................................................................................. 6 |
| CHAPTER |
| 1 INTRODUCTION | .................................................................................................................. 7 |
| 2 SAMUEL DANFORTH, SODOMY, AND PURITAN “BODY POLITICS” | ........................................ 19 |
| 3 “A WHOREDOM UNMASKED” IN WARNINGS TO THE UNCLEAN | ........................................ 39 |
| 4 CONCLUSION | .................................................................................................................. 61 |
| LIST OF REFERENCES | .................................................................................................................. 63 |
| BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH | .................................................................................................................. 68 |
Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

“OPEN THY MOUTH WIDE, AND I WILL FILL IT”: SEXUAL DISCOURSE IN THE
PURITAN EXECUTION SERMON

By
Justin R. Grant

May 2012

Chair: Jodi Schorb
Major: English

This study investigates the relationship between pre-modern sexual discourse and the
body in the late seventeenth century Puritan execution sermon. Using Rev. Samuel Danforth’s
The Cry of Sodom Enquired Into (1674) and Rev. John Williams’s Warnings to the Unclean
(1699) as the focal points of my study, I demonstrate the unlikely erotic potentials these two
texts unbeknowingly authorize by reconsidering the power of sexual language they invoke, from
bestial morphologies to metaphors of uncleanness. Central to my analysis of their sermons is a
theorization of the criminal bodies that occasion each text. Danforth preached his sermon on the
day of Benjamin Goad’s execution for bestiality, and Williams preached his sermon on the day
of Sarah Smith’s execution for infanticide. While both Danforth and Williams set out to warn
their respective congregations about the dangers of sexual sin, I argue that the bodies of Goad
and Smith disrupt the execution sermon’s disciplinary mechanism for public control, and
produce unyielding terrains of erotic possibility. Drawing upon legal archives, theological texts,
and recent scholarship in early American sexuality studies, I ultimately reveal the interconnected
ways the exposed ‘deviant’ body on the scaffold and the public sexual discourse of ministerial
intervention produce the formation of distinct sexual imaginaries.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Before arriving to the North American colonies, Thomas Shepard was a student at Cambridge University. He recounts in his journal a memorable night of excess drinking and gaiety at school. Upon waking up the next morning, however, Shepard felt “sick with beastly carriage,” and a peculiar “sense of shame and confusion” came over him. As his thoughts of the night became less muddled and more lucid, Shepard horrifyingly recalls:

I was once...dead drunk and lived in unnatural uncleanness not to be named and in speculative wantonness and filthiness with all sorts of persons which pleased my eye (yet still restrained from the gross act of whoredom) which some of my own familiars were to their horror and shame overtaken with. (God’s Plot 393)

Here, sensational speculation may arise in debating what this pre-penetrative “restrained” act “not to be named” was, and the types (and genders) of “pleas[ing]” persons with whom this young man engaged in “unnatural uncleanness.” But perhaps most striking from this passage are the diverse forms of language Shepard implements to convey his experience and sense of non-normative sexual pleasure in ‘edging’ with another inebriated body. Central to his recollection of sinful foreplay is restraint. Shepard imagines his body on the precipice or verge of utter abomination.

Shepard’s comments are helpful for understanding the language of sex in pre-modern cultural formations, steeped in Calvinist theology. Shepard first explains a “sickness” that falls over him, figuratively symptomatic of virility and contagion. But that experience is also coupled by “beastly,” inferring animalistic imaginings. He then elucidates his drunken sexual experience as a form of “unnatural uncleanness,” simultaneously signifying abjection and filth. Besides the invocation of these vibrant and perhaps even macabre metaphors, the young man also articulates sex in relation to fantasy and desire, where “all sorts of persons...please [his] eye.” Shepard also alludes to those sins “not to be named,” such as sodomy and bestiality, which were capital
offenses on both sides of the Atlantic during the seventeenth century, punishable by death when witnessed penetration could be proved. At the same time, Shepard relates his “gross act,” understood to be both an abominable physical action and state of consciousness, as a form of “whoredom” against God and his covenant with Him. Lastly, Shepard conveys what it means to be a sexually ‘feeling’ body, insomuch he maps out an affective terrain of erotic longing through the language of “shame.”

Perhaps young Shepard mended his sexually lascivious ways when he arrived to New England. He became a prominent Puritan minister of the Church at Newton, and published an immensely popular religious tract on spiritual conversion titled *The Sincere Convert* (1641), which went through numerous reprints. In his text, Shepard explains how everyone is a potential perpetrator of sexual sin. He writes:

> Every natural man and woman is born full of all sin, (Rom. i.29,) as full as a toad is of poison…All these sins are in thine heart: thy mind is a nest of all the foul opinions, heresies, that every were vented by any man; thy heart is a foul sink of all atheism, sodomy, blasphemy, murder, whoredom, adultery, witchcraft, buggery; so that, if thou hast any good thing in thee, it is but as a drop of rosewater in a bowl of poison; where fallen it is all corrupted. (40)

Here, the parallels are striking between Shepard’s use of language to describe his private sexual experience in his journal, and the public discourse he invokes to articulate the warring and vile “sins [of] thine heart” in his religious tract. Shepard reiterates the bestial morphologies, comparing man’s sinful nature to how a “toad is of poison.” The language of uncleanness and toxicity is also present in his examination of “foul opinions” and “bowl[s] of poison.” Moreover, the rhetoric of abjection forms the cogency of the spiritual treatise. Shepard explains “every natural man and woman is born full of all sin” and “corruption.” It is only the grace of God that prevents a convert from falling into the ‘non-natural’ sins of “sodomy, blasphemy, murder, whoredom, adultery, witchcraft, [and/or] buggery.” Thus, in Shepard’s framework, following the
dominant Calvinist principles of the time, every Puritan body is part of a larger social body that posits all congregants as potential perpetrators of sodomitical sin, encompassing acts such as masturbation, buggery, and adultery, which we may refer to as the ‘sodomitical imaginary.’ The rhetoric of the ‘sodomitical imaginary’ is both anti-agential and shared, insofar as everyone is equally on the cusp of being a sodomite, irrespective of gender or even sexual appetite or taste. At the same time, Shepard’s sexual discourse points in another direction when he refers to the “heart [as] a foul sink of all atheism.” All carnal and worldly desires, fantasies, and thoughts that divert a congregant from his or her relationship with God comprise what we may call the ‘whorish imaginary.’

While this project is not explicitly about Thomas Shepard or his night of intoxicated sexual romping, his commentary is instrumental for introducing the complexities of being a sexual body in Puritan culture. For Shepard, his entrance into sexual awareness and his experience of sexual sensation is mediated through the language of Calvinist theological rhetoric, which he learned from ministers and religious texts. By becoming a minister himself, Shepard then replicates this sexual information to his congregants in a continuous cycle of knowledge production and authorization.

Shepard certainly heeded the cautions of his ministers by restraining his body when he was on the brink of falling victim to a sinful abomination “not to be named.” But this project takes up two Puritans who crossed the threshold of sexual borders in seventeenth century New England, and who were subsequently executed for their lascivious crimes. Benjamin Goad was convicted and hanged for buggery (also sometimes referred to as a form of sodomy and commonly known today as bestiality) in 1674, and Sarah Smith was convicted and hanged for murdering her bastard child in 1699. Upon Goad’s day of hanging, Rev. Samuel Danforth of
Roxbury preached an execution sermon titled *The Cry of Sodom Enquired Into*, documenting a vast terrain of deviant sexual crimes that lead an individual into heinous and sinful transgression. Upon Smith’s day of hanging, Rev. John Williams of Deerfield preached an execution sermon titled *Warnings to the Unclean*, positing whoredom as the main cause of an individual’s fall into ‘abominable uncleanness,’ even driving one to commit infanticide.

In this project, I demonstrate the unlikely erotic potentials of *The Cry of Sodom* and *Warnings to the Unclean*. While both sermons present explicit and didactic arguments about what not to do, each text, I will demonstrate, proliferates and inculcates a counter-discourse of sexual possibility. This counter-discourse has the potential to stir the erotic imaginary of Puritan spectators and readers. While Danforth and Williams use similar language and metaphors to illustrate the perils of sexual transgression—the semantics of uncleanness, bestial anxiety, and abjection resonant in the Shepard archive—I argue that the bodies of Goad and Smith disrupt the execution sermon’s disciplinary mechanism for public control and produce feelings that range from erotic longing to sexual fantasy. I examine how the bodies of Goad and Smith, being on the brink of ‘life and death,’ conveyed meaning and power to Puritan witnesses. It is precisely in the performative interplay of the exposed ‘deviant’ body on the scaffold and the public sexual discourse of ministerial intervention that incites such queer readings of the Puritan execution ritual.

Moreover, I read Danforth’s language alongside Williams’s to clarify how bestiality and whoredom fit into the sexual imagination of late seventeenth century Puritan culture in New England. This is done in order to demonstrate how Danforth’s sermon unintentionally authorizes the creation of a ‘sodomitical imaginary,’ while Williams’s sermon unintentionally deploys a ‘whorish imaginary.’ What is yielded from this mode of inquiry, then, are figures such as
Thomas Shepard who privately reflect upon their sexual desires, fantasies, and pleasures, always on the cusp of spiritual and physical erotic inebriation.

To date, no scholar has adequately explored the erotic potentials of the Puritan body on the scaffold during the execution ritual. Quite formulaically, most historians, literary, and cultural critics, such as Karen Halttunen collectively contend: “Public execution was a ritual response to the problem of evil” (25). In her book *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination*, Halttunen details most eloquently the manifest Calvinist symbolism of the Puritan execution. She writes:

The New England execution aimed ritualistically to achieve reconciliation between the criminal and the community whose most powerful mores he or she had violated. The prisoner’s part was to be offered as a moral example for the congregation and to assume a sacrificial role analogous to that of Christ by dying publicly and ignominiously for an act rooted in a sinfulness that was shared by all. (25)

So if the role of the convict was to act as a passive penitent and bearer of Christ’s cross, which we will later see disrupted in Sarah Smith’s refusal to provide adequate repentance, the role of the execution sermon and minister was to reify the convict’s due punishment and guide congregants through the harmful wages of “evil” and sin. In his book *Hanging Between Heaven and Earth: Capital Crimes, Execution Preaching, and Theology in Early New England*, Scott Seay explains that “prior to the early eighteenth century, most Puritan execution preachers believed that capital criminals were not likely to have a chance of eternal salvation” (77). He observes that ministers linked a criminal’s sin to the “pollution of the land,” authorizing the execution for fear of God’s potential wrath upon the community (83). Lastly, Seay argues that until approximately 1700, ministers relied on the “doctrinal standards of Puritanism to make sense out of capital crime,” and to justify the death penalty (166). Thus, scholars of the genre
overwhelmingly focus on the criminal body’s pedagogical function, and not its erotic possibilities.

Moreover, scholars have also addressed the vast performative aspects of the Puritan execution ritual beyond the minister’s role, such as the function of the criminal’s procession to the gallows and his or her last words and final warnings on the scaffold. In his article “Lethal Theatre: Performance, Punishment, and the Death Penalty,” Dwight Conquergood explores the parts the spectator and convict played in the formal penal ceremony. He most poignantly argues that “executions encouraged spectators to gaze intently” at the convict’s body on the scaffold, creating a “ritual license for the condemned…to make [a] spectacle out of [his or her] body” (471). Clarifying further, Conquergood explains: “Just as the sentence of death had to be executed on [a convict’s body], so [did] the signs of grace [have] to be manifested bodily.” In this way, “execution audiences” closely monitored and scrutinized the convict’s “gesture, carriage, countenance, demeanor…and tonal inflection” for “signs” or signals of God’s divine intervention and graces (471). “Execution audiences,” writes Conquergood, were thus “encouraged to identify deeply with the condemned as fellow sinners.” He argues:

This way of seeing encouraged a deeply sympathetic, theatrical identification in which the spectators could imaginatively exchange places with the condemned, instead of holding themselves aloof in distanced judgment. The ideal spectator at executions became a deeply engaged, co-performative witness. (472)

Conquergood’s observations are vital for illustrating the “co-performative” role of the spectator in the execution ritual. By positioning the Puritan execution as a form of ‘lethal theatre,’ he exemplifies the role of the audience to react and engage with the condemned in a series of complex semiotic and pedagogical approaches.

While Halttunen, Seay, and Conquergood are useful for broadly understanding the Puritan execution sermon and ritual, Joseph Fichtelberg’s work on the psychological dimensions
of spectator participation help us to further consider what these visual and aural displays of punishment and restraint afford. In his book *Risk Culture: Performance & Danger in Early America*, Fichtelberg, drawing upon the scholarship of Charles Cohen, argues that spectators “treated” the “material body” of the condemned as an “emotional ethnography” that silently “disclosed” a “psychological history that ministers and congregants shared” (53-4). In addition, he maintains: “Rituals of Puritan punishment enforced social ‘solidarity.’ Puritan sermons [can be] read for their communal effects—their satisfaction of the ‘deepest psychological needs’ of their listeners” (54). Fichtelberg’s observations aid us in visualizing the affective meaning-making potentials of the condemned body on the scaffold, which he argues are collective feelings for witnesses mediated by the minister. However, as I argue throughout this project, the proliferation of sexual possibility lies outside the minister’s control—both in the case of Danforth and Williams—through the disruptive potentials of the ‘deviant’ sexual body on the scaffold and bleeding through the pages of the minister’s sermon. The way sex is ‘felt’ is a key concern of my study.

To provide further historical contextualization on the execution sermon, I trace the genre’s ‘literary’ significance in colonial New England. Throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Puritan execution sermon was an immensely popular form of criminal and gallows literature in the colonies. These published sermons not only reached a wide geographic area, but also a diverse readership population as well, spanning across class and social ranks (Cohen 5). From the period of 1674-1699, nine execution sermons were published in New England. That number would surge to over two hundred across the eighteenth century. These sermons responded to capital crimes that ranged from infanticide and bestiality, to servant uprising and murder. Besides the Danforth and Williams texts addressed in this project, some of
the other well-known execution sermons from this period include Cotton Mather’s *Speedy Repentance Urged* (1690), Samuel Willard’s *The Impenitent Sinners Warned of their Misery and Summoned to Judgment* (1698), and Increase Mather’s *The Folly of Sinning* (1699). The latter two respond to the high profile case of Sarah Threeneedles who, like Smith, was convicted and executed for murdering her illegitimate child.

Imperative for understanding how *The Cry of Sodom* and *Warnings to the Unclean* can be read and thought of as literary texts, it is useful to explain the structural form, style, and similar thematic trends of the genre. Execution sermons varied insignificantly in structure from other types of Puritan sermons. In *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace*, Daniel A. Cohen observes the consistent literary form execution sermons took. First, a minister begins his sermon by introducing his “text,” and then proceeds to offer his congregants a passage or story from the Bible. He subsequently takes that biblical passage or story and uses it as evidence to derive a “doctrine,” which is the minister’s thesis. Then, the minister proceeds to develop the doctrine’s application. As Cohen notes, the doctrine’s application is articulated in the form of “exhortations” and “instructions.” In developing their argumentative points, ministers implemented a “plain” and bare style to convey the dismal and solemn occasion on which they were writing (Cohen 7). In addition, execution sermons were oftentimes appended with the convict’s confession, last words, and occasionally a documentary account of the actual execution.

Cohen’s claims are accurate for understanding early execution sermon structure and form in the New England colonies, and useful for the scope of this project given the timeframe discussed spans from 1674-1699. Cohen also notes that execution sermons published during the early decades of eighteenth century were, however, sometimes inconsistent with this framework.
He claims this was due in part to publishers attempting to sensationalize the criminal’s crime with intricate elaborations and details that oftentimes overshadowed the sermon’s purpose. Yet, as new and alternative forms of gallows literature emerged, such as crime ballads and conversion narratives, the execution sermon retained its original premise as a “vehicle for the pulpit messages of local ministers” (Cohen 13). Thus, we can use Cohen’s beneficial model as a guide for explaining the broad structural form of the execution sermons of Danforth and Williams. This is done in order to demonstrate the manifest content of these texts.

Danforth begins The Cry of Sodom by offering an address to his “Christian Reader,” which serves as the introduction to his ‘text.’ The sermon’s ultimate purpose is to theorize how a young servant was discovered sodomizing a mare, but in the process, it must make all spectators worried for their own salvation, and must make audiences feel as if they, too, could easily slip into Goad’s path of sin, without the protective grace of God. Danforth explains: “The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.” Because a sexual sinner, such as Goad, did not “glorifie…God” in the covenant, “He [God] gave [Goad] up to uncleanness, vile practises, [and] to vile affections” (1). Thus, Danforth is explaining how God has completely withdrawn his divine graces from Goad, which simultaneously serves as justification for Goad’s execution and authorization for the delivery of his sermon. He then proceeds to explain the sexual pollution found in the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which serves as the biblical story he uses to develop his ‘thesis.’ Danforth writes: “Sodom and Gomorrah are…named in my Text because as they were the most notable and famous for estate and greatness, so they were the most notorious and infamous for sin and lewdness” (1). Then, Danforth uses the story the story of Sodom and Gomorrah to develop his ‘thesis.’ His overarching point is that Goad’s bestial sin is not merely a haphazard or isolated occurrence.
Rather, Goad’s act is part of a larger manifestation of moral issues that cause “sin and wickedness,” which Danforth posits as a steppingstone for becoming another Sodom (2). By developing his ‘thesis’ into a set of moral ‘instructions’ for his congregants, such as avoiding “Disobedience to Parents and Masters in Families” (23) and being cautionary of “Irreligion and Profaneness” (24), Danforth can use Goad as a “Bridle to curb and restrain the rest of our Youth, and all others, from indulging themselves in any kinde of Carnal Uncleanness” (18). He urges his congregants to “Take the Sword of the Spirit, and thrust it into the bowels of thy lusts” (26). In this manifest light, Danforth fully exercises his authority to punish Goad, while also preventing the community from falling into heinous transgression.

Similarly, Williams begins Warnings to the Unclean by offering an address to his “Reader,” which serves as the introduction to his ‘text.’ Here, the ‘text’ is ultimately seeking to explain how a woman could conceal a pregnancy and murder an illegitimate child, while also making all congregants—male and female—feel equally at risk and culpable. Williams argues that sin is “both…contempt of the Divine Authority…and] violence of Conscious” (3). He then introduces a biblical passage from the Old Testament to develop his ‘thesis.’ Williams explains: “The method of God in his Judgments seems directly to point at…the causes of Israel’s miseries, 2 King 17.9…That the Children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right in the sight of the Lord” (4). Here, Williams’s invocation of the Israelites serves as precursory evidence for explaining how the “secrecy of those things,” namely unauthorized sexual relations, prompted Smith to commit infanticide. Williams’s specific ‘thesis’ is twofold. First, Smith’s drive to murder her bastard child and attempt to conceal the crime was caused by her whorish behavior, which is simultaneously a deplorable physical act and “violence of Consciousness” against God. Williams then situates Smith’s whoredom as justification for her death: “So the whorish woman
spoken of in Prov. 7.15. She becomes an Orator for it…to inveigle a companion” (23). By positing Smith as an “inveigling” body of sexual corruption, he forcefully calls for her execution before other bodies and the land become enticed and fall into ‘uncleanliness.’ The second component of Williams’s ‘thesis’ is his explanation of all bodies as potentially ‘unclean’ and whorish, both male and female. He elucidates: “These take a course to carry the guilt of their doings into another world with them. Those that commit Adultery, and walk in Lies, will be as Sodom to God” (27). Similar to Danforth’s project, Williams develops a set of ‘instructions’ and ‘exhortations’ to caution congregational members of the sinful trappings of ‘uncleanness’ and whorishness. In this manifest light, Williams fully exercises his authority to punish Smith, and dutifully warns and prevents others from engaging in such lascivious behavior.

Before moving on to develop my extended analyses of the two sermons and bodies of Smith and Goad, a final point to address is the Puritan conception of the sanctified body. Because so much of this project is devoted to non-conforming bodies, it is useful to visualize the construction of normativity in the Puritan consciousness. To perhaps state the obvious, ‘clean bodies’ were first and foremost Puritan bodies. In his captivity narrative titled Memoirs of Odd Adventures (1736), John Gyles warns: “A Jesuit will ruin you, body and soul!” (212). For the Puritans, a sanctified body meant a pure soul. In A Modell of Christian Charity” (1630), John Winthrop states: “The Soule to the body…[is the] Power…to sett all the faculties on worke in the outward exercise of…duty” (39). The “naturall” body, according to Winthrop, is the outward manifestation of spiritual unity to the “body of Christe” (45). Thus, the sanctified Puritan body is one that must restrain itself from any form of worldly corruption that disrupts this unity.

This theological contextualization illustrates the anxieties Puritan ministers experienced when individuals, such as Smith and Goad, interrupted the utopian spiritual body. But as Rev.
Samuel Whiting optimistically proclaims in *Abraham’s Humble Intercession for Sodom* (1666): “Could any good come out of *Sodom*? *Abraham* does not altogether despair of it; *Peradventure* (layes he) *there be fifty righteous within the City*” (1). While Whiting is referring to Sodom as a “good” apparatus for instilling fear into Puritan minds, his statements far exceed his ability to thoroughly control and restrain. The bodies of Smith and Goad are branded not only as unclean and abject on the scaffold and in their respective execution sermons, but they are also chaotically disruptive to the Puritan social order. As I will now illustrate, these ‘unclean’ bodies are also resistant to the forces that rigorously attempt to scrub them out.
CHAPTER 2
SAMUEL DANFORTH, SODOMY, AND PURITAN “BODY POLITICS”

It was an assumedly mild afternoon in the Massachusetts Bay Colony on February 7, 1673 at noon, when an individual walking past a field witnessed a horrifying scene—an adolescent was penetrating a mare (Cronin 10). At the age of seventeen, Benjamin Goad, a native of Roxbury in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was arrested and brought to court on charges of buggery—accused of copulating with a mare in broad daylight—a capital offense in Puritan New England (Cohen 103). In a scrutinizing examination before his trial, young Goad confessed to the “vnnatural & horrid act of Beastiallitje.” Standing before the magistrate, however, Goad recanted his confession, stating he would be “trjed by God & the Countrje” (Cronin 10).

Goad’s case was especially complex in proving evidence for a guilty verdict and death penalty punishment. As Richard Godbeer notes, jurisdictions in New England required two witnesses for a conviction of buggery, which was interchangeably used in sodomy laws (“Cry of Sodom” 260). Echoing Godbeer’s observations, many ministers debate at length the issue of sodomy and witness in William Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation (1656). The collective response, as Rev. John Reynor explains: “In taking away ye life of man, one witnes alone will not suffice, ther must be tow” (391). However, other ministers, such as Rev. Charles Chauncey fervently argue: “If a man witnes against him selfe, his owne testimony is sufficente” for conviction (397). Only one individual came forth stating they observed Goad’s private sexual act, and the “Honored Court” had to deliberate over his initial confession as evidence against him (Cronin 10).

On March 14th of the same year, Goad was found guilty on all charges, and according to the Records of the Court of Assistants, “It was Agreed that the prisoner Condemned…should be executed on the next fifth day fortnight being the second day of Aprill” (Cronin 14). Customarily
traditional for “Capitolly Guilty” sinners, Goad was mandated to return to “the place from whence yow Came & from thence to the place of execution & there hang till yow be dead” (10-1). In addition, the “mare that [Goad] abused” was to be brought before him first and “knockt on [the] head” (11). In Puritan culture, bestiality and the sexual violation of animals was considered particularly heinous and disruptive. Following Leviticus 20: 15-16, ministers vehemently demanded execution of the victimized beast because of the disruptive potential in the natural order (man becoming beast), in addition to the fear of possible demonic impregnation. In fact, a 1656 ordinance to the New Haven legislature procedurally required the animal to be “slaine, buried, and not eaten” in cases of bestiality (Hoadly 577). This ritualistic procedure for dealing with sexually violated animals was implemented throughout the New England colonies.

The complexities of bestial witness in Goad’s trial were typical of similar cases in seventeenth century New England. For example, George Spencer, a one-eyed man from New Haven, was accused of buggery in 1641. Compelling testimony to his guilt was brought before the colony’s General Court. Spencer was the servant to a wealthy aristocrat, Henry Browning. Browning had recently sold a sow to John Wakefield, a planter. When the swine gave birth, Goodwife Browning was met with a horrifying discovery—a “pigge…monster.” She noticed that the demonic piglet “had no haire on the whole body, the skin was very tender, and of a reddish white colllour like a child’s” (Reis 47). She also noticed that the demonic piglet had a deformed Cyclopes-like eye, which looked similar to Spencer’s disability. After Spencer’s “deformed eye [was] beheld and compared together with the eye of the monster,” it was evident to the authorities that the servant had buggered and impregnated the sow. When “examined concerning this abomination, att first [Spencer] said he had nott done itt [but then later] answered he had done itt…in a hogstie” (Reis 48). Although Spencer’s testimony operates in reverse fashion from
Goad’s, the court officials used his confession as evidence for his conviction. While Goad was found guilty of bestiality because his abject sexual act was witnessed, Spencer was found guilty because he confessed and the product of his abject sexual act was revealed. In both cases, the ‘truth’ of the sexual crime was inscribed onto bodies and legally verified by confession.

Upon Goad’s sentence to the gallows for such a lewd and villainous sexual crime, Rev. Samuel Danforth, a Puritan minister and associate pastor of the church at Roxbury—the congregation that Goad was converted into—presided over the execution. Before Goad ascended the scaffold for public hanging, Danforth preached to his congregation the dangers and perils of sexual misconduct in the first known and published execution sermon in the British North American colonies, titled *The Cry of Sodom Enquired Into* (Cambridge, 1674).

Following Puritan legal doctrine, steeped in morality, ministers such as Danforth believed public executions restored the health and stability of a community. For example, delivering a sermon on the occasion of James Morgan’s execution for murder, Rev. Increase Mather reflects: “One [‘Capitolly guilty’ sinner] unpunished may bring guilt and a Curse upon the whole Land, that all the Inhabitants of that Land shall suffer for it” (179). Illustrated in Mather’s anxiety-ridden words is the spiritual duty of the convict to reconcile with God and his or her community in a civic setting—the scaffold. Public executions served as a means of warning spectators about the dangers of capital sin, and to demonstrate the absolute authority of the State. From the Puritan legal viewpoint, Benjamin Goad’s body on the scaffold signifies not only a morality narrative for the onlooker, but also a force for codifying sexual restraint in the spectator’s consciousness.

Central to the ritualistic practice of the convict’s reconciliation with God and his community was public confession and repentance. While we don’t have surviving records
documenting Goad’s statements, we can turn back to the Spencer archive to illustrate how the “truth of the crime” was fully revealed not only in the punished body of the condemned, but also in his very soul (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 44). When “the day of execution came,” Spencer told youths to “take warning by his example how they neglect and dispise the meanes of Grace” (Reis 50). He acknowledged his “sundry evils, both in his yonger yeares, and in his late service.” After “the halter” was “fitted to [Spencer’s] neck,” “he justified the sentence as righteous.” Calling upon God as the virtuous “and severe judge who had vengeance att hand for all his other sins” (Reis 51), the “penal ceremony” effectively “justified justice” among its participants when the criminal authorized and internalized his guilt and due punishment (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 44).

Most intriguingly, the moment of Spencer’s confession and ‘truth’ occurs when the noose is placed around his neck. It is a temporal moment before his expiration. Similarly, during Danforth’s lengthy sermon, Goad’s body is hauntingly located on the ‘brink of life and death’—hanging in a moment of time before his demise—which is a way of understanding his body as ‘spectral.’ Although Goad’s deviancy and impulses are seldom mentioned in the sermon, his body is sexually signifying on both the scaffold and in Danforth’s text. Goad’s body does not merely serve as a disciplinary mechanism for prompting sexual normativity in spectators. Rather, the figurative and real body of the adolescent operates to extend the text’s erotic and semiotic power, counter-discursively codifying the possibility of unregulated sexual desires and propensities for the spectators.

Thus, in this chapter I will argue that Goad’s sodomitical body, in part articulated through a narrative of monstrous fluid spillage into an illicit bestial “vesel” (to borrow a term used by Rev. John Cotton in his catechism *Spiritual Milk for Babes* (1646) to describe one’s intimate
private parts), disrupts the sermon’s disciplinary mechanism for public control by producing and proliferating knowledge of erotic fantasy, and serves as an early discourse of sexual propensity for Goad’s spectators (Cotton 5). Goad’s body is simultaneously made invisible in Danforth’s sermon, while made hyper-visible through the theatricality of the scaffold and the participatory engagement of communal spectatorship onto the punished body, leaking sexual ‘truths’ beyond the surface. I will demonstrate how Benjamin Goad’s body conveyed meaning on the scaffold and how that knowledge, or truth-producing power, functions in Danforth’s sermon. This is done in order to better clarify how both texts—Goad’s body and the sermon—operate to produce a counter-discourse of sexual possibility.

The problematic and tenuous issue of Goad’s (in)visible body has yet to be addressed in contemporary scholarship on Danforth’s text. While Richard Godbeer reads the sermon as a cultural artifact of bestial anxiety caused by the perpetual fear of unknown wilderness and “savage” Native Americans (“Cry of Sodom” 67), Michael Warner observes that Danforth’s text is a geographically and spatially oriented play on the ‘sodomitical imaginary’ in the Puritan consciousness, which he argues “authorizes the publicity of sexual practice” (“New English Sodom” 23). Yet, both scholars seem to curtail discussion of Goad’s body in the sodomitical wilderness of Danforth’s text and on the scaffold.

Throughout The Cry of Sodom Enquired Into, Danforth reinforces the communality and shared social experience of divine ‘truth,’ emphasizing the centrality of strict, scriptural interpretation of God’s law, and the biblical lineage from which his congregation directly descended. He warns: “The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who imprison the truth in unrighteousness” (1). Richard Godbeer points out that Puritan theology linked sex and the body to “a larger moral drama” (Sexual Revolution
“driven by the innate corruption of fallen humanity, and all embodied disobedience to God’s will” (65). Godbeer’s observations are useful for understanding Calvinist theology and the absence of agency Puritans tangibly felt.

In order to understand Danforth’s text, it is imperative to put it in conversation with the dominant discourses of sodomy in the seventeenth century colonies. In his article “The Age of Sodomitical Sin, 1607-1740,” Jonathan Ned Katz explains that Puritans did not punish sodomitical perpetrators because they were “different,” part of a distinct “minority group,” or had an inherent sense of sexual proclivity to their being. Codified conceptions of sexual identity were not yet formed. Instead, Puritans viewed the “enactor of sodomy” as a “partner in sin” to other wicked acts, such as lying, adultery, stealing, among other ‘common’ acts. If we return back to George Spencer’s confession and proclamation of “other sins” committed before his descent into bestiality, one can see how Katz’s observations prove accurate (Katz 53).

In their analyses of Danforth’s sermon, Godbeer, Warner, and Katz all comment on how Danforth draws an “explicit parallel between the [biblical] city of Sodom and the settlements of New England” (Katz 51). One the one hand, the fear of being and becoming Sodom was a major concern of the Puritans. On the ‘city on a hill,’ to borrow a well-known phrase from John Winthrop, the Puritan mission could crumble if the collective social body becomes poisoned in sin. This assertion is echoed in Danforth’s jeremiad titled A Brief Recognition of New-Englands Errand into the Wilderness (1670). Danforth proclaims: “Attend we our Errand, upon which Christ sent us into the Wilderness, and he will provide bread for us….But we have many Adversaries, and they have their subtle Machinations and Contrivances” (474). Here, Danforth likens the Puritans to the Israelites. God will feed the ‘chosen people’ manna in the desert, or in Danforth’s case, “the wilderness.” However, “enemies” are always plotting their “subtle
Machinations and Contrivances” to desanctify and seize the land, turning it into a heinous abomination. Thus, convictions of sodomy were considered particularly grave. This was not only because Puritans feared their ‘city on a hill’ could become Sodom, but also because a congregant ‘on the hill’ could be responsible for the entire community’s damnation.

Besides this ‘sodomitical imaginary,’ bestiality had even further implications at the end of the seventeenth century. In his article “Things Fearful to Name: Bestiality in Early America,” John Murrin explains that soon before Goad’s trial in 1673, cases of sodomy—most peculiarly, bestiality—flooded the courts throughout New England (236). From 1642-1662, six men were executed for buggery. From the period of 1673-1692, only four cases of bestiality were reported in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Two of the cases were acquitted, one never made it to trial, and only one resulted in a guilty verdict, Goad’s (Beirne 128). Murrin reads the 1642-1662 bestiality trials in relation to the Salem witch proceedings. He explains that as the momentous hunt for satanic demons fueled the colonial mind, anxieties over the human becoming nonhuman was a particularly grievous concern for the Puritans. In Sexual Revolution in Early America (2002), Richard Godbeer notes the hysterics surrounding interspecies sex in colonial America: “Some cases of bestiality [even] came under suspicion after the birth of deformed animals with features similar to those of the defendant,” which we previously saw in the Spencer archive (112). In Magnalia Christi Americana (1702), Cotton Mather writes on William Potter’s 1662 bestiality conviction using the language of violence, secrecy, and chaos: “[Potter’s] wife had seen him confounding himself with a bitch ten years before [his conviction]; but conjur’d her to keep it secret: but he afterward hang’d that bitch himself, and then return’d unto his former villanies, until…his son…saw him hideously conversing with a sow” (38). Indeed, bestiality “struck ministers as especially horrifying” in comparison to other illicit sexual acts and more
stringent repercussions were oftentimes enforced (Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution* 67). The temporal, historically-contingent moment of inhuman, devilish fears gives reasonable evidence for Goad’s untimely execution amidst man-turned-animal mayhem.

It perhaps may not come as a surprise that Danforth subsequently sets out to warn the community about Goad’s deviant sexual actions in *The Cry of Sodom*, but this knowledge is contingent upon the congregants’ disavowal to act on this knowledge. “No man may plead ignorance,” warns Danforth, “that the Ministry did not acquaint them with the nature and heinousness of…[sexual] Transgression, let us with holy modesty, in the fear God, enquire” (4). Hence, the clerical role is to educate audiences about Goad’s “heinous…transgression,” while foreclosing any participatory fantasies. For the minister, Goad’s public sexual act and public execution serve as a regulatory force for policing congregational bodies in the private sphere. While Danforth suggests that spectators may “pity [this] Youth [in such] tender years,” he reminds his audience about the “heinous and atrocious nature of [Goad’s] Sin and Transgression” (10). The “youth” becomes a learning instrument and example for explaining the dangers of sexual “transgression.” Thus, Danforth’s civic invocation serves as a classic pre-modern Foucauldian example of the ‘truth’ of sex (acts) resting with the clergy. The ‘truth’ that Danforth speaks of is sweeping—all sexual acts outside of marital, monogamous procreative relations are abominations to God’s divine law. At the same time, the epistemology of sexual ‘truth’ is conjured by the pervasive shadow of Goad’s spectral body, which can be read in terms of Foucault’s notion of ‘docility.’ As Foucault articulates, “docility” is the apex at which “the analyzable body and the manipulable body” traverse, producing internalized regimes of regulation upon the subject (*Discipline and Punish* 136). Foucault takes up the notion of “docility” to illustrate how bodies become productive sites for disciplinary mechanisms of
control. While Foucault is theorizing the role of institutional discipline and punishment upon the sovereign individual, Danforth’s “analysis” and “manipulation” of Goad’s deviant body serves as an apparatus for attempting to regulate collective sexual morality by extending the body’s narrative potentials.

Danforth tactfully positions Goad’s sodomitical or bestial body as a knowable body for the spectators. Goad is not merely a body occupying a liminal space at the margin or fringe of Puritan society, but a material body that is identifiable and perhaps even relatable. Directed toward the onlookers, Danforth vehemently argues: “Our cursed Natures are propense and inclined to all matters of sins. Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man is…evil…The holiest man hath as vile and filthy a Nature, as the Sodomites” (14). Danforth’s remarks illustrate the interior dilemma of spiritual life in Calvinist theology, which Richard Godbeer is referring to when he explains the “larger moral drama” of Puritan life (Sexual Revolution 64). To summarize succinctly, this interior dilemma is that all are born into sin and corruption. It is only God’s divine grace that prevents a convert from falling into heinous corruption.

By drawing attention to the potential sodomitical bodies in the meeting house pews, Danforth can use Goad’s ‘docile’ body to signal and police other forms of sexual abjection beyond the bestial sins for which Goad is being sentenced to death. Steeped in Calvinist tradition, Puritan theologians, such as Danforth, anxiously viewed the body as weak, chaotic, and always susceptible to the Devil’s unyielding advances. In his Complete Body of Divinity (1726), Rev. Samuel Willard reconciles the body as a “suitable instrument” for protecting the “Reasonable Soul” when the titillating “sensations” of one’s “Organs” are restrained (123). Echoing Willard’s remarks, Danforth sets out not only to castigate all forms of illicit bodily
arousals and practices, but also to chastise vile “sensations” and passions that emerge in wandering minds when bodies are unrestrained. Thus, from Danforth’s perspective, Goad’s ‘docile body’ serves an apparatus to inculcate regimes of discipline upon all public and private bodies and thoughts.

However, it is important to examine what Danforth believes his sermon is doing and his use of Goad’s ‘docile body,’ and what the sermon actually does from the spectator’s point of view. One of the most interesting and significant qualities of the sermon is Danforth’s attempt to educate his listeners on a vast array of illicit sexual practices. So for example, Danforth defines “incest” as “uncleanness committed by parties that are of near of Kin, between whom there is Consanguinity, or affinity, within the degrees prohibited by the Law of God,” and subsequently moves on to describe “sodomy,” “whoredome” to “bestiality” (5). Most ironically, the vast terrain of illicit practices articulated by Danforth can be thought of as providing a private sexual imagination for the intrigued and whispering congregational members. Most ironically, the public discourse Danforth invokes to describe sex and sexual acts are in empirical terms of classification, using scripture not only as a means of producing reality, but also as a way of mediating definitional boundaries of erotic sexual practices. He gives his congregation a vocabulary for ways of talking about sex, albeit in religious terminology to justify criminality and punishment.

We can read this exchange of sexual knowledge in terms of Michel Foucault’s teachings in *The History of Sexuality*. Telling his “Christian Reader” to “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,” Danforth positions himself as a feeder of sexual knowledge and ‘truth.’ He becomes a ‘nursing father,’ offering his hungry congregants ‘spiritual milk’ to sustain holy life (Dillon 129; Godbeer, “Love Raptures” 380). However, while Danforth pursues this sexual knowledge
through tedious religious study, a congregant hearing his teachings may put his lessons to practice. Illustrated here is what Foucault explains in the “repressive hypothesis.” Danforth’s nourishing discourse unintentionally “deploy[s]” a “complex network” of sexual knowledge beyond his control (History of Sexuality 34). Power shifts from the ministerial apparatus to the private chambers of curious congregants, and even extending outward to the open fields. The sermon thus illustrates alternative sexual possibilities while advocating for normative, reproductive sex. So while Danforth arduously recounts the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah in biblical history, explaining that the Sodomites were “extremely wicked” and “prodigiously unclean” in their sexual attitudes and behaviors, we can imagine Danforth as counter-discursively providing the access point to which a ‘sodomitical imaginary’ is unintentionally licensed or authorized and most importantly, deployed (3).

While there are no surviving audience testimonials or witnessed accounts to Danforth’s sermon and Goad’s execution, there is no way to document any alternative sexual knowledge that a congregant may have taken away. However, other similar court cases from the time period may suggest some answers. Documented extensively in William Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation (1656) is the case of Thomas Granger. Similar to Benjamin Goad, Granger was about “17 years of age” when he was accused of bestiality. In 1642, he was convicted of “buggery with a mare, a cowe, tow goats, five sheep, 2 calves, and a turkey” and sentenced to death (Bradford 397).

Bradford first describes Granger’s affinity and affection for the mare, which he amusingly “forbears[s] [the] perticulers” of. Next, the young man is questioned as to how he came into “knowledge and practice of such [bestial] wickednes” (Bradford 398). Granger’s subsequent response holds key evidence for imagining the sexual possibilities spectators may
have taken away from Danforth’s execution sermon and Goad’s body on the scaffold. Bradford recounts Granger’s response: “He was taught [about bestiality] by an other that had heard of such things from some in England when he was ther, and they kept catle togeather. By which it appears how one wicked person may infecte many” (398). Here, Granger’s abject sexual knowledge is shaped by the external forces of “an other.” However, that “other” heard about bestiality “from some in England.” A question of ambiguity arises in where those “some in England” heard about such lascivious sexual behaviors (Bradford 398). While Bradford can pinpoint a linear narrative of contagion, it abruptly stops when the Atlantic crossing occurs. While no definitive answer can be deduced, Granger’s history is useful for understanding the young man’s experience of pleasure in passing on and receiving sexual knowledge. Illustrated here is the proliferation of a sexual discourse that is a chain reaction of bodies mingling with one another through the exchange of language and physical experimentation.

At the same time, Bradford frames Granger’s entrance into sexual knowledge in terms of virility, toxicity, and contagion. Taking up Bradford’s metaphor, we can think of Granger’s first induction into abject sexual knowledge as the point of infection. Then, his desire to enact that knowledge is the apex where the disease subsumes the body. Finally, Granger’s execution and burial serves as a precautionary measure to prevent the disease from spreading and other bodies from becoming infected.

Reframing Bradford’s contagion metaphor, Danforth uses the language of ‘uncleanness,’ filth, and scrubbing as a way for explaining the containment of sexual pollution among congregational bodies. Addressing Goad, Danforth proclaims: “The Land cannot be cleansed, until it hath spued out this Unclean Beast. The execution of Justice upon such a notorious Malefactor, is the onely way to turn away the wrath of God from us” (11). Here, Danforth posits
Goad as a bestial body that he interprets in terms of ‘uncleanness.’ Because the Land and Church are ‘clean,’ Danforth calls for the “execution of Justice,” which can be thought of as the removal of the ‘stain’ from perhaps the white linen that is spiritual purity. Goad as an “unclean” body, then, has the potential to soil ‘clean’ bodies, which Danforth vigorously attempts to scrub out. Or, to invoke George Spencer’s trial discussed earlier in this chapter, which can be extended to Goad’s case, there is the fear of the nonhuman bestial body anthropomorphizing human bodies into monsters. If the incitement to this formative knowledge is understood and experienced through highly infectious language among discourse-producing bodies, nobody seems immune or curable. What we are left with are resistant bodies, such as Goad and Granger, who experience side effects to this knowledge.

Taking up this language of hygienics, Danforth conceptualizes all sexual sins as ‘abominable uncleanness.’ In her book *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America*, Kathleen M. Brown explains: “Executions of [sexually deviant] criminals allowed ministers to minimize the abstraction in the metaphor of the unclean body and to explain graphically the danger sinners posed to the Puritan social body” (82). Following Brown’s claims, Danforth imagines all sexually transgressive bodies as “unclean” to illustrate the decaying social purity of the community. However, Danforth is especially concerned with Goad’s “exceedingly grievous sin,” which he claims “defiles the Land,” making it “fearfully polluted,” and easily vulnerable to disease and contagion (*The Cry of Sodom* 10). Benjamin Goad’s “polluted” body is thus represented as viral and contagious—a powerful force that must be quelled.

This language of pollution is not merely isolated to Danforth’s sermon, but rather extends to all facets of Puritan religious culture and writing. For example, William J. Bouwsma observes John Calvin “slipped into the language of impurity and pollution” to convey his message that “all
human desires are evil” (38). Drawing upon the theological teachings of Cotton Mather, Kathleen Brown explains that ministers used metaphors of uncleanness and pollution in order to better explain how sin impacts the body, rendering it spiritually impure and festering (86). Congregants then internalized these metaphors to give language to their experiences of sex and the body. For example, Joseph Moody wrote in his journal on July 19, 1722: “This morning I got up pretty late. I defiled myself, though wide awake. Where will my unbridled lust lead me?” (qtd. in Carroll 168). The mediation of sexual practice for Moody and many Puritans, then, was contingent upon extrapolating these ‘unclean’ metaphors in order to articulate sinful bodily action.

At the same time Danforth draws upon these ‘unclean’ metaphors in *The Cry of Sodom*, the minister also describes sexual sin by invoking animalistic imagery. Goad’s bestial sin thus fuels the deployment of language in the text. For example, Danforth relates “the hire of a Whore” to “the price of a Dog” (7). Furthermore, he refers to Goad’s sinful history as “the standing Pool [gathering] filth, and [harboring] Toads and filthy Vermin” (10). In addition, the minister continually refers to the body of a Sodomite as a “Beast, and let him be a Beast still” (17). Indeed, Goad’s sinful history into ultimate ‘bestial’ transgression is imagined through a historicized narrative of depravity inscribed onto his body, in which past sins of “Gluttony,” “Drunkenness,” “Sloth,” and “Idleness,” to name a few, drove him into fallen “Uncleanness” (Danforth 22-3). Following Danforth’s formulation, then, the path into sexual corruption or wickedness—caused by internal dilemmas of morality—are suggestively conceptualized through the act of being and becoming the beast.

Although Goad is seldom addressed in *The Cry of Sodom*, his body functions as an ethereal force—ghostly omnipresent in the theatrical production of Danforth’s fiery sermon—
constructing the causal relationship between an individual’s fall into “Abominable Uncleanness,” and his or her enactment of private desires. Danforth adamantly proclaims that the “sin of Uncleanness…pollutes the Body, and turns the Temple of the holy Ghost into an Hog-stie, and a Dogs Kennel,” inferring that deviant sexual acts destroy the religiously sanctioned body, and thereby disrupt the social order and community relations beyond reprieve in which death is the inevitable outcome to restore sovereign control (7). Danforth describes bestiality as “when any prostitute themselves to a Beast,” invoking the language of whoredom and whoremongers. He further explains that bestiality is a “monstrous and horrible Confusion: it turneth a man into a bruit Beast. He that joyneth himself to a Beast, is one flesh with a Beast” (6). Here, Danforth illustrates Puritan understandings of the natural order, while at the same time eroticizes bodily flesh and friction.

In his most explicit depiction of Goad’s bestial body, Danforth writes: “He gave himself to Self-pollution, and other Sodomitical wickedness. He often attempted Buggery with several Beasts, before God left him to commit it: at last God gave him over to it, and he continued in the frequent practice thereof for several Moneths” (10-1). Here, Danforth draws attention to Goad’s “frequent practice” and propensity for bestial pleasure through the language of repetition and temporal excess. At the same time, this assertion illustrates Goad’s bestial sin not as an isolated incident, but rather a lingering propensity. Central to Danforth’s core assertion is Goad’s agonizing sexual struggles. His non-normative body does not merely serve as a haunting space of gendered anxiety. Rather, his body becomes an affective space of desire and longing by visually embodying a chain of illicit erotic exchanges between new and old England, between man and beast, which Danforth frames in terms of shame.
We can examine the social and collective experience of sexual shame that Danforth seems to sanction by explaining its reverse-liberatory potentials. As Michael Warner poignantly remarks: “Shame is bedrock…Because abjection is understood to be [a] shared condition, communication” moves in “generous” ways (Trouble with Normal 35). Indeed, because Danforth adamantly argues that everyone has an internally corrupt “Nature” leading to sexual impropriety, sexual fantasy moves swiftly through the spectator’s consciousness. Hence, the dispersion of sexual knowledge in Danforth’s sermon, implicitly framed around Goad’s bestial actions, signals not only an ahistorical moment in Puritan culture framed around anxieties of monstrosity and impurity, but also affords new ways for thinking through the collective social body and sex as the ‘new’ Sodom stealthily takes shape.

Danforth goes on to describe a vast terrain of sexual behaviors that are imagined through a gendering of its offender. For example, in his definition of “Self-Pollution,” Danforth writes: “When a man practiseth [masturbation],” “[he] commits filthiness with his own body alone.” Invoking the biblical lineage to which this particularly sinful act “derives” from, he continues: “This was the sin of Onan the second son of Judah…[whom] abhorred the lawful use of the Marriage-bed, and most impurely defiled himself” (4). Here, Danforth invokes a masculinist narrative of uncontrollable phallocentric ejaculations. He suggests the impossibility of the masturbating woman, and disavows her body to perform such a criminal act that is ‘exclusively’ the vice of men.

Danforth even addresses the psychosexual, perhaps even pre-Freudian (modern), dynamics of solitary sex, detailing at length those men who “dream of [the act],” and “defile[d] themselves at night” (4)—subsumed by “carnal pollutions” (5). Echoing Danforth, Rev. Cotton Mather states in The Pure Nazarite (1723): “It is a shame even to speak of [masturbation], which
[is] done in Secret. But I am to write of [it]...and I shall hope...that you will be Ashamed, and also Afraid of doing [it]” (2). In both Danforth’s and Mather’s descriptions of masturbation—and non-normative sex more generally—sexual shame is a public affair that is always already linked to the body. Queer theorist David Halperin observes that shame “is what propels identities into [a] performative space” of existence “without giving those identities the status of essences” (43). Benjamin Goad’s spectral and haunting body then serves as a signifier of sexual shame on the scaffold and in the sermon, extending his body’s narrative into the realm of the affective. As a marker of ‘erotic melancholia’ in the “performative space” of the scaffold, Goad’s body is a sexual longing one. ‘Erotic melancholia’ is used here to convey Goad’s “inward [sexual] history” and “mode of erotic representation” on the scaffold. The “constellation of melancholia” mapped onto his body signals a “chiral reflection” of erogenous yearning in the spectator’s consciousness (Pensky 2). Hence, those feelings of erotic loss may be wider spread as the minds of the spectators wander.

Danforth subsequently develops a section of his sermon devoted to “Going after strange flesh,” in which he situates “Sodomy” and “Buggery” (also referred to as bestiality) as mutually exclusive and gender neutral. He describes “Sodomy” as “the filthiness committed between parties of the same Sex: when Males with Males, and Females with Females work wickedness,” and he offers the same gender neutral premise in cases of bestiality (The Cry of Sodom 5). As Richard Godbeer and other cultural critics have noted, this is of particular significance because conviction of sodomitical crimes in Puritan New England were explicitly based on witnessed penetrative sex. Thus, Danforth opens up an imaginative terrain of penetrative possibility beyond anal sex between men. Justifying Godbeer’s claims and echoing Danforth’s assertions, Rev. Francis Higginson describes the first documented case of sodomy, which occurred onboard the
Talbot traveling to Salem in 1629. Higginson writes: “This day we examined 5 beastly Sodomiticall boys, which confessed their wickedness not to bee named” (English Literatures 150). In Higginson’s documentary account, he refers to the “Sodomiticall boys” as “beastly,” indicating their depraved path into “wickedness” beyond human imagination that is decidedly monstrous. In a perhaps orgiastic scene of youthful lust and passion, the boys’ confession serves as ‘witnessed’ testimony for their own conviction at the mercy of divine law.

Goad’s eerie presence on the scaffold and in the sermon could be read as an “erotic deployment of the body” beyond Danforth’s textual control, producing a sexual “fantasy” in the spectator’s mind (Butler 115). The fragmented corpses of bizarre sexual perpetrators in early America, such as the well-documented 1646 New Haven bestiality trial of Thomas Hogg, suggest evidence to this reading. Modes and forms of penetration appeared to occupy the Puritan sexual consciousness. The image of the sodomite that Danforth depicts degenders its cultural imaginary as exclusive male abjection, and charts newly contested terrain regarding women’s intimacies and modes of touch and sensuality. Thus, Danforth’s gender queer sexual discourse is licensed during the execution ritual, moving beyond Foucault’s conceptualization of the ‘repressive hypothesis,’ and enters into the realm of personal, emotive, and political.

The spectacle of Goad’s body on the scaffold, then, reveals its innumerable functions as a social body—bestial body—adolescent body—legal body—longing body—sexual body—contagious body—private body—and discourse producing body. Yet, perhaps most critically absent from the Goad/Danforth archive is the young man’s public confession and repentance before hanging. Ed Ingebretsen observes that these gestures were “signal public moments” in the “social drama” before the sovereign “execution” of justice (24). The agential feeling of Goad’s
turbulent history, then, lies within the signification his body affords on the scaffold and in the sermon.

Following Foucault, “from the judicial torture to the execution, the body has produced and reproduced the truth of the crime,” perpetuating the continuous replication of power through the visual display of public suffering, enacting an interpretative semiotic and aural schema between the condemned and the onlooker (Discipline and Punish 47). More concisely stated, “torture forms part of a ritual [that] meets two demands. It must mark the victim…[and] public torture and execution must be spectacular” (Foucault 33-4). Indeed, the “mark” of Goad’s exposed body on the “spectacular” scaffold has a twofold purpose. First, moralism and spirituality are theatrically represented in the spatial proximity to justify the enactment of the “tortuous” death, in addition to being a learning instrument for the onlookers. At the same time, Goad’s body is a tangible artifact—a face of exuberant excessiveness outside of the normative—adding one more spectral corpse to the rich and haunting history of sexual deviancy in pre-modern culture.

Indeed, the historical circumstances surrounding Goad’s untimely execution provides insight into the social, cultural, religious, and political dimensions of Puritan New England. This is achieved not only through civic engagement in the execution sermon ritual, but also through Danforth’s power to criminalize and punish Goad for his disruptive actions. In addition, Danforth’s execution sermon exposes the historical foundations of emergent sexual discourse in North America, tied to complex conceptions of the body and feeling. Although contextualized around religious condemnation and punishment, Danforth’s execution sermon reveals structures of erotic fantasy, insomuch he continually, though inadvertently, provides his listeners with a glimpse into alternative sexual practices.
While Danforth’s sermon—in manifest terms—seeks to describe deviant acts through the lens of biblical teaching, and to illustrate, using the words of William Bradford, the origins of sexual sin from “our corrupted natures, which are so hardly bridled, subdued, and mortified” (459), a reverse discursive move occurs throughout his writing that carves new ways for imagining sexual possibility. While Danforth’s *The Cry of Sodom* was explored by revealing how the ‘sodomitical imaginary’ is tied to Goad’s body, I now move on to examine how the ‘whorish imaginary’ is constructed in John Williams’s *Warnings to the Unclean*, delivered on the occasion of Sarah Smith’s execution for infanticide.
CHAPTER 3
“A WHOREDOM UNMASKED” IN WARNINGS TO THE UNECLEAN

In 1693, Martin Smith and his wife, Sarah, moved from New Jersey to Deerfield, Massachusetts (Boltwood and Judd 269). Cotton Mather speculates their move to Deerfield was prompted by communal castigation because of an adulterous affair Sarah committed (Magnalia Christi Americana 48). Several months after their relocation, however, Martin was captured by Native Americans and sent to New France, now Canada. He wasn’t released until June of 1698. In her husband’s absence, Sarah faced a tumultuous existence in Deerfield. For example, on August 4, 1694, she entered a complaint to the authorities against John Evans for “attempting to force an unclean act upon her,” suggesting rape (Sheldon 263). Even though two soldiers reportedly witnessed the act, documenting the exact location of the crime, no legal actions were taken against Evans and the charges were dropped.

Nearly four years later, on January 11, 1698, Smith gave birth to an illegitimate child and then asphyxiated the infant to death. In Magnalia Christi Americana (1702), Rev. Cotton Mather horrifyingly recounts the incident: “She did with much Obstinacy deny and conceal her being with Child: And when the Child was born, she somother’d it: But the Neighbours found it out immediately” (48). Smith was subsequently arrested and held in jail while awaiting her trial, which took place several months later when her husband could be present. According to court records:

At a meeting of the Council in Boston, Aug. 8, 1698, Upon information given by His Majesty’s Justices in the County of Hampshire, that one Sarah Smith lies in prison for murdering her bastard child. * * * Ordered and appointed that a court of Assize and General Gaol Delivery be held and kept at Springfield within said county of Hampshire by the Justices, upon Thursday, the eighteenth of the present month of August for the trial of said Sarah Smith. (Sheldon 263)
Three judges from the Superior Court of Boston, Wait Winthrop, Elisha Cooke, and Samuel Sewall presided over the scandalous trial. Moreover, the judges were accompanied by a battalion of twenty six soldiers due to fear of potential Native American attacks during their journey to Springfield.

Smith’s subsequent trial proceedings revealed the grave seriousness Puritans placed on infanticide cases. At the hearing, the allegations against Smith were read aloud to her by the foreman, John Holyoke. He stated:

On Tuesday the eleventh day of January...betwixt the hours of one and five a clock afternoon...in the dwelling house of Daniel Wells...by the providence of God one female bastard child did bring forth alive being led by the instigation of the devil, between the hours of one and seven a clock afternoon of the same day, withholding her natural affection, neglected and refused all necessary help to preserve the life of said child, and with intent to conceal her Lewdness the said child did strangle and smother. (Sheldon 263-64)

Smith entered a plea of not guilty to the charges. However, a jury of twelve men brought in a verdict of guilty, and Justice Winthrop sentenced her “to be hanged by the neck till she was dead” (Sheldon 264). Before Smith ascended the scaffold for public hanging on August 25th, John Williams of Deerfield preached to his congregation the dangers of sexual promiscuity in his four hour execution sermon, titled *Warnings to the Unclean*.

Tellingly in Williams’s sermon, Smith is on trial for whoredom, not infanticide. Williams anxiously proclaims there are “so many instances of these horrid and unnatural sins of Murder and Uncleanness; but especially of this latter, that there is ground to fear” (4). It is important to note that in the context of Williams’s sermon, “Murder” here refers to infanticide and “Uncleanness” here refers to whoredom. Williams suggests “Uncleanness” is more widespread, contagious and damaging than “Murder.” Most intriguingly, he articulates “Murder”
and “Uncleanness” as “unnatural sins,” suggesting a blurring comparison of abject horrors. Of most significance is the final word of Williams’s declaration—“fear.”

Thus, this chapter begins by exploring why the greater evil, whoredom, was a such a vitriolic sin in the Puritan consciousness. This is done in order to contextualize how Williams’s sermon unintentionally authorizes the creation of a ‘whorish imaginary,’ which can be defined as both physical and spiritual adultery against proscribed relations with God and family. Important to note, ‘whoredom’ as linked to ‘prostitution’ is distinguished here as giving oneself over to any force that inverts spiritual and social hierarchy. I will argue that Sarah Smith’s resistant and ‘unclean’ body functions as a disruptive potential to both the public execution ritual and the sermon’s disciplinary mechanism for control, and inculcates a terrain of sexual possibility outside of the ‘city on a hill’ for spectators. Williams creates a genealogy of whoredom that extends beyond its premise of castigating abject maternal bodies, and interrogates the limits of gendered and sexual borderlands.

To begin, both infanticide and whoredom were sins invested with complex meanings in Puritan culture. Writing on the Puritan execution sermon in Executing Race: Early American Women’s Narratives of Race, Society, and the Law, Sharon M. Harris observes: “Whoredom or promiscuity was…the central theme of all infanticide sermons in the early decades of the eighteenth century” (32-3). She explains that infanticide narratives became an outlet for ministers to regulate women’s social and moral positions, and focusing on ‘sexuality’ became a way for doing so (26). This was especially pressing because by 1700 cases of premarital pregnancy were rising exponentially in the colonies (Schorb 295). This phenomenon prompted legal officials to revise a 1623 English concealment stature that made “concealing the death of a bastard” a capital offense (Harris 34). Harris contends that women’s “concealment” of the
conception, birth, and death of an infant became a way for ministers to link infanticide to gender and to control unbound and dissolute bodies. She argues that infanticide trials revealed the degree to which women were posited as “natural…receptacles of immorality [that] concealed sin and…undermined public custom,” which she reads alongside ideology produced from the Salem witchcraft proceedings (35).

Harris’s subsequent analysis of the witchcraft trials and faulty accusations provides a useful contextualized history for understanding the stigmatized position of women in late seventeenth century Puritan culture. “In both witchcraft trial narratives and infanticide narratives,” writes Harris, “gender…ideologies were implicated in the constructions of ‘evidence’ and guilt” (28). She illustrates that individuals accused of witchcraft in Salem, most prominently servants and widows, bear a significant resemblance to those accused of infanticide in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Servants and widowed women in Puritan hierarchy were always already suspect of “Uncleanness,” “Sabbath Pollutions,” and “Sinful thoughts, words, and actions” and the like, to borrow the language of Williams (28). Thus, in Harris’s formulation, Williams’s sermon, published in 1699, serves as an early artifact or example to this claim.

While Harris provides foundational claims about the historical circumstances surrounding the whorish thematic in execution sermons and the inscribed meanings of women’s bodies in the aftermath of the witchcraft trials, her arguments are limiting because she neglects to address the tangible role the infanticide played in these texts and how whoredom was not merely a physical act, but also a spiritual state. The whorish ‘thematic’ is in actuality part of the functional deployment of a ‘whorish imaginary’ in Williams’s sermon, which does not limit itself to mediating women’s bodily practices. In fact, Sarah Smith usefully stages not simply female
sexual misconduct, but—through a series of shifts and associations—a cautionary tale about men, male zeal, and male ministers faithfulness to their male congregant. Moreover, I will argue that bewitching ideology ‘enters’ Williams’s text in terms of metaphors of border crumbling—the language used in many witchcraft sermons—rather than the merely paranoid female monstrosity that Harris contends.

As previously mentioned, Smith’s infanticide is decidedly absent from Williams’s sermon. It is important to explain this silence in order to understand how the infant functions in the minister’s text. In Women Who Kill, Ann Jones explores the religious teachings surrounding infanticide in early America. Puritan theologians taught that when a woman murders her unbaptized infant, she also kills the babe’s soul. Thus, “the unbaptized have no place in heaven” according to Calvinist doctrine (Jones 77). Jones most poignantly observes that ministers often curtailed discussion of the infant’s damned fate during execution sermons—a resonant claim that holds valid in Williams’s text—but she provides no explanation for this silence. One possible explanation, as Martha Sexton argues in Being Good: Women’s Moral Values in Early America: “The murderous mother substituted an image of female power…exercised at the expense of mankind and at its most vulnerable” (86). In other words, she suggests Puritan ministers were too preoccupied with retaining and validating patriarchal control that the deceased infant’s fate was deprioritized. In Sexton’s framework, the infanticide perpetrator represents an imminent threat to the masculinist order that must be vigorously cleansed.

While Jones and Sexton provide fruitful discussions of the spiritual and social dynamics of infanticide, their observations and arguments are shortsighted because their focus on ‘murderous mothers’ obscures the central thematic of ‘whorishness’ used to explain and to explore the wider social and theological threat of infanticide. Useful for shedding light on the
absentee infant’s physical and spiritual death in the Puritan execution sermon, Rev. Thomas Foxcroft explains in *Lessons of Caution to Young Sinners* (1733), delivered on the occasion of Rebekah Chamblit’s execution for infanticide on September 23, 1733: “Pride has tempted many a young Woman to destroy the fruit of her own Body, that she might avoid the Scandal of a spurious Child” (35). Here, Foxcroft suggests “Pride” is an inherent sin linked to the universal Puritan body, which thus causes a woman to “destroy the fruit of her own Body.” Perhaps most significant is the “scandal” Foxcroft refers to. The “scandal” is most distinctly unauthorized sex. Hence, the body of the deceased infant functions as a public marker, or ‘evidence,’ of a woman’s sexual degeneracy. The minister suggests a linear narrative to which a woman falls into uncleanness. Excessive pride leads to whoredom, which is made public and tangibly felt by the dramatic presence of the infanticide. For Foxcroft, addressing a woman’s private, “spurious,” and illicit whorishness in the public space of the execution sermon is of vital significance for illustrating (sexual) sinful decay, and to police congregational bodies (supposedly) heeding his cautions.

Similarly, Williams’s *Warnings to the Unclean* operates on the same ideological premise of the infanticide representing the visual product of a woman’s spiritual spiral into whoredom. While Foxcroft believes pride leads a woman into whoredom, Williams asserts idleness and intoxication are the ‘true’ roots of the grievous sin. In either case, the infanticide is imagined as ‘evidence’ to a woman’s whorish decay. Williams writes: “Unclean persons are idle persons; there was abundance of Uncleanness in Sodom, and that because there was abundance of Idleness. Ezek. 16.49. Be aware of drinking away your precious time: Drunkenness ushers in Murder and Adultery: Drunkards are often Unclean” (36). Here, Williams suggests promiscuity is caused by indolence. For the minister, the body of the whorish perpetrator is imagined by its
very excess, and articulated through a metaphor of bodily consumption. Too much free time leads to “unclean” thoughts and actions. ‘Naturally,’ this presupposes that an individual drinks too much alcohol, which leads to adultery, and finally to murder. The Puritan fear of being and becoming Sodom—the ‘sodomitical imaginary’—illustrated in my previous chapter on Danforth’s sermon, is replaced in Williams’s text by an equally dangerous and effusive entity—the ‘whorish imaginary.’ For Williams, even men have the potential to become sinful whores, which Harris, Sexton, and Jones all seem to gloss over and leave silent.

In Puritan theology, whoredom was not merely linked to physicality, but also to spirituality. Rev. John Cotton explains: “For spirituall whoredom is not infinite in the act of it, but onely in respect of the object of it, to wit, in respect of the infinite God, against whom it is committed” (Narragansett Club 158). Here, Cotton articulates “spirituall whoredom” by emphasizing the word “respect” twice. He is calling dutiful attention to the “respect” or honor the Puritan convert should feel in their covenant with Christ. Cotton explains that any worldly “object,” be it carnal flesh to polluting thoughts, which prevents a convert for upholding their affection for Christ is a sin “committed”—“spiritual whoredom.” Complicating Sharon M. Harris’s claims discussed earlier and reflecting Cotton’s assertions, Cotton Mather observes: “Tis also remarkable that witchcraft is generally in scripture joined with spiritual whoredom, i.e. idolatry” (More Wonders 202). Or Michael Wigglesworth who reflects upon his nocturnal ejaculations in his diary: “When I look upon my vile ungrateful impenitent whorish heart I am ashamed to think that God should love or owne me…I could even take vengeance of my cursed heart that is so deceitful and desperately wicked in impenitent departure from God” (47). Indeed, Puritans believed that the infinite love Christ shares with them must always be mutually reciprocated as the supreme object of worship for fear of the withdrawal of God’s graces.
Elizabeth Maddock Dillon’s recent literary scholarship on spiritual conversion is useful for imagining the implications infanticide had on the Puritan minister. Regardless of gender, Puritan converts were ‘Brides of Christ’ in a marriage vow. Dillon explains: “The Bride of Christ image appears repeatedly in Puritan rhetoric, as does another cross-gendered image—that of ‘nursing fathers,’ usually used in reference to ministers who nourish the flock with their metaphorical milk” (130). So, if Rev. Williams, for instance, imagined himself as a ‘nursing father’ to the mouths of hungry congregants—sucking spiritual nourishment out of his reverent breast—the troublesome potentials of infanticide are particularly alarming and significant. In his address to “The Reader,” Williams anxiously proclaims: “[Whoredom] is a sin against a man’s own body, it is a defiling of that which should be the temple of God; it is a Sin loathsome in itself, and makes those who are guilty of it, loathsome to God, and to man too, when it is discovered” (6). Here, Williams offers his reader a cross-gendered depiction of whoredom and its consequences. Of most significance is the minister’s emphasis on whoredom not only violating and disrupting the body of the perpetrator, but also other bodies as well, both real and spiritual. In this light, we can view Sarah Smith as simultaneously transforming from a feeder off of her ‘nursing father’—Williams—and rejecting her maternal role as an actual nursing body to her infant. Smith is a physical and spiritual murder of holy sustenance that is imagined in Williams’s Warnings to the Unclean through a language of polluted excess, “defiling…the temple of God” and His people in multiple ways.

These metaphors of ministerial nursing, metaphorical milk, and congregational sucking in Puritan theology signal an invitation for queer and gender perverse readings of Williams’s text. Williams would have been aware and immersed in this conversion rhetoric, and perhaps explains the unintentional whorish erotics of his text. As Thomas Shepard, Jr. explains in Eye-Salve
(1672): “Though there be the murmuring and strife of the congregation in some times of temptation, [the minister] must remember he is a nursing father…and [the congregant is] a nurse [that] must be gentle” (259). Here, the ‘nursing father’s’ metaphorical nipple is imagined as sensitive to the congregational mouths’ feeding. Shepard cautions his congregants to be “gentle” when sucking, but the ‘nursing father’ upholds his duty even in discomfort. Moreover, John Cotton explains in *The Bloody Tenent* (1646): “When the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of the Lord (Revelation 11:15) it is not by making Christ a temporal king, but by making temporal kingdoms nursing fathers to his church” (204). Here, Cotton suggests that even at the rapture, spiritual milk will squirt and flow, putting out the fire of damnation at the Day of Judgment. Thus, these perverse images of cross-gendered maternalism could be read as ‘entering’ Williams’s sermon not only through his gender queer ‘whorish imaginary,’ but also through the language of pollution. Smith has let the spiritual milk spoil and coagulate in her rejection of the minister’s nipple.

To date, most scholars, such as Kathleen Brown have only addressed “metaphors about uncleanness” conjured in William’s sermon. According to Brown, most Puritan witnesses would have imagined Williams’s “uncleanness” metaphor in terms of “excrement and rotting corpses,” in which the infanticide narrative was considered a “crime of the flesh.” She argues that the condemned woman “brought together ideas about female sexuality, sin, the body, and death in ways that made the female body the standard for most kinds of bodily and social corruption” (87). Her conclusions fall in agreement with Sharon Harris’s examination of infanticide narratives discussed earlier in this chapter.

An even more resonant and far-reaching argument is proposed by Teresa Toulouse. She has argued that William’s sermon imagines New England as a battlefield, warring against the
wages of spiritual degradation. In *The Captive’s Position: Female Narrative, Male Identity, and Royal Authority in Colonial New England*, Toulouse examines the biblical “borders” Williams references in his text, such as the story of Achan “who ‘troubles’ Israel” in the Book of Joshua (157). Examining Williams’s sermon as resonating the ‘city on a hill’ metaphor, to borrow a term from John Winthrop, she asserts: “As in the Smith sermon, bodily representations of the border between the inside and the outside of the individual female fornicator or non-fornicator intersect…with representations of an entire people as a border or frontier” (157). Toulouse further claims that Williams’s continual usage of boundary metaphors linked to the home suggest his own paranoia of ‘internal,’ personal and private pollutions. Toulouse’s arguments are incredibly useful for carving out a new interpretation of Williams’s sermon by viewing the ‘whorish imaginary’ as a form of border disruption. While both Brown and Toulouse implicitly and explicitly read and frame Williams’s sermon in terms of contamination metaphors—where the body of the female infanticide perpetrator signifies spiritual/social/communal rotting—they fail to address Smith’s body as a site of resistance. Her body is sexually signifying beyond ‘corruption’ (morality), and thus does not merely serve as a victimized tool for communal regulation.

Throughout Williams’s sermon, Smith’s body is haunting uncontainable and chaotic. In his text, Smith’s body becomes counter-discursively transformed into an erotic taxonomy in the minds of spectators. This is illustrated by Williams’s discursive attempt to categorically harness her body. “Light…Attire…impudent and immodest carriages, filthy communications, idleness, intemperance, by which the body is inflamed, and modesty banished; the command that forbids the acts of Uncleanness,” writes Williams on Smith’s “whoremongering” body (7). Here, the body of Smith is marked its excess. Too many “immodest carriages” and “filthy
communications,” for example, has led her body to become “inflamed” in “uncleanness.” In Williams’s formulation, her body is so swollen in sexual “pollution” that is about to burst and on the brink of fluid seepage. From Williams’s perspective, the macabre imagery he invokes functions to eliminate the deviant sexual body’s infection (and virility/toxicity). However, he counter-discursively reveals the sexually liberatory effects Smith’s body affords, from intoxicated passions to uninhibited desires. The spectators could be imagined as inebriated by this narrative, producing unyielding fantasies beyond the ‘border’ of communal regulation—a ‘wilderness’ of possibility outside the ‘city on a hill.’

Most strikingly, the language of Smith’s bodily excess was not limited to Williams’s sermon. Midwife testimony during her trial also revealed similar language patterns. For example, Mary Lyes noted: “I heard that Sarah…was sick [and] I went to her and found her in such a state that I thought she was in travail and the child nere birth for her water was Broken.” Another midwife stated: “[Smith] began to sweat when she got up. She came to the fire…[and I] saw by the sheete that which caused [me] to tell her that it could not be so unless a childe was borne” (qtd. in Henigman 73). In both cases, the midwives articulate Smith’s birthing body as sickly, oozing, and shaking.

Beneficial for establishing the momentous impact the Smith case had on the Puritan legal and social consciousness in colonial Massachusetts, Rev. Cotton Mather’s Pillars of Salt (1699) takes up the Smith archive in this seminal work. In his text, Mather traces some of the most influential and pivotal criminal cases in the seventeenth century British North American colonies. The Smith section of Mather’s work was subsequently reprinted in Magnalia Christi Americana, printed in 1702. The dire attempt by Williams to harness and restrain Smith’s chaotic and resistant body is also vigorously pursued by Mather. Attempting to reconstruct her fall into
sinful decay, Mather explains: “Her despising the continual Counsels and Warnings of her godly Father-in-law laid the Foundation of her Destruction” (48). Indeed, Mather’s remarks resonate with Martha Sexton’s claims discussed earlier in this chapter. To reiterate, she explains that the infanticide perpetrator represents a symbolic and physical threat to patriarchal hierarchy.

While Williams places attentive focus on Smith’s whorishness, Mather is preoccupied with Smith’s illicit resistance to authority. Although Mather acknowledges and agrees with Williams that Smith’s fall into infanticide was caused by “Sins of Unchastity,” he obsessively discusses the fact that she fell asleep during Williams’s four hour execution sermon and made a feeble attempt at a public confession for her sins. He feels as though she isn’t repentant enough. Mather writes:

She slept both at the Prayer and the Sermon, in the publick Assembly on the Day of her Execution: And seem’d the most unconcern’d of any in the Assembly; professing therewithal. That she could not but wonder her own Unconcernedness. At her Execution she said but little, only, That she desir’d to give Glory unto God, and to take Shame unto her self, and that she would warn all others to be aware of the Sins that had brought her unto this miserable end. (48)

Of particular significance in Mather’s assertions is the repetitious and shape-shifting use of “unconcern.” There is a strand of biting irony and humor to the minister’s words. While at once the entire congregation is most “concerned” with Smith’s fate, Smith is the least “concerned”—or completely “unconcern’d”—which deeply “concerns” Mather. Reasoning further, Mather insists that she must “wonder [about] her own Unconcernedness” because there is so much to be “concerned” for, perpetuated (or perhaps even aggravated) by the fact that everyone else around her is incredibly “concerned” for her.

According to Mather’s retelling of the Smith narrative, Williams’s execution sermon affects and disciplines the spectator’s consciousness, while Smith remains resistant and unmoved. Williams ironically cautions to Smith in his sermon: “And you are now enjoying your
last Opportunity in God’s house; you that have idled, slept away, yea whored away…so many Sabbaths and Lectures, shall have no more” (53). Most humorously, Smith was probably asleep when Williams stated that she “slept away…so many Lectures.” Nevertheless, the linkage between sleep and whorishness is striking because of Smith’s potential dreams that may enable her to resist the reality of the penal machine. Thus, the disciplinary function of Smith’s exposed and spectacular body on the scaffold unsuccessfully manifests/reproduces power relations, and is thus rendered an incomplete exercise of authority. Her body and actions are a disruptive force for the ‘execution of justice’ to be enacted and carried through effectively, cleanly, smoothly, and most important, comprehensively. As Foucault eloquently argues: “From the judicial torture to the execution, the body [of the condemned] produce[s] and reproduce[s] the truth of the crime” (Discipline and Punish 47). Meaning, a public execution “justifie[s] justice” by inscribing the “truth” of the crime onto the body of the condemned (42). Moreover, Foucault artfully explains that this moment of “truth” is contingent upon the “scene of…[public] confession.” He explains: “Public [confession]…established the public execution as the moment of truth. These last moments, which the guilty [wo]man no longer has anything to lose, are won for the full light of truth” (Foucault 43). From Mather’s point of view, the divine revelation of spiritual (sexual) truth and the enactment of justice are regrettably incoherent during the ritualistic performance of Smith’s execution.

While Mather explains that Smith “said but little” during her public confession and repentance opportunity, he asserts “That she desir’d to give Glory unto God, and to take Shame unto her self, and that she would warn all others to be aware of the Sins that had brought her unto this miserable end” (Magnalia Christi Americana 48). Here, there is an implicit feeling or sense of melancholia to Mather’s claims. Although he states that she briefly took a “sense of Shame
unto her selfe,” that feeling doesn’t suggest an internalized, remorseful state of consciousness. Rather, “Shame” is counter-discursively imposed or hailed upon the minister for ‘failing’ to reach, probe, and effectively punish Smith’s “whorish heart.” Even more striking is the logistic reality that Mather wasn’t even present for Smith’s execution, and thus illustrates the widespread effects Smith’s resistance had on Puritan ministers in the New England area. As Jodi Schorb argues in “Hard-Hearted Women: Sentiment and the Scaffold,” “recalcitrant prisoners,” such as Smith, “were not well suited for the public [execution] ritual” because they “interrupted the necessary emotional transaction between spectator and spectacle” (294). Williams even concedes “rivers of tears should run down our eyes,” but they don’t (20). Indeed, a “lingering sense of failure” permeates Mather’s writing “prompted by the frustration that [Smith is] still concealing something,” which is even further intensified in Williams’s sermon (Schorb 296).

So, on the one hand, Smith’s physical body is duly punished by the gallows device. Yet, on the other, the ministerial apparatus implemented for spiritually cleansing Smith still renders her “whorish heart” unscrubbed and filthy. In his article “Lethal Theatre: Performance, Punishment, and the Death Penalty,” Dwight Conquergood explores the participatory engagement the spectator and minister had on creating meaning from the “body and speech of the condemned.” He explains that during the execution sermon, ministers looked for “signals of divine grace” in the soul and body of the convict, and “when they recognized true penitence then they could interpretively reframe the hideous torture of a hanging [to the spectators] into a catalyst for salvation.” Moreover, Conquergood explains that ministers “endeavored… to turn the earthly scene of capital punishment into a stunning morality play” (469). He pinpoints the moment and feeling of the capital sinner’s shame and repentance as the dramatic precursor to the “final act”—the execution. Thus, the flat and dispassionate dénouement of Smith’s confession is
an abrasive and resistant force to the theological and social practices and goals of the Puritan execution, and also serves as a stark contrast to her disruptive, open, and chaotic body. For Mather, he is unable to readily and fully articulate a combative response to Smith’s unaffected and impervious positionality. Mather leaves his reader with little solace, only observing that she is a woman of “lies” and is also “stupid” (*Magnalia Christi Americana* 48).

Comparatively, Williams’s text is about Smith’s whoredom, while Mather’s text is about Smith’s hard-hearted obduracy, but both texts are variations of a Puritan spiritual crisis. Yet, in Williams’s sermon, the problem goes beyond Smith’s imperviousness—in many ways, Smith’s imperviousness may be read as a threat to the spiritually guarded border of the ‘city on a hill’—a temporal Puritan locale first textually conceived by John Winthrop in *A Modell of Christian Charity* (1630). A location where “the eies of all people are uppon us,” writes Winthrop. Moreover, he warns: “If wee shall deale falsely with our God in this worke wee haue undertaken…wee shall be made a story and a by-word throughout the world” (Winthrop 47). Here, Winthrop suggests the always imminent global mockery that will ensue if Puritan bodies are not kept ‘clean’ and spiritually devoted in their covenant with God. Echoing Winthrop, Williams explains: “We live in such an Age of the World, wherein the Light of the Gospel shines with greater cleanness…then it ever did since the first revelation of it” (4). Here, Williams takes up Winthrop’s pervasive ‘city on a hill’ by invoking imagery of light. This is done not only to illustrate that the ‘city on a hill’ is a place of observation by people “throughout the world,” but also a place that is now “cleaner” than it once was. Williams’s statements could be read as a response to Winthrop’s first revelation of the ‘city on a hill.’ For Williams, Puritans inhabit a space that is now “cleaner” because of the great turmoil the elect have been forced to endure and
combat. No longer is the ‘city on a hill’ a site of relative isolation for the world to see. Rather, it is a space that is continually under attack by those outside, worldly forces.

This interpretation certainly gains credence given the turbulent warring climate of the 1690s when Smith was tried and executed for infanticide, which I am positioning as both a threat to the ‘clean’ ‘city on a hill’ as well as its anxious borders. For example, King Williams’s War broke out in 1689 and didn’t end until 1697. This was one of the earliest markers of the French and Indian Wars, which was a dispute between the French and English over control of the colonies. Battles sparked between the French and Iroquois in Western New York and between the English and French on the Hudson Bay. These attacks by New France—now Canada—were instrumental in the British militarization of the colonies (Eames 15).

Bloodshed was not merely isolated to New York. In Deerfield, Massachusetts—where Williams and Smith resided—disputes between the English and French over control of the Connecticut Valley waged violently. The town was located in a shallow and exposed valley often traveled by the Algonquin and Iroquois tribes. Outside of Deerfield, there was nothing but wilderness for forty miles to the east and west. During Queen Anne’s War, Deerfield turned into an armed camp in fear of French and Native American invasions. And by February of 1704—just five years after Williams preached *Warnings to the Unclean*—one hundred and forty two Mohawks and Abenakis, followed by two hundred French troops, attacked Deerfield and killed fifty six English settlers and over one hundred others were taken captive. This event would become to be known as the Deerfield Massacre (Haefeli and Sweeney 272-73). Moreover, Williams’s daughter Eunice was one of those taken captive. Although Eunice was eventually released, she chose not to return to Deerfield and instead decided to marry a Native American
and stay with him in his French-Indian tribe. She can be thought of as an ultimate border crosser and rupturer of the ‘city on a hill.’

Indeed, as Teresa Toulouse has previously argued, the historical context from which Williams is writing offers a useful way of understanding his text in terms of borders. Not only does his sermon, according to Toulouse, define a “spiritual border” between “punishable and nonpunishable sexual behaviors”—and, invoking Kathleen Brown’s scholarship, unclean versus clean bodies—the sermon also implicitly defines a very real “physical border” between warring bodies (Toulouse 156). For Williams, the ‘city on a hill’—once a calm and benevolent locale in Winthrop’s time—has become transformed into a warring ground that must be ardently defended. This rigid binary, I argue, is exactly under siege by the crime of whoredom, particularly as whoredom is imagined and put into discourse in Williams’s sermon on Sarah Smith. Williams creates a culture genealogy of whoredom that posits everyone—women and men—as potential spiritual and physical whores in this zone of conflict.

In addition to understanding William’s imagination of the ‘city on a hill’ as a site of warring bodies, we can also examine the resonant ideology from the witchcraft trials as operating in similar fashion in his text. Williams states: “There were Sodomites in the Land. However that be, it’s certain the Prophets reckon up the sins of Whoredom and Adultery among the black Catalogue of their abominations, and the causes of their calamities” (4). Williams goes on to argue: “God finds stubbornness & rebellion which are as that Sin of Witchcraft, where Sinners can see only human frailty and sins of Infirmity” (42). Here, Williams places “Whoredom and Adultery” over “Sodomy” as the “black Catalogue” of grievous sexual “abominations” that are to be feared. Moreover, he posits “whoredom and adultery” as the major causes of Sodom and Gomorrah’s fall into “calamity.” Unlike Danforth, whose Cry of Sodom sermon emphasizes that
sodomy and bestiality disrupt the natural order by “going after strange flesh” (4), William’s focuses on a different sort of disruption in the natural order. His invocation of a “black catalogue” and “Sin of Witchcraft” points to the ever resonate historical moment of the Salem trials and the language of “broken…walls” (Mather, Wonders 80). In The Wonders of an Invisible World (1693), Cotton Mather writes: “The Walls of the whole World are broken down! The usual Walls of defense about mankind have such a Gap made in them, that the very Devils are broken in upon us, to seduce…[and] torment” (80). The language of witchcraft is a language of borders, and comes at a very distinct cultural moment when the cohesive Puritan worldview is weakening because of increased religious diversity and turbulent land wars in the colonies. More specifically, witchcraft is a language of border stanchioning to prevent collapse and suffocation. From Mather’s perspective, “the walls” of “defense” are now gradually opening or decaying, producing “such a Gap made in them.” Those diabolical “Devils” seek to terrorize—“to seduce…[and] torment.” The “stubbornness & rebellion” of Smith’s whorish “infirmity” has caused “humans” to see the “frailty” of the polluted spiritual borderlands.

To be a whorish body, then, is to pollute both spiritually and physically valuable ‘Brides of Christ’ who also need to be ‘Soldiers of Christ’ to keep the ‘city on a hill’ from crumbling. Thus, for Williams, the language of a witch’s ‘whorish’ attempts and conquests to seduce other cleans bodies to the works of the Devil—a figure propagated in Puritan sermons as a warmonger against the ‘city on a hill’—can easily be translated to case like Smith’s. Not only does she pollute clean bodies with her seductive powers, spiritually murdering strong ‘Brides/Soldiers of Christ,’ but she also physically murders another potential ‘Bride and Soldier of Christ’—her bastard child.
In the midst of attempting to harness Smith’s chaotic body, Williams provides his reader with a genealogy of whoredom to better explain why these metaphorical walls are crumbling. Or, invoking the language used by Cotton Mather to describe Mary Martin’s 1646 infanticide conviction, Williams sets out to provide his reader with “a whoredom unmasked” (*America Begins* 118). Starting out by solely addressing Smith, Williams argues:

For the person Executed for these sins, she is an awful instance of the…hardening and stupefying power of this brutish Sin of Uncleanness, her love to, & frequent practices of it, having occasioned her…many convictions & contracted a fearful stupidity and foolishness upon her, near the approaches of death. (6)

Here, Williams first explains that Smith is victim to the “awful instance…of this brutish Sin of Uncleanness,” which causes her to become a “hard” hearted woman unable to escape the “stupefying power” of sexual vice. Then, a momentous textual shift occurs when Williams explains “her love to, & frequent practice” of whoredom. He infers the pleasure she takes in the rejection of monogamous domesticity, which is both physical, spiritual, and revolves in a continuous cycle of pleasure seeking and satisfaction. In “Against Monogamy,” Leo Bersani argues infidelity is the “antisocial drive toward sexual pleasure.” Bersani is explaining that social formations only permit pleasure from sex when monogamy is present and reproduction is its useful purpose (93).

Thus, Smith’s “social drive” toward “pleasure” is at once radical, but also clarifies why Williams invokes so many pollution and contagion metaphors in his sermon. If too many bodies mingle and engage in promiscuous relations against God and family, pleasure would become the imperative above marital and relational purpose. In the Puritan context, pleasure moves beyond sex. Moreover, this is why Williams quickly ends his remarks by chastising Smith as “stupid” and foolish”—a body soon to be “dead.” Smith will no longer be able to pursue the “pleasure drive,” and Williams makes every effort to quarantine spectator bodies that may engage with her
“other” desires. As Michael Bronski argues in *The Pleasure Principle*: “pleasure by ‘the other’ is, by its nature, ‘displaced.’” He explains that this “displacement” infers “pleasure resides elsewhere,” and “the other [thereby] becomes the forbidden—that which is not safe—and as such its potential for pleasure becomes greater” (46). So, on the one hand, Williams duly castigates Smith’s “forbidden” pleasure, and illustrates to the spectators the dangers of such lascivious behavior. On the other hand, however, Smith’s body could be read as occupying that space of “elsewhere” on the scaffold.

While Smith’s soon-to-be punished body reveals a temporal moment on the ‘brink of life and death,’ the spectators could be read as engaging with her illicit whoredom—physical and spiritual—as an “other pleasure” that is simultaneously “forbidden” and “not safe.” Thus, it is precisely in Williams’s castigation and punishment of Smith’s whoredom that incites spectators to desire her “other pleasure,” making its appeal exponentially “greater” than if she wasn’t disciplined. The spectator could be imagined as struggling to locate Smith’s arrival into illicit whoredom, which, following Bronski’s claims, is “by its nature, ‘displaced.’” In a sermon suffused with images of crumbling borderlands, one could locate that “displacement” as a site beyond the walls of the ‘city on a hill,’ and outside the minister’s control for spiritual and social monogamy to God and family.

For Williams, Smith’s sins consequently become subordinate to his fearful recognition of whoredom’s subsuming and polluting power in New England. He elucidates: “A whore is a deep ditch, and a narrow pit, the abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein” (7). Moreover, Williams goes on to argue: “Uncleanness is an aggravated iniquity, filling up the measure of other sins” (15). Here, Williams detaches whoredom’s association from gender (it is not confined to women) and even the physical body, and instead moves it closer to explain a state of temporal, geographic
consciousness, pervaded by fullness and filth metaphors. While Williams’s definition of “a whore” may have provoked a sense of erotic longing in the minds of spectators—especially the penetrative and vaginal language of a “deep ditch” and “narrow pit”—the minister also illustrates whoredom’s spiritual control for “filling up the measure of other sins,” where even the Lord and his followers have the potential to “fall therein.”

Thus, Williams illustrates the disruptive potentials of the ‘whorish imaginary’ to not only pollute and defile clean and monogamous bodies, but also to desecrate the spiritual minds of those inside the ‘city on a hill.’ As Michael Wigglesworth scolds in “God’s Controversy with New England” (1662): “This O New-England hast thou got/By [polluting] excess…Thus must thy worldlyness be whipt” (English Literatures 574-75). For Williams, carnal pollutions and unclean thoughts have swollen the Puritan social body to such toxic excess that a whorish perpetrator can no longer be merely “whipt” for his or her “worldly” sin. A whore’s sin becomes a state of spiritual and social consciousness that is collectively shared among all members that comprise the Puritan social body, regardless of gender. The transmission, infection, and incubation of whoredom’s disease are symptomatic of the larger borderland decomposition that Williams details in his sermon. If, according to Williams, parents are now bringing up their “children and Families in Idleness, which doth occasion the abounding of sin, even this sin of Uncleanness,” whoredom detaches itself from sinful decay and moves closer, ironically, to a ‘way of life’ (19).

So while Williams began the sermon with a straightforward attack on the sexual promiscuity that led Smith to conceal and murder her child, he ultimately builds a sermon that uses Smith’s body to stand in for the larger battle of spiritual and social disintegration, framed around both real and imagined warring bodies. Moreover, by positing whoredom’s effusive
power to seduce all bodies, Williams may ironically authorize the ‘whorish imaginary’ of his spectators, fueling their minds with images of illicit bodies, shaken borders, and falling into deep, dark ditches. The border of the ‘city on a hill’ has been breached when Smith is executed, and minds, such as Michael Wigglesworth, are imagined pursuing “the whorish outgoings of [the] heart,” which are “after other things” (Diary 17). Smith’s “whorishness” helps us view these “other things,” which are dark spaces of fear and desire that coagulate around the body on the scaffold.
Throughout this project, I have continually illustrated the erotic and sometimes even spiritual and liberatory potentials and effects of the sexual body on the scaffold, using the archives of Benjamin Goad and Sarah Smith, and the respective execution sermons of Danforth and Williams, as the focal points of my study. But perhaps the most dangerous of these potentials linked to the body is the deployment of a ‘whorish imaginary,’ discussed in my previous chapter on Smith. Not only is the ‘whorish imaginary’ about real bodies engaging in promiscuous affairs, but it is also about ‘spiritual’ bodies feeling and locating other sites of desire and pleasure.

While the scope of this project centered explicitly around sexual bodies, borders, and texts that responded to sex in multifaceted, generous, and fulfilling ways, it is also important to problematize the fact that most scholarship on Puritan sexual history is drawn from rigid legal archives. These types of texts are useful for thinking through the ways ‘sexuality,’ criminality, and guilt were configured in the pre-modern imagination. Moreover, legal archives are important for exploring how normativity was policed and enforced, giving valuable insight into the ideological construction of permissible and illicit behavior. But it is precisely in this emphasis on real, tangible bodies and bodily acts that prevent further access points or entryways into the ways Puritans experienced ‘sexuality.’

Amusingly, but perhaps pertinent given the subject matter of this project, Puritan sex is not always about death, whether it be spiritual, civic, or physical. In order to move away from Puritan ‘sexuality’ as a ‘death drive,’ then, it is vital to rethink how pre-modern ‘sexuality’ was experienced. In his recent article “Mary Rowlandson’s Hunger and the Historiography of Sexuality,” Jordan Alexander Stein offers a useful redefinitional model of early American “sexuality”—moving beyond empirical and legal definitions—to include the “cultivation of
sensations” (469). He explains: “Sexuality…is a realm of psychology and culture making…And this sexuality is not necessarily tied to the [physical] body and its instrumental functions” (473). According to Stein, “cultivated sensations,” such as “taste,” allow us to “connect sexuality with other phenomena,” such as “hunger” (474). Stein further explains that “aesthetic representations rather than empirical evidence [are] key sites of sexuality’s modern articulation” (369). Writing on Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative titled Sovereignty and Goodness of God (1676), Stein notes that Rowlandson does not make any reference to her body throughout the course of the text. Thus, the way readers experience and ‘know’ Rowlandson’s body is through her constant hunger and appetite. But as Stein so eloquently illustrates through textual explication, Rowlandson’s hunger is less about impulse and survival than about her particular tastes and her sensations of consuming (472). Thus, drawing upon and examining the “cultivation of sensations” in early America challenges the modern reader to reconsider the archive from which he or she draws knowledge of pre-modern sexualities from.

While Stein takes up pre-modern ‘sexuality’s’ modern articulation as rooted in physical sensation, his arguments can be extended to include forms of spiritual sensation too, such as the experience of conversion and other feelings of religious life. Because Danforth and Williams eagerly urge their ‘hungry’ congregants to “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,” we can unearth how the erotics of experiencing spiritual ‘fullness’ is yet another way of understanding their texts in terms of ‘sexuality.’ In this light, we access the unyielding possibilities of ‘sexuality’s’ manifestation in the archives of Benjamin Goad and Sarah Smith, and imagine their ‘sexualities’ outside of the spatial proximity of the scaffold. For Goad and Smith, no longer are their ‘sexualities’ merely located on ‘brink of life and death,’ but are brought to life and actively ‘felt’ through a reconsideration of affective ways of knowing and experiencing.
LIST OF REFERENCES


---. *The Sincere Convert; And the Sound Believer.* 1641. Paisley: Stephen & Andrew Young, 1812.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Justin R. Grant graduated summa cum laude from Purchase College, State University of New York with a Bachelor of Arts degree in literature and minor in lesbian and gay studies. Justin completed his Master of Arts degree in English from the University of Florida in the spring of 2012, and he is currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy degree in the same program.