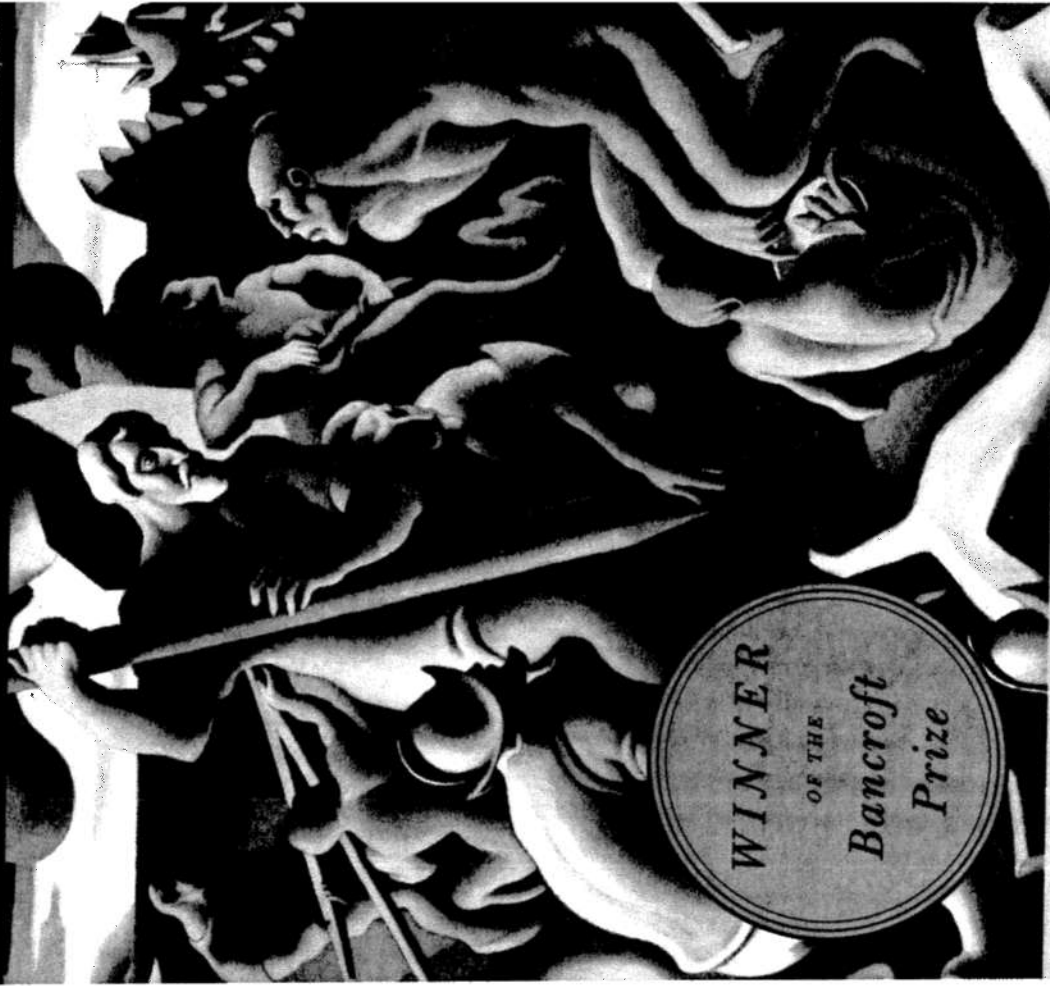


An evocative, powerful, and troubling book about a little-known war that speaks to all wars.
—*The New Republic*



THE NAME OF WAR

KING PHILIP'S WAR AND THE ORIGINS
OF AMERICAN IDENTITY

JILL LEPORE

The Name of War

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THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN

IDENTITY • JILL LEPORE

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What's in a Name?

Words like devastation, rape, slaughter, carnage, starvation are lock and key words to keep the pain at bay. Words about war that are easy on the eye.

I'm telling you stories. Trust me.

—JEANETTE WINTERSON,
The Passion

This is a study of war, and of how people write about it. Writing about war can be almost as difficult as waging it and, often enough, is essential to winning it. The words used to describe war have a great deal of work to do: they must communicate war's intensity, its traumas, fears, and glories; they must make clear who is right and who is wrong, rally support, and recruit allies; and they must document the pain of war, and in so doing, help to alleviate it. Not all words about war do all these things, but most of them do some. The words used to describe and define war are among the tireddest in any language. "Bloody," "brutal," "cruel," "savage," "atrocious"—all are overused and imprecise. And yet they remain shocking, perhaps because of their very vagueness. How does someone far from the scene of battle imagine "savage cruelty" except by thinking the worst?

Words about war are often lies. False reports, rumors, deceptions. One nation's propaganda may be its enemy's profanity: truth in war is relative (which is not to say that some kinds of killing aren't worse than others). "Each man calls barbarism whatever is not his own practice," Montaigne observed. Or, to paraphrase Hobbes, one man calls cruelty what another calls justice.¹

Such words about war, truths, lies, or fine distinctions, constitute what political scientist Michael Walzer has called a “moral vocabulary of warfare,” the language by which combatants justify their own actions while vilifying their opponents.¹ I call your attack a massacre, you call my resistance treachery. One of us may be lying, but one of us may lie dying. If I die, your word, “treachery,” is almost as important as my wound, since you alone survive to make meaning of my death. War is a contest of injuries and of interpretation. As the literary critic Elaine Scarry has argued, war “differs from all other contests in that its outcome carries the power of its own enforcement.”² My death gives you the power to claim the victory. And, even if I survive, you can force me to confess to “treachery.”

Words about war are slippery, and “war” itself may be the slipperiest of all. War is hell, we say, and war’s a game. War is a contagion, the universal version. War is politics by other means, at best barbarism, a mean, contemptible thing. We say many things about war, not all of them profound, and few as pithy as these.⁴ Eminently quotable remarks aside, war is perhaps best understood as a violent contest for territory, resources, and political allegiances, and, no less fiercely, a contest for meaning. At first, the pain and violence of war are so extraordinary that language fails us: we cannot name our suffering and, without words to describe it, reality itself becomes confused, even unreal.⁵ But we do not remain at a loss for words for long. Out of the chaos we soon make new meanings of our world, finding words to make reality real again, usually words like “atrocities” and “betrayal.” War twice cultivates language: it requires justification, it demands description.

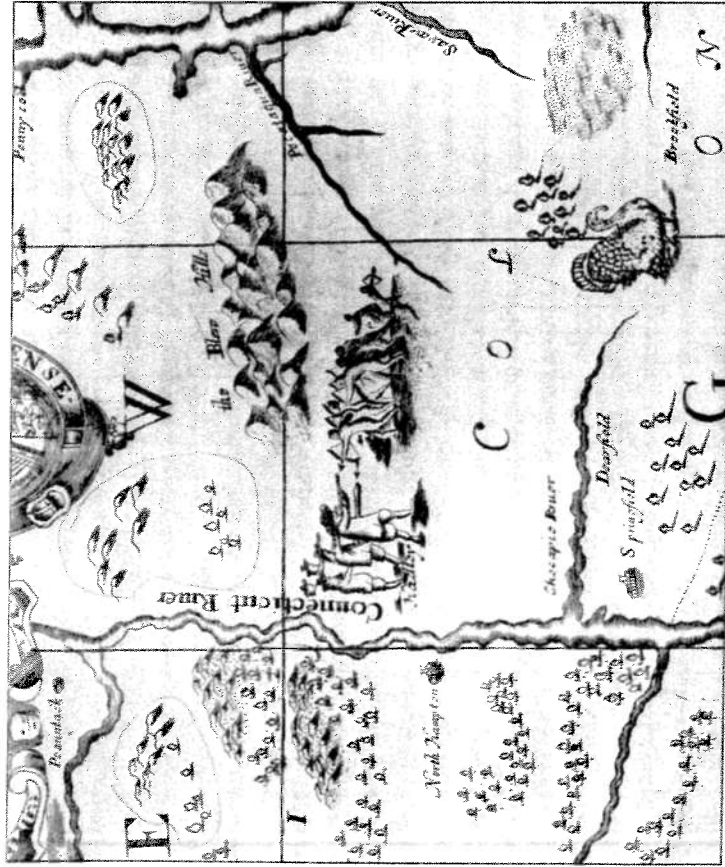
To say that war cultivates language is not to ignore what else war does: war kills. Indeed, it is the central claim of this book that wounds and words—the injuries and their interpretation—cannot be separated, that acts of war generate acts of narration, and that both types of acts are often joined in a common purpose: defining the geographical, political, cultural, and sometimes racial and national boundaries between peoples. If you kill me and call my resistance “treachery,” you have succeeded not only in killing me (and in so doing, ensuring that I will not be able to call your attack a “massacre”), but you have also succeeded in calling me and my kind a treacherous people. In attacking me, you have kept me out of your territory; in calling my resistance “treachery,” you make clear that I was not worthy to be your neighbor. Your success, however, may be short-lived. Future generations and future historians, certainly my descendants and perhaps even yours, may tell the story of our battle differently. They may even declare it a “massacre.” How wars are remembered can be just as important as how they were fought and first described. If future generations call your attack a “massacre,” new ideas about themselves, rather than

any new evidence about you or me, may propel them to do it. Waging, writing, and remembering a war all shape its legacy, all draw boundaries.

How this all works, of course, is rather more complicated than this crude example suggests. War is rarely so straightforward, and most wars require more than a bit of unraveling. Today, one way we unravel wars is with pictures. Since words about war can be easily exhausted of meaning and their truth easily questioned, pictures can sometimes mean more to us. When we hear “atrocities,” it is almost impossible not to see stock images: smoking furnaces at Auschwitz, the bloody killing fields of Cambodia, lifeless Bosnian bodies lining a Sarajevo street. Newsreels, photographs, satellite videos. The pictures haunt us. Yet such images were not always so abundant, not because there were fewer atrocities but because they could not be so skillfully captured. Except with words.

This, then, is a study of a war before television, before film, before photography. It is a study of a war in an age and in a place where even crude wood engravings were rare and printed books an uncommon commodity. When the English and Algonquian peoples of seventeenth-century New England went to war in 1675, they devastated one another. In proportion to population, their short, vicious war inflicted greater casualties than any other war in American history.⁶ Yet just a single image of the fighting survives: half a dozen tiny, crouching figures shooting at one another along the creases of John Seller’s map of New England printed in an English atlas in 1675. It tells us precious little.

The fighting shown on Seller’s map began in June 1675, when three men were hanged by the neck not far from Plymouth Rock. They had been convicted of murdering a man named John Sassamon, who, weeks before his death, had warned the governor of Plymouth Colony that Philip, a Wampanoag Indian leader, was planning to wage war against the English settlers. The three convicted men, all Wampanoags loyal to Philip, were suspected of killing Sassamon, a Christian Indian minister, as punishment for his betrayal. On the gallows, two died the slow, jerky death of strangulation; the third was saved when his rope frayed as he dangled and, finally, dropped him to the ground. But two deaths were more than enough to start a war. Whatever his original intentions, Philip began attacking English towns on June 24, just days after his men were hanged. Over the next fourteen months, one English town after another was laid waste. In July, Middleborough, Dartmouth, Plymouth, and Mendon were attacked. Brookfield in August. Springfield, Hatfield, and Northampton in October. Then, in the winter, Pawtuxet, Lancaster, Medfield, Groton, Longmeadow, Marlborough, Simsbury, and Providence. Still more the following summer. It seemed to the colonists as if the Indians had



Detail from John Seller, "A Mapp of New England, 1675." Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

"risen almost round the country."⁷ And indeed, as the war progressed, other northeastern Algonquians—Nipmucks and Pocumtucks in central and western Massachusetts, Narragansetts in Rhode Island, and Abenakis in Maine—joined Philip's campaign or fought the English for reasons of their own.⁸ By August 1676, when Philip was shot to death near his home in Mount Hope, twenty-five English towns, more than half of all the colonists' settlements in New England, had been ruined and the line of English habitation had been pushed back almost to the coast. The struggling colonists had nearly been forced to abandon New England entirely, and their losses left them desperately dependent on England for support.⁹

Yet Indian losses were far, far greater. Colonial armies, with their Pequot and Mohegan allies, pursued enemy Indians from Narragansett Bay to the Connecticut River Valley, killing warriors in the field and families in their homes. Those Algonquians who fought the English saw their communities decimated: thousands were killed in the fighting while thousands more died of disease or starvation or were shipped out of the colonies as slaves. Those

who retreated beyond the Connecticut River found themselves fighting on two fronts: with their traditional Iroquois enemies, the Mohawks, to the west, and with the English to the east. Closer to the Atlantic, not even Christian Indians loyal to the English were spared; in the fall of 1675 most were removed from their towns and imprisoned on barren islands, where many died of cold or hunger during the long winter. Always brutal and everywhere fierce, King Philip's War, as it came to be called, proved to be not only the most fatal war in all of American history but also one of the most merciless.

However remarkable for the magnitude of its destruction and the depth of its cruelties, King Philip's War is almost as remarkable for how much the colonists wrote about it: more than four hundred letters written during the war survive in New England archives alone, along with more than thirty editions of twenty different printed accounts. In letters, diaries, and chronicles, Englishmen and -women in New England expressed their agonies, mourned their losses, and, most of all, defended their conduct.¹⁰ Not all colonists agreed about the causes of the war, or about how it should be waged, but most agreed about what was at stake: their lives, their land, and their sense of themselves. And, in the end, their writings proved to be pivotal to their victory, a victory that drew new, firmer boundaries between English and Indian people, between English and Indian land, and between what it meant to be "English" and what it meant to be "Indian."¹¹

Yet those boundaries were never stable, either before or after the war. Seventeenth-century New England was, after all, a frontier, at once a dividing line and a middle ground between at least two cultures.¹² Boundary setting, as frontier historians have pointed out, is "the very essence of frontier life."¹³ And it has been the fate of the American frontier to endlessly repeat itself. (And, perhaps, to echo across the continent: not long after King Philip's War ended, unrelated hostilities erupted in New Mexico when Pueblo Indians revolted to free themselves of Spanish rule.¹⁴) The same cultural anxieties and land conflicts that drove Indians and colonists to war in 1675 would continue to haunt them after the war had ended. Not only that, but their descendants, and their distant relatives, peoples from other parts of Europe and from more western parts of America, would fight uncannily similar wars over and over again.¹⁵ King Philip's War was not, as some historians have suggested, the foundational American frontier experience or even the archetypal Indian war.¹⁶ Wars like it had been fought before, and every war brings its own stories, its own miseries. Yet there remains something about King Philip's War that hints of allegory. In a sense, King Philip's War never ended. In other times, in other places, its painful wounds would be reopened, its vicious words spoken again.

War cultivates language, but frontier wars cultivate language in a very particular way. As Patricia Nelson Limerick has written, "the process of invasion, conquest, and colonization was the kind of activity that provoked shiftness in verbal behavior."¹⁷ Much of that shiftness has its roots in European ideas about nature, God, and man, ideas that can be traced to the earliest New World encounters and to questions about the humanity of the indigenous peoples of America. And words are at the center of the encounter between the Old World and the New, between the European "self" and the native American "other."¹⁸ As the bishop of Avila famously remarked when presenting Queen Isabella with the first Spanish grammar book in 1492, "Language is the perfect instrument of empire."¹⁹ Yet seventeenth-century English colonists in New England were plagued with anxieties of identity, not of self and other but of a more complicated, triangulated self, other, and another.²⁰ At least as far back as the Reformation, the English had measured themselves—their civility, their piety, their humanity—against other Europeans, especially the Spanish, whom they condemned for their cruelty to Protestants during the Spanish Inquisition. And, after the first European ventures to the New World, the English continued to measure themselves against the Spanish, whom they again condemned for cruelty, now against Indians during the conquest of Mexico.²¹ If papistry was a defining element of infidelity, cruelty was a defining element of savagery. Yet a cruel European, from the perspective of the English, was still better than a savage, just as a papist was clearly more pious than a pagan.

Distinctions such as these lay behind much of the Puritans' moral posturing in their writing about King Philip's War. As Stephen Greenblatt has written, "Language is, after all, one of the crucial ways of distinguishing between men and beasts," and, as I argue, the language of cruelty and savagery was the vocabulary Puritans adapted to this end.²² English colonists in New England defined themselves against both the Indians' savagery and the Spaniards' cruelty: between these two similar yet distinct "others," one considered inhuman and one human, the English in New England attempted to carve out for themselves a narrow path of virtue, piety, and mercy. Out of the chaos of war, English colonists constructed a language that proclaimed themselves to be neither cruel colonizers like the Spaniards nor savage natives like the Indians. Later on, after nearly a century of repetition on successive American frontiers, this triangulated conception of identity would form the basis of American nationalism as it emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But by that time, the British had come to replace the Spanish as the third element of the triangle.²³ Meanwhile, Algonquians in New England, who, in the seventeenth century, had defined themselves in opposition to their English and Iroquois neighbors, created a new ethnic identity

two centuries later. And, in the twentieth century, they would come to define their own, Indian, nationalism.

WORDS ABOUT WAR—even the names of wars—can be contentious indeed. Historians, admittedly a contentious lot, have failed even to agree on what to call King Philip's War. Its very name, each word in its title—"King," "Philip's," "War"—has been passionately disputed. Philip is said to have been neither a "king" nor, truly, "Philip," and not only historians but contemporaries, too, have insisted that what took place in New England in 1675 and 1676 was simply too nasty to "deserve the Name of a War."²⁴

Can what happened in New England in 1675 and 1676 rightly be called "King Philip's War"? Alas, three impassioned arguments say no. The first condemns the colonists' aggression and suggests that the conflict be called a "Puritan Conquest." The second celebrates Indian resistance and proposes "Metacom's Rebellion," insisting that Philip is more accurately referred to by his Algonquian name, Metacom (sometimes rendered as "Metacomet" or "Pometacom"), and that calling him a "king" is derisive. A third argument takes the view that the fighting is better understood as an Indian civil war, since many Mohegans and Pequots, as well as Christian Indians, fought alongside the English against the Wampanoags, Pocumtucks, Nipmucks, and Narragansetts.²⁵ But what really happened? Did the Puritans conquer? Did Metacom rebel? Did one Indian brother fight another? Did King Philip wage a war? Yes, yes, yes, and yes again.

All wars have at least two names. In Vietnam, the conflict Americans call the "Vietnam War" is called the "American War." What most Americans now call the "Civil War" has been called (by Northerners) the "War of the Rebellion" and (by Southerners) the "War of Northern Aggression." Names of wars are always biased; they always privilege one perspective over another. This is no less true of "Metacom's Rebellion" than it is of "King Philip's War." And, though names of wars may tell us a good deal, they rarely tell us everything. Calling what happened between 1739 and 1742 the "War of Jenkins' Ear" tells us about the sad fate of a British sea captain's auditory apparatus, but not that the war was fought between England and Spain. Still, it is a telling name, since Captain Robert Jenkins' ear, cut off by the Spanish as punishment for smuggling, became a symbol of the conflict (especially after Jenkins presented it to Parliament). "King Philip's War" is telling in this same way. Philip was not, literally, a king; his own people may have called him by a name other than "Philip"; and, at the time, they probably called the fighting something other than "King Philip's War." Nevertheless, Philip did begin a war in which his

people's sovereignty (their "kingdom") was lost, and his death did become a symbol of the English victory. (His severed head was staked on a pole for public viewing in Plymouth.) Meanwhile, the colonists did call what happened "King Philip's War," and the very fact that what their enemies called it has not survived ("Metacom's Rebellion" is mere conjecture) is part of what the fighting was about in the first place: it was a contest for meaning—and the colonists won.

"King Philip's War" is not unbiased, but its biases are telling. (And some of its biases are less biased than historians have assumed.) Perhaps it will be best to consider each of the contested terms in "King Philip's War" in turn. To begin with, calling an Indian leader a "king," though it eventually became mocking, began as a simple (though inaccurate) translation of *sachem*. The English called many prominent Indian leaders "kings," partly in recognition of the sachems' very real political authority and partly as a result of the colonists' overestimation of that authority. Most sachemships were hereditary, and English colonists saw them as roughly analogous to European monarchies, however much smaller in scale; "king" might have seemed a fitting, if not entirely satisfactory, translation of "sachem." "Philip," too, was an English creation; it was the name given to Metacom when he and his brother Wamsutta appeared before the Plymouth Court in 1660 as a gesture of friendship and fidelity.²⁶ In 1677 one colonist, with the benefit of hindsight, suggested that Metacom, "for his ambitious and haughty Spirit," had been originally "nick-named King Philip."²⁷ But, in 1660, naming Metacom and Wamsutta "Philip" and "Alexander" after the ancient leaders of Macedonia was most likely a reference (oblique to us but obvious to them) to the seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, an engraving of an Indian mouthing the words, "Come Over and Help Us," and itself an echo of Acts 16:9, in which the Apostle Paul sees a vision of a Macedonian begging him, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."²⁸ Plymouth authorities, like their Massachusetts counterparts, saw Indians as pagan Macedonians who, at heart, were desperate for the light of the gospel. "Philip" was no compliment, but that doesn't make it a joke.

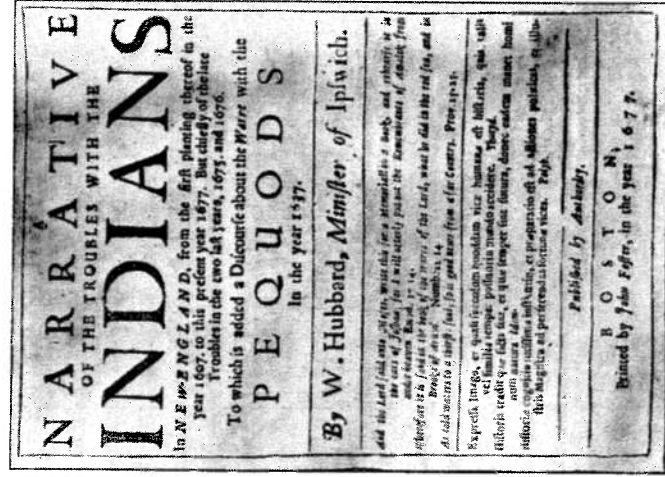
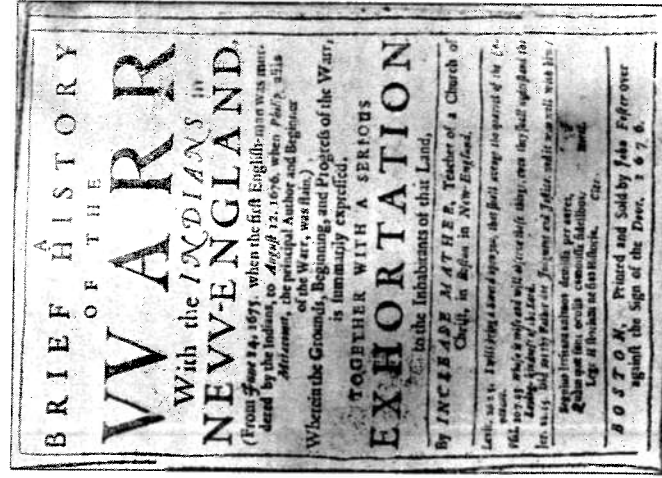
"War" is, of course, the slipperiest, most disputed word in "King Philip's War," but the recently proposed alternatives are poor substitutes. "Conquest" implies that the outcome of the hostilities was predetermined, while "rebellion" suggests that Philip was a treasonous subject of King Charles. Neither is quite true (much as the colonists would have liked to believe both). "Indian Civil War" rings false, too, since, although the colonists were quick to call upon Indian allies, the majority on both sides perceived the war as an English-on-Indian conflict. In the end, "war" may be the word that takes the conflict most seriously, but, tellingly, even at the time of the fighting, the word "war"



Seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
Courtesy of the Massachusetts Archives

sparked controversy. In the fall of 1676, soon after Philip's death, Increase Mather, the Puritan minister of Boston, published *A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New-England*. A few months later, William Hubbard, minister of nearby Ipswich, took exception to the title of Mather's book. In the preface to his own *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England*, Hubbard distinguished his book from Mather's by explaining that he had titled his work a "narrative" because "the Matter of Fact therein related (being rather Massacres, barbarous inhumane Outrages, than Acts of Hospitality or valiant Achievements) no more deserve the Name of a War than the Report of them the Title of an History."²⁹ Here was no "history" of a "war"; this was a "narrative" of some "troubles." In Hubbard's mind, to call the conflict a "war" and the account of it a "history" gave it a dignity it did not deserve, not to mention giving Mather stature he did not merit. Hubbard no doubt bristled that, in his own preface, Mather had boasted, "I have performed the part of an *Historian*."³⁰ Did Mather pretend to be Thucydides? Did he suggest that what happened in New England in 1675 and 1676 could be likened to the Peloponnesian War? Perhaps it is only fair to observe that Increase Mather was a bombastic bully, but ultimately the two ministers' petty squabbling is beside the point. When Hubbard declared that the Indians' fighting—"Massacres, barbarous inhumane Outrages"—simply did not "deserve the Name of a War," he made Mather seem somewhat pretentious; more importantly, he made New England's Algonquians seem entirely inhuman.

The Reverends Hubbard and Mather, much as they bickered, had a great deal in common. Most importantly, they shared what the seventeenth-century English scholar Samuel Purchas called the "literall advantage": they could write, and most Indians could not. "Want of Letters," Purchas argued, left Indians in awe of Europeans' astounding abilities and led them "to thinke the Letter it selfe could speake." Compared to men who could read and write, Indians were no more than "speaking Apes." For Purchas, the "literall advantage" truly separated men from beasts—"amongst Men, some are accounted Civill, and more both Sociable and Religious, by the Use of letters and Writing, which others wanting are esteemed Brutish, Savage, Barbarous."³¹ With this, both William Hubbard and Increase Mather would have agreed. Like all literate Europeans in the New World, Hubbard and Mather had a veritable monopoly on making meaning, or at least on translating and *recording* the meaning of what they saw and did, and even of what they supposed the Indians to have seen, done, and said. And herein lies the circularity of the "literall advantage": "speaking Apes" cannot respond in writing to the writers who label them inhuman.



Title pages of Increase Mather, *Brief History*, LEFT, and William Hubbard, *Narrative*, RIGHT. Both courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society



LEFT: Reverend Increase Mather, London, 1688, by Jan Van der Spriett. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society. RIGHT: Ninigret, Sachem of the Niantics, c. 1681, unidentified artist. Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design. Gift of Mr. Robert Winthrop

Nowhere are differences like the "literall advantage" better illustrated than in the contrast between two portraits from the 1680s, one of Mather himself, and one of Ninigret, a Narragansett sachem.³² Mather sits in his library, studying his books and manuscripts; Ninigret stands in the woods, armed with a knife and club. To the Europeans who painted these portraits, Mather was clothed in the fine fabrics of arts and letters (his collar even seems to be made of the pages of an open book), while Ninigret was naked in body, mind, and soul.

If, in the seventeenth century, the "literall advantage" proved decisive, recent challenges to the name "King Philip's War" have attempted to even the odds, to take away the colonists' monopoly on making meaning of the war by asking, What would the Indians have called it? Most historians who have asked this question have begun with the assumption that no Algonquian would have called the conflict "King Philip's War." But those who spoke English might have. At least one Nipmuck, in a note tacked to a tree outside a burning English town, called the fighting a "war," and Metacom at least occasionally called himself "King Philip."³³ (A rebellious letter written from Mount Hope to the governor of Plymouth and transcribed by Philip's inter-

*g Philip alias metacom
his P mark*

Mark of Philip, alias Metacom

preter, Tom Sansuik, begins, "King Philip desire to let you understand that he could not come to the Court."³⁴ Moreover, Philip, who probably knew the alphabet, signed documents with a "P," not an "M"—only his scribes occasionally added "alias Metacom" to his mark, probably to accommodate the colonists, who were meticulous record-keepers.³⁵

It is possible that Philip called himself "Philip" when addressing the English and "Metacom" when talking with Indians. But it seems more likely that he simply abandoned the name Metacom after 1660. After all, Philip was raised in a culture in which people commonly adopted new names, leaving old names behind. Edward Winslow had observed in 1624, "All their names are significant and variable, for when they come to the state of men and women, they alter them according to their deeds or dispositions."³⁶ For just this reason, it is possible that Philip renamed himself during the war, to mark a new stage in his life, but surely he would not have returned to Metacom, the name of his youth. That no record of Philip's new name survives should come as no surprise. Those who knew Philip by the name he went by at the time of his death, in August 1676, would not have uttered it: a strict naming taboo prohibited it. As Roger Williams had reported, "the naming of their dead *Sachims*, is one ground of their warres"; in 1665 Philip himself had traveled to Nantucket to kill an Indian who had spoken the name of his deceased father, Massasoit.³⁷ If Philip took another name during the war, it has not survived. (Although one small, uncorroborated bit of evidence suggests that he may have been renamed "Wewesawamit."³⁸) And, since he seems to have initially taken "Philip" in earnest, calling him "Metacom" today is no truer to his memory, especially because "Metacom" became a popular substitute for "Philip" only in the early nineteenth century, when white playwrights, poets, and novelists sought to make the war sound more authentically, and romantically, Indian.³⁹

Unfortunately, as relates to seventeenth-century evidence, there are few clues about what Algonquians might have called the war, with the important exceptions of Philip's inky "P" and rare notes left by retreating Indians. Nearly all of what we know about the fighting—whether "brief histories" or "narra-

tives of troubles"—comes from the colonists themselves, and, as the Massachusetts seal ("Come Over and Help Us") so poignantly illustrates, more than a bit of skepticism must be brought to words the colonists quite literally put into the mouths of their Algonquian neighbors. Yet those neighbors were neither as silent as the colonists hoped nor as "inarticulate" as most historians have assumed. Still, perhaps the question of what Algonquians might have called King Philip's War is ultimately futile. Or perhaps it is simply the wrong question. In either case, the question this study asks is slightly different: If war is, at least in part, a contest for meaning, can it ever be a fair fight when only one side has access to those perfect instruments of empire, pens, paper, and printing presses?

THIS STUDY ASKS other questions, too, of course, questions about cruelty, language, memory, and, most of all, identity. I argued earlier that war cultivates language, but in writing this book it has at times seemed to me that war cultivates questions, many of them disturbing and all too few of them answerable. Scholars of the generation whose work has most inspired me were themselves compelled to write about war because of their experiences as witnesses of Vietnam, a war best remembered for the debate over whether it ought to have been waged at all. In his tellingly titled *Just and Unjust Wars*, for instance, Michael Walzer explained, "I did not begin by thinking about war in general, but about particular wars, above all the American intervention in Vietnam."⁴⁰ Nor did I, nearly two decades after Walzer, begin by thinking about war in general, but about a particular conflict, the Persian Gulf War. That war, noted for its excess of video images through extensive television coverage, led me to wonder how war could be represented without pictures. In an age when there were few technologies for visual representation, how effective were words in describing and justifying war? That question, in turn, led me to consider how cultures lacking not only television but also literacy come to terms with war. And, like Walzer, while I began by thinking about a particular war, I soon found myself facing some rather grand philosophical questions. To me, the most pressing of these is, How do people reconcile themselves to war's worst cruelties? Or, as Elaine Scarry put it, "By what perceptual process does it come about that one human being can stand beside another human being in agonizing pain and not know it, not know it to the point where he himself inflicts it?"⁴¹ Between each line and on the words on every page, this question drives my investigation. Yet nowhere do I answer it, nor did I ever expect to. It has seemed to me the most unanswerable of all.

As distressing as it can be to study cruelty, King Philip's War, like most

bulky chunks of the past, is filled with fascinating characters, bizarre happenings, and strange tales. Not surprisingly, I have found myself caught up in these stories, with the result that the questions that brought me to this topic, however urgent, are sometimes seduced into slumber by the cunning charms of a pressing plot. Analysis, however, is a light sleeper. Just when it seems that plot might take over entirely, rest assured that analysis will soon be awake, as cranky and demanding as ever. In the end, this book is just another story about just another war, but happily, along the way it is also a murder mystery, an adventure story, and a tale of peril on the high seas.

The structure of this book is shaped both by the action of the war and by my own ideas about its importance. Bookended by the Prologue and the Epilogue, the four parts of this study—Language, War, Bondage, and Memory—describe and define four elements of the conflict and also four themes of my analysis. Part One examines why so many colonists wrote so much about King Philip's War while New England's Algonquians wrote so little, investigating, along the way, how war alters an individual's relationship to language. Next, Part Two traces how boundaries were drawn during King Philip's War, both on the physical landscape and on the landscape of the human body, and how the war's cruelties were explained and justified by both sides, especially in religious terms. Part Three contrasts New Englanders' differing experiences of bondage during the war: captivity, confinement, slavery. Last, Part Four analyzes how subsequent generations of Americans have remembered King Philip's War, most notably through *Metamora*; or, *the Last of the Wampanoags*, a wildly popular play that was performed in theaters across America in the 1830s and 1840s.

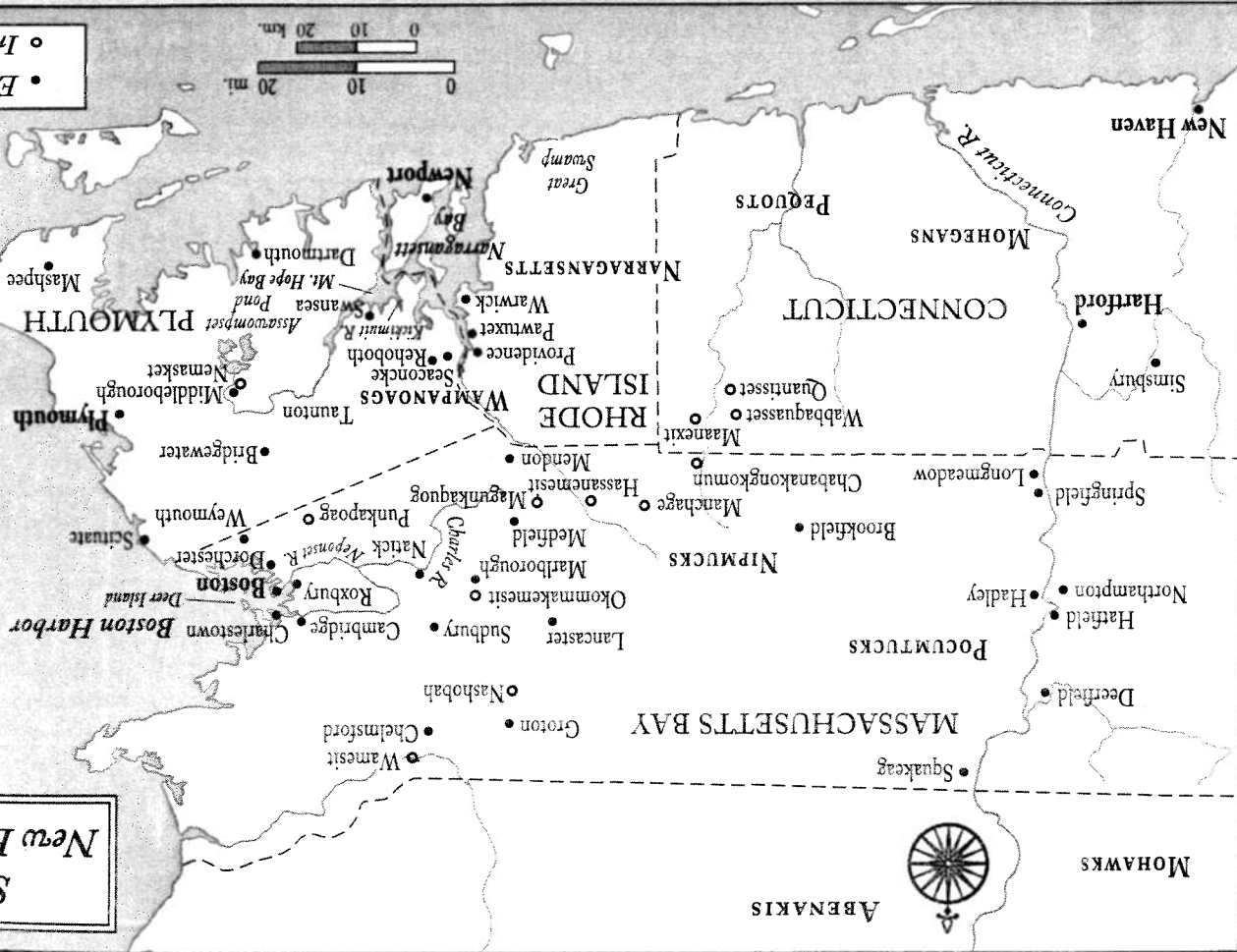
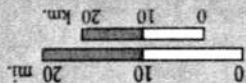
Meanwhile, to preserve the flavor of the stories of King Philip's War, and most especially to help readers appreciate the differences in the spoken and written language among colonists and Indians, I have preserved the original spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in all seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources with the following important exceptions: superscribed characters have been brought down; abbreviations have been spelled out; fanciful or conventional italics have been removed, unless they were clearly intended for emphasis; mistaken homonyms ("there" used for "their") have been corrected if their usage might confuse the reader, but not otherwise; and, when relevant, the following letters have been changed: "u" to "v," "v" to "u," "j" to "i," "y" to "th," and "t" to "c."⁴² (Remember that what we see as poor spelling does not always imply poor education; seventeenth-century spelling is entirely idiosyncratic.) Additionally, all "old style" dates have been modernized—that is, dates between January 1 and March 25 have been changed to the modern calendar and are considered part of the new year (thus, what in seventeenth-

century notation is "February 10, 1675/6" is here rendered as "February 10, 1676"). And, in rendering Algonquian personal names, whose spellings often vary tremendously, I have in each case chosen the least quirky and simplest spelling for use in the text; variant spellings are recorded in the notes.

Finally, a word about the title of this study. In 1677, when William Hubbard explained why he had called his account of King Philip's War a "narrative," he uttered the mouthful that bears repeating: "The Matter of Fact therein related (being rather Massacres, barbarous inhumane Outrages, than Acts of Hostility or valiant Achievements) no more deserve the Name of a War than the Report of them the Title of an History."⁴³ A better illustration of the importance of language I could not have asked for, and so, with a nod to Reverend Hubbard, I borrow the title for this, my own set of words about war.

Southern
New England, 1675

- English settlements
- Indian settlements



Prologue

THE CIRCLE

They first cut one of his Fingers round in the Joynt, at the Trunk of his Hand, with a sharp Knife, and then brake it off, as Men used to do with a slaughtered Beast, before they uncase him; then they cut off another and another, till they had dismembered one Hand of all its Digits, the Blood sometimes spirting out in Streams a Yard from his Hand . . . yet did not the Sufferer ever relent, or shew any Signs of Anguish. . . . In this Frame he continued, till his Executioners had dealt with the Toes of his Feet, as they had done with the Fingers of his Hands; all the while making him Dance round the Circle, and Sing, till he had wearied both himself and them. At last they brake the Bones of his Legs, after which he was forced to sit down, which 'tis said he silently did, till they had knocked out his Brains.¹

July 1676. King Philip's War is almost over. Houses have been burned, children murdered, men beheaded. Hatred has accumulated. And here, it seems, is a typical account of a typical torture—the inexorable slowness of it, the mocking. The torturers are Mohegan Indians. “Making a great Circle, they placed him in the Middle, that all their Eyes might at the same Time, be pleased with the utmost Revenge upon him.” The typical spectacle, the typical torments; we can almost see the writhing English colonist, surrounded by men he considers barbarians, suffering stoically. But our imagination, swelled by too many Saturdays spent watching Westerns, has carried us away. The man in the middle is not an English-

man. The account itself might have tipped us off: "*'Tis said*" that the fingerless, toeless man sat down silently while his torturers knocked his brains out. Said by whom? The Englishman whose words we read writes in the third person; he is not that fingerless, toeless, ultimately brainless man. Nor is he a captive forced to watch a gruesome preview of the fate that awaits him, only to be rescued at the last minute. He has only heard this story, second-hand, from someone who witnessed the scene and lived to tell the tale. Who, then, is the man in the middle, and where is the Englishman who watched him die?

The fingerless, toeless man is also nameless. He is called only "a young sprightly Fellow, seized by the Mohegins," though his sprightliness will soon fade. He is no Englishman; the English despise him. He is a formidable foe. "Of all the Enemies" of the war, "this Villain did most deserve to become an Object of Justice and Severity." He is, at first, boastful, too, and brags of shooting nineteen Englishmen dead and then, "unwilling to lose a fair Shot," killing a Mohegan to make an even twenty. "With which, having made up his Number, he told them he was fully satisfied." The Mohegans, after all, are allies of the English, and he who would kill one would as easily kill the other. The man in the middle of the circle could, perhaps, be a Frenchman, enemy to both. But instead he is a "cruel Monster" who has fought to oust the settlers from New England. The picture becomes clearer. The man in the middle, it turns out, is an Indian, a Narragansett.

But if both the sufferer and his tormentors are Indians, where, in this scene, are the English? They are watching, and paying close attention. Aided by the Mohegans, the English have just captured more than three hundred enemy Indians and now they must "gratify" their allies, who ask that this Narragansett man "be delivered into their Hands, that they might put him to Death" and thereby "sacrifice him to their cruel Genius of Revenge." The English quickly consent, "lest by a Denial they might disoblige their Indian Friends," and also, they admit, because they are curious for "an ocular Demonstration of the Salvage, barbarous Cruelty of these Heathen." The English, then, have made this torture possible, and now they form part of the "great Circle" of onlookers to the event.

Truly the English are in a difficult position. Being the man in the middle, however horrifying, makes more sense to them, to their sense of themselves, than forming the circle. If they are to think of themselves as different from "these Heathen" whom they condemn for their "barbarous Cruelty," how can they consent to it? How can they stand shoulder to shoulder with Indians and watch as a man is tortured to death, knowing, as they do, that watching is the chief sport of it? Although they insist that the Narragansett man is tortured

simply to humor the Mohegans, his suffering seems sublimely satisfying to the English as well. They never look away; this is the "ocular Demonstration" they've been waiting for. In many ways, theirs is a safe pleasure. Their enemy is killed, yet they do not have to kill him. They are allowed to witness torture, yet they need not inflict it. Nor are they themselves physically threatened—it is not their legs that are being broken.

Still, there is danger here. "It is a signe of a barbarous and cruell man," according to an influential English Puritan theologian, "if any one bee given to warre simply desiring it and delighting in it."² Or, as Thomas Aquinas had written, "brutality or savagery applies to those who in inflicting punishment have not in view a default of the person punished, but merely the pleasure they derive from a man's torture."³ To the extent that the English soldiers enjoy witnessing this scene of torture, they are relishing "savage" pleasures and thereby jeopardizing their identity as "civilized" men. And protecting that identity—as Christians and, most fundamentally, as Englishmen—is why they are fighting the war in the first place. From the time of their first arrival, in the 1620s and 1630s, the settlers had worried about losing their Englishness. However much they wanted to escape England and its corruptions, they still clung to their English ways—ways of walking, talking, dressing, thinking, eating, and drinking.⁴ Being away from England meant religious freedom, but it also meant cultural isolation. Even while in Holland they had complained that it was "grievous to live from under the protection of the State of *England*," likely "to lose our language, and our name of English."⁵ If living among the Dutch in a European city threatened English identity, how much more threatening was living among the Indians in the New World. Strange languages, strange people, strange land. Building a "city on a hill" in the Americas wilderness provided a powerful religious rationale, but on certain days, in many ways, it must have fallen short of making perfect sense. When the corn didn't grow, when the weather turned wild, when the wolves howled, when the Indians laughed at God, these are the times when the colonists might have wondered, What are we doing here? Discouraged and afraid, thousands of colonists simply left—as many as one in six sailed home to England in the 1630s and 1640s, eager to return to a world they knew and understood.⁶

But those who stayed eventually learned to grow corn, predict the weather, shoot wolves, and ignore Indian blasphemies. And then they might have wondered, Who have we become?

The colonists' doubts about their own identity were magnified both by their distance from England and by their nearness to the Indians. Most especially, they worried about the Indians' origins and the reason for their barbarity. Either the Indians were native to America (and more like an elm tree than

an Englishman), or else they were migrants from Europe or Asia (and then very much like the English, who were simply more recent migrants). If native, the Indians were one with the wilderness and had always been as savage as their surroundings. As Roger Williams reported, "They say themselves, that they have sprung and growne up in that very place, like the very trees of the Wilderness."⁷ But if the Indians were migrants from Europe or Asia, then they had changed since coming to America and had been contaminated by its savage environment. If this were the case, as many believed, then the English could expect to degenerate, too. Urging the conversion of the Indians to Christianity, Daniel Gookin had warned, "Here we may see, as in a mirror, or looking glass, the woful, miserable, and deplorable estate, that sin hath reduced mankind unto naturally."⁸ Instead of being the stage for the perfection of piety, the woods of New England might in truth be a forest of depravity. Instead of becoming "visible saints" for all of Europe to see, the English might expect to become more savage with each passing year, not only less religious but also less and less like Englishmen. And more and more like Indians.⁹

By the 1670s, in the years before King Philip's War broke out, there were many signs that the English had degenerated. Church membership and church attendance had declined. People were settling farther and farther from the coast, nearer to the Indians, and farther from the civilizing influence of English neighbors. Trade and contact with the Indians were increasing, though little of this contact involved sharing the good news of the gospel. In 1674, just a year before the war began, the Puritan minister Increase Mather published a sermon called *The Day of Trouble is Near*, in which he bemoaned the profligacy of his parishioners and the "great decay as to the power of godliness amongst us." It had become almost impossible, he complained, to tell the difference between church members and other men.¹⁰

Mather's themes of decay and confusion were common concerns. At the farthest extreme, New Englanders worried that they might degenerate so much as to become indistinguishable from beasts. The same year that Mather published his *Day of Trouble*, Samuel Danforth printed a sermon on bestiality (occasioned by a young boy's confession of copulating with a mare, a cow, two goats, five sheep, two calves, and a turkey) in which he condemned the practice as a "monstrous and horrible Confusion" that "turneth man into a brut Beast."¹¹ Somewhere between these two fears—of mistaking godly men for ungodly men, or men for beasts—lay the colonists' principal fear: of mistaking Englishmen for Indians. Earlier English colonizers in Ireland had shared the same concerns, worrying, as Edmund Spenser did, that the English there might follow the fate of the original Norman invaders who "degenerated and grown allmoste meare Irishe yea and more malicious to the Englishes

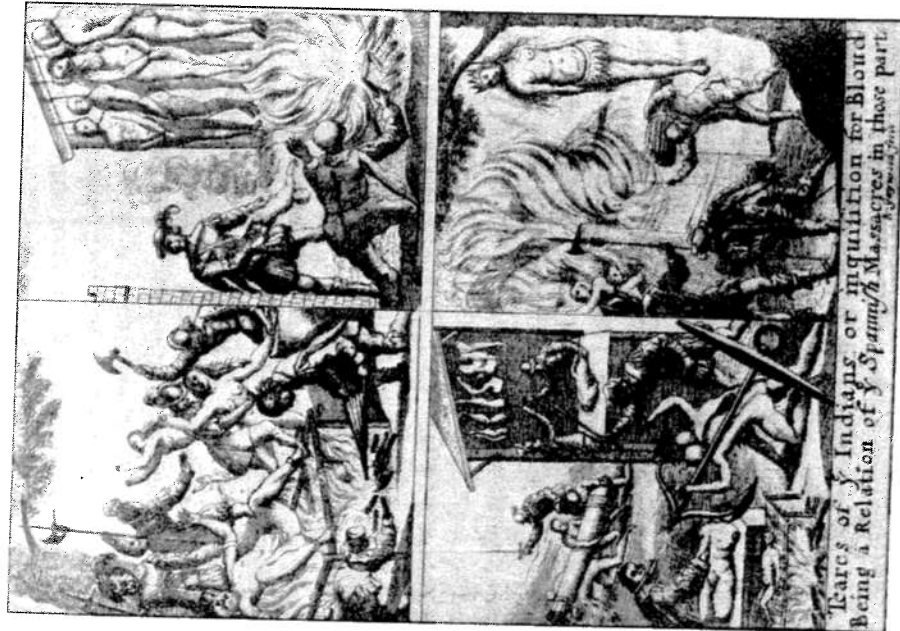
than the verve Irishe themselves."¹² In both New England and Ireland, not a few colonists, after all, had run off to live with the natives, abandoning English society altogether.¹³ (Nearby, in New France, Frenchmen seemingly "became Savage simply because they lived with them."¹⁴) Perhaps, the English New Englanders worried, they themselves were becoming Indianized, contaminated by the influence of America's wilderness and its wild people.¹⁵

Meanwhile, many Algonquians had come to suspect the reverse, worrying that they themselves had become too much like their new European neighbors. Not only had the English taken Indian lands and disrupted traditional systems of trade and agriculture, but they also had corrupted the power of native rulers, or sachems, and attempted to eradicate the influence of powwaws, native religious leaders. When coastal populations became decimated by European diseases, many Indians had even decided to convert to Christianity and to live among the English. Those who resisted the influence of the English commonly attributed all of their people's problems "to the Departure of some of them from their own heathenish Ways and Customs."¹⁶ Philip himself believed that too many Indians had been Anglicized and Christianized, praying to an English God and even learning to read and write. During negotiations with several colonists from Rhode Island, Philip and his counselors claimed "that thay had a great fear to have ani of their indians should be Caled or forced to be Christian indians. Thay said that such wer in everi thing more mischivous, only disemblers, and then the English made them not subject to their kings, and by ther lying to rong their kings."¹⁷ Clearly, the boundaries between the two peoples had become blurred.

A day of trouble was indeed near, as Increase Mather had warned. "Ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars," he preached, quoting from Matthew 24:6. Calamities showing God's judgment were almost always at hand in Mather's mind, but this time, in 1674, he had a point. It is not entirely clear just exactly how or why the war started when it did, in June 1675, but from the firing of the first shots, both sides pursued the war with viciousness, and almost without mercy. "Christians in this Land have become too like unto the Indians," Increase Mather would later write, "and then we need not wonder if the Lord hath afflicted us by them."¹⁸ The Indians, Wampanoags, Narragansetts, and Nipmucks, as well as Pocumtucks and Abenakis, attacked dozens of English towns, burning as many houses and killing as many inhabitants as they could. And the English, with occasional help from Mohegan, Pequot, Mohawk, and Christian Indians, burned wigwams, killed women and children, and sold prisoners into slavery. Both sides practiced torture and mutilation of the dead.

New England's Algonquians waged war against the English settlers in

response to incursions on their cultural, political, and economic autonomy and, at least in part, they fought to maintain their Indianness. Meanwhile, New England colonists waged war to gain Indian lands, to erase Indians from the landscape, and to free themselves of doubts about their own Englishness.¹⁹ For many colonists this was a struggle ordained by God, in which He “in wisdom most devine” would “purg ther dros from purer Coyne.”²⁰ But if the English hoped to do away with enemy Indians by torturing some, killing most, and selling the rest as slaves, there was a catch: that was what the Spanish had done. And to behave as the Spanish had would again jeopardize the colonists’ identity as Englishmen.



Frontispiece of Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Tears of the Indians*, trans. J. P. (London, 1656). Courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California

Spain's brutal conquest of Mexico was widely known in both Old and New England, largely through a work titled *The Tears of the Indians* and commonly referred to as “Spanish Cruelties,” but actually a translation of the Spanish friar Bartolomé de Las Casas’ sixteenth-century treatise “In Defense of the Indians.” Las Casas had spared no details in documenting the atrocities perpetrated by the conquistadors, and “Spanish Cruelties” invited English readers to define their colonial ventures in opposition to that model. In the seventeenth century, the widespread printing and distribution of works such as “Spanish Cruelties” fueled the growth of nationalism in Europe, a development that was predicated on the invention of the printing press.²¹ As one New England colonist wrote in 1676, “all men (of reading) condemne the Spaniard for cruelty . . . in destroying men & depopulating the land.”²² Translations of Las Casas were, in fact, part of a propaganda war among the competing imperial powers, Spain, Holland, England, and France, much of which, from the English perspective, centered on proving who was most Christian, and most civilized, in their interactions with America’s native inhabitants.²³ When Richard Hakluyt listed for Queen Elizabeth the reasons for planting American colonies, he suggested that the English might easily win the favor of Indians desperate for liberation from Spain’s cruelties:

The Spaniards governe in the Indies with all pride and tyranie; and like as when people of contrarie nature at the sea enter into Gallies, where men are tied as slaves, all yell and crye with one voice *Liberta, liberta*, as desirous of libertie or freedome, so no doubt whensoever the Queene of England . . . shall seate upon that firme of America, and shalbe reported throughout all that tracte to use the naturall people there with all humanitie, curtesie, and freedome, they will yelde themselves to her government and revolte cleane from the Spaniarde.²⁴

Sir Walter Raleigh even planned to bring Las Casas’ “booke of the Spanish cruelties with fayr pictures” on his voyage to Guiana in the 1590s, hoping to show it to the natives and impress them with the wisdom of welcoming the kinder, gentler English.²⁵

Part of the mission of New England’s “city on a hill,” then, was to advertise the civility of the English colonists and to hold it in stark contrast with the barbarous cruelty of Spain’s conquistadors and the false and blasphemous impiety of France’s Jesuit missionaries. Books not only about the Spanish conquest but also about the Spanish Inquisition, both of which illustrated the depravity and cruelty of Spaniards, and of papists in general, were printed and made widely available to English readers (“Spanish Cruelties” was even subtitled “Inquisition for Blood,” to make the connection more explicit).

The French, on the other hand, were derided not so much for cruelty as for hypocrisy and sacrilege in their meaningless baptisms of Indians ignorant of the gospel. A popular English joke told of a Jesuit missionary who, having lived in New France for a quarter century, wrote to a friend in Europe to ask him "to send him a Book called the Bible, for he heard there was such a Book in Europe; which might be of some use to him."²⁶

Countering these visions of colonial failures, early published accounts of the English colonists' adventures in New England stressed the pleasantness of their interactions with Indians; the fairness of their treaties; and, especially after 1640, the success of their efforts to convert the Indians to Christianity by teaching them to read the Bible.²⁷ New Englanders' fame as missionaries to the Indians was so well publicized that by 1654 Roger Williams was able to dissuade his fellow colonists from waging war against the Narragansetts by pointing out that their reputation was at stake:

it Can not be hid, how all England & other Nations ring with the glorious Conversion of the Indians of New England. You know how many bookes are dispersed throughout the Nation of that Subject . . . : how have all the Pulpits in England bene Commanded to Sound of this Glorious Worcke. . . . I beseech you consider how the name of the most holy & jealous God may be preserved betwene the clashinges of these Two: Viz: The Glorious Conversion of the Indians in New England & the Unnecessary Warrs & cruell Destructions of the Indians in New England.²⁸

Fearful of "Unnecessary Warrs & cruell Destructions," those New England colonists who had read or heard of Las Casas' "Spanish Cruelties" had a vivid idea of what not to do in the New World. In a prefatory address "To all true English-men," the translator of a 1656 English edition of "Spanish Cruelties" asked his readers to imagine watching the horrors of the conquest, to imagine, in a sense, standing in a circle of spectators to that event:

had you been Eye-witnesses to the transcending Massacres here related; had you been one of those that lately saw a pleasant Country, now swarming with multitudes of People, but immediately depopulated, and drown'd in a Deluge of Blood: had you been one of those that saw great Cities of Nations and Countries in this moment flourishing with Inhabitants, but in the next, totally ruin'd with such a General Desolation, as left neither Person living nor House remaining: had you seen the poor innocent Heathens shaming and upbraiding, with the ghastliness of their Wounds, the devilish Cruelties of those that called themselves Christians: had you seen the poor creatures torn from the peace and quiet of their own Habitations, where God had planted them, to labour in a Tormenting Captivity . . . your Compassion

must of necessity have turn'd into Astonishment: the tears of Men can hardly suffice. . . .²⁹

Compassion, astonishment, and tears. In 1656, when this "Spanish Cruelties" was printed, these were the only proper responses of "true English-men" to the torture and slaughter of Indians.

Twenty years later, those "true English-men" who lived in New England found themselves in a very tricky spot. Barbarism threatened them from every direction: if they continued to live peaceably with the Indians, they were bound to degenerate into savages, but if they waged war, they were bound to fight like savages.³⁰ Their dilemma was further complicated because, along with the lessons of "Spanish Cruelties," New Englanders were also influenced, however indirectly, by the representation of German, Irish, and Catholic cruelties in English books and stories. In the 1640s England had itself experienced and inflicted some of the worst atrocities of warfare during its civil wars. Meanwhile, Germany's own religious violence warned that England might meet a similar fate and descend into grotesque and enduring civil strife. At the same time, England's experience in Ireland, especially during the Irish Rebellion of 1641, contributed to the powerful tradition of Protestant martyrdom by emphasizing English Protestants' sufferings at the hands of the "wild" and "heathen" Irish and also established a precedent allowing Christian Englishmen to ignore the laws of war when fighting against people England considered "barbarians."³¹ Several of these traditions, of course, contradicted one another. The lesson of "Spanish Cruelties" commanded New Englanders to shun cruelty against the Indians, while the English suppression of the Irish Rebellion suggested that cruelty against barbarians might not really be cruelty at all. Yet what linked Spanish, German, and Irish cruelties was that they were all written about at great length, and put into print. This was the lesson New England's colonists would take to heart: as the Boston poet Benjamin Tompson would write in 1676, "All cruelties which paper stained before / Are acted to the life here o'er and o'er."³²

Here, then, was the solution to the colonists' dilemma between peacefully degenerating into barbarians or fighting like savages: wage the war, and win it, by whatever means necessary, and then write about it, to win it again. The first would be a victory of wounds, the second a victory of words. Even if they inflicted on the Indians as much cruelty as the Spanish had, New Englanders could distance themselves from that cruelty in the words they used to write about it, the same way the English had when writing about the Irish. They could save themselves from both Indian and Spanish barbarity; they could reclaim their Englishness.

Recall now the scene with which we began. It is July 1676; King Philip's War is almost over. Houses have been burned, children murdered, men beheaded. The Indian population has been decimated. It could be said that many have been "torn from the peace and quiet of their own Habitations" and that many now "labour in a Tormenting Captivity." Here, English soldiers and their Mohegan allies stand in a circle while a Narragansett Indian has his fingers and toes chopped off, his legs broken, his brains dashed to the ground. No longer do the English have to imagine watching these "Spanish Cruelties." They are there; these cruelties are their own. But even here, the only proper response is the response of "true English-men": compassion, astonishment, and tears.

The way the story is told, we know that the English are disgusted by the cruelty they witness, and as both anthropologists and historians have pointed out, disgust is one way that one culture differentiates itself from another. The story's expression of disgust goes a long way toward preserving the Englishness of the soldiers present. But the other side of disgust is desire, and, despite their protestations to the contrary, clearly the English feel that, too.³³ Their disgust takes the form of revulsion, their desire fascination. While they may find it painful to watch as a young man has his fingers sawed off, they also find it pleasurable. But for an English soldier to confess his fascination, to admit his pleasure, is to become indistinguishable from the Indian beside him.

Now contrast this scene with another, the torture of several Englishmen by Wampanoag Indians in April 1676:

They took five or six of the English and carried them away alive, but that night killed them in such a manner as none but Salvages would have done. For they stripped them naked, and caused them to run the Gauntlet, whipping them after a cruel and bloody manner, and then threw hot ashes upon them, cut out the flesh of their legs, and put fire into their wounds, delighting to see the miserable torments of wretched creatures. Thus are they the perfect children of the Devill.³⁴

In this scene, where the English are the sufferers rather than the spectators, who is "savage" and who is "civilized" is much clearer. The torture is what "none but Salvages would have done." And the smug conclusion, "Thus are they the perfect children of the Devill," implies its own antithesis: "Thus are we the perfect children of God."

Yet the key to both of these scenes is not who is being tortured but who is being pleased. When the Englishmen run the gauntlet, the Wampanoags are said to be "delighting to see the miserable torments of wretched creatures."

And when the Narragansett man is butchered, the Mohegans "delight" in this "brutish and devilish Passion." "Delight" is in fact their chief sin—any good Puritan would have been familiar with Psalms 68:30: "Scatter thou the people that delight in war." Although the English soldiers watch, they make it clear that they themselves are "not delighted in Blood." This, in fact, is the only way to excuse their presence: We may be watching, they say, but that doesn't mean we like it; in fact, it makes us sick. What pleases Indian eyes pains English ones. The Mohegans encircle the tormented man so that all eyes might "be pleased" with a good view, but the English admit to no such pleasure; they can only weep at the grisly sight, "it forcing Tears from their Eyes." (These are the very same tears that, had they imagined themselves witnesses to the Spanish conquest, they would have shed in abundance.)

Instead of admitting their pleasure, the English displace it onto the Mohegans standing next to them. Again and again they point out that it is the Indians who are "delighted," not the English. But even that move is not enough. The line between Englishman and Indian is still too thin. To thicken it, the pain of the event must be displaced, too. The Indian in the middle of the circle does not himself "shew any Signs of Anguish." Instead, the English do. He bleeds but they cry. The scene is so painful to the English that it is *terrible* just to watch it. By feeling the pain of the fingerless, toeless man, feeling it even more than he does, the English onlookers put themselves in his place. Desperate to distinguish themselves from the "heathen" Mohegans, they figuratively hurl themselves back into the center of the circle, where their identity as the tormented victims of barbarous savages is reestablished. Their Englishness has been preserved.

WHAT THE ENGLISH representation of this scene utterly fails to understand, of course, is the elaborate meanings of the Indians' behavior. Yet, if the Indians' perspective on this scene goes unstated or uncomprehended in the English account, it need not remain unstated or unexamined here. Interpreted in the context of Algonquian ritual, the Mohegans, whom the English condemn for their "delight," are not enjoying the victim's agonies as much as they are admiring his stoicism, his failure to "shew any Signs of Anguish," and the circle they form has social and spiritual significance, uniting the group in collective catharsis. Since captives may have symbolically replaced a recently deceased lost tribe member, torture, for the tormentors, was both an expression of dominance and a release of mourners' emotions. And, for the sufferer who endured it, torture was a ritual of initiation, a test of perseverance, and a spiritual journey. His singing and dancing were expressions

of defiance that brought worldly respect and otherworldly rewards both to himself and to the tribe member whom he had symbolically replaced. For the Indians, then, this event was an elaborately ordered ceremony.³⁵

Nor should we allow the Narragansett man in the middle of the circle to remain nameless and speechless simply because he is so rendered in the English account. Although his identity cannot be reliably determined, some evidence suggests that he may have been Stonewall John, a Narragansett Indian named for masonry skills he acquired while living among the English. At the start of the war, Stonewall John abandoned the English, joined enemy Indians, and participated in several attacks on English towns. Most notoriously, he was thought to have coordinated the construction of an Indian fort at the Great Swamp.³⁶ And when Roger Williams attempted to negotiate with Stonewall John and other Indians during an attack on Providence in March 1676, they told him, "You have driven us out of our own Countrie and then pursued us to our Great Miserie, and Your own, and we are Forced to live upon you."³⁷

ULTIMATELY, it is not at all surprising that the English have failed to record evidence that might explain the reasons why this man, a "cruel Monster," fought against the English during the war, or to recognize the layers of meaning that might make his torturers "delight" something other than "savagage." The English account, after all, is concerned only with explaining English meanings. In that regard, its strained and twisting moral posturing is not unusual; indeed, it is typical of writing about war. A great deal is at stake when people are trying to kill one another, and the language used to write about it can be very complicated indeed. So much was at stake for the English colonists, in fact, that they had to tell stories like this over and over again. This scene, they say, is an example of "unheard of Cruelty," but it does not go unheard of for long. "*'Tis said*" that the young Narragansett man sat down silently while his torturers knocked his brains out. Said by whom? Said, no doubt, by many. Clearly, this story made the rounds. People were eager to hear it, and the soldiers were eager to tell it. Often, those who related this torture scene, or the story of the expedition of which it was a part, went out of their way to exonerate the English soldiers. The Rhode Islander William Harris claimed that the English had been "provoked by the barbarous inhumanity they have heard of: & Seen hath bin done to the English whose dead bodies they founde in the woods." Fearful that the actions of the English soldiers "Should be thought too great Severity," Harris went on to provide a detailed description of "the cruelty of the Indeans" that had so provoked them.³⁸

The account of the torture of a captured Narragansett man with which we began is that of William Hubbard, who included it in his *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England*, printed in Boston in 1677, and in London, under a slightly different title, that same year. Hubbard was a Puritan minister, but (much as he criticized Mather for hubris) he also called himself a historian. Being a historian, in Hubbard's mind, required only two things: diligence in collecting materials and faithfulness in presenting them. Most of his materials, he claimed, were "either gathered out of the Letters, or taken from the Mouths of such as were eye or ear Witnesses of the things themselves."³⁹ Hubbard probably obtained an account of the July 1676 torture scene from Major John Talcott, who led the expedition against the Narragansetts, during which, over a single two-day period, his soldiers killed 52 Indian men and 114 women and children, and took 72 captive (of such a disproportionate number of women and children, Hubbard wrote that "being all young Serpents of the same Brood, the subduing or taking so many, ought to be acknowledged as another signal Victory, and Pledge of Divine Favour to the English").⁴⁰ When one of those captured Narragansett men was tortured to death, Talcott himself may have stood in that "great Circle," entranced, tearful, repulsed.

But if Talcott stood in that circle, so did Hubbard. And so, too, in a way, did all of Hubbard's readers, Englishmen and -women on both sides of the Atlantic. Hubbard's book was widely read, especially in England, where it probably found an audience among the readers of England's popular literature of gore—tales of executions, murders, and massacres. People who read Hubbard's account might well have experienced the same set of feelings as Talcott—shameful pleasure in being witness to torture; sympathy for the suffering victim; and, most of all, condemnation of the cruel, vicious Mohegans. Compassion, astonishment, and tears. Watching this scene is different from reading about it; readers would probably have felt these things less intensely than Talcott, and certainly they would have felt safer than he. Still, the power of the event resides in its being a spectacle, and readers and spectators have a great deal in common.

Hubbard claimed to be "faithful" in presenting his materials. If an event was "variously reported by the Actors, or Spectators," he would only include those details "which seemed most probable." And yet Hubbard, we can be sure, embellished Talcott's story. First of all, as a clergyman, he felt compelled to contribute a religious interpretation: "Instances of this Nature," he advised, "should be Incentive unto us, to bless the Father of Lights, who hath called us out of the dark Places of the Earth, full of the Habitations of Cruelty." More importantly, perhaps, Hubbard worried that readers in Old and New England

might identify too much with the suffering Indian in the middle of the circle. Hubbard's telling of the story encouraged readers to affirm their Englishness by finding the Mohegan tortures appalling and by sensing the Narragansett man's pain, but Hubbard never wanted his readers to sympathize with the tormented man too strongly, or for too long. By the time Hubbard wrote his account, near the end of the war, the kind of compassion for Indian victims of cruelty that had been encouraged by "Spanish Cruelties" had been replaced by contempt. Now, the near destruction of an entire population of Indians inspired only further destruction. In August 1676, the Connecticut Council wrote of the Indians that "their wicked contrivances will doubtless incite & animate all *true Englishmen* to endeavour the confusion of such bloodsuckers, as are now, thorow God's mercy to us, totally routed in theses partes & gathered into a nett . . . ; they being but the gleanings of sundry nations that were great numbers ere while."⁴¹

To a considerable degree, the response of all "true English-men" to the Spanish conquest—compassion, astonishment, and tears—was predicated on acknowledging the Indians as human. According to a contemporary military manual, it was only because all men are "of one Nature, and deriving their originals both from one Roote," that soldiers "should behold neither mortall wounds, nor the living miseries of their subdued enemies, but with compassion."⁴² Since the question of whether colonists and Indians were "from one Roote" was at the heart of what caused King Philip's War in the first place, compassion for Indians, as for the tortured Narragansett man, could be, at best, only partial.⁴³ He was, Hubbard points out, a "Villain," treated as one might treat "a slaughtered Beast." When the Mohegans asked the tortured Narragansett "How he liked the War?" he answered, "He liked it very well, and found it as sweet, as English Men did their Sugar." For this, Hubbard called him an "unsensible and hard-hearted Monster." After all,

He might have replied, as the Scotch Gentlemen did after the Loss of a Battle, that being asked how he liked the Match (sc. with our Prince of Wales, (which then was the Occasion of the Quarrel) made Answer, he liked the Match well enough, but no whit liked the Manner of the Wooing written by such Lines of Blood.⁴⁴

This awkward, awful attempt at humor reveals Hubbard's incredible discomfort with the scene. Unaware of the significance of the Narragansett man's own biting reply, demonstrating his stoicism while mocking English dependence on imported goods (a dependence Stonewall John would have observed while living among the English), Hubbard compared it with a Scot's double

entendre, as if to say that the Indians, even in death, lack the Saxons' witicism. They, he insisted, are not like us. Whether Indians were fully human is a question writers about the war would take up again and again but would ultimately leave unanswered.

For all its awkwardness, Hubbard's account of the scene of the torture of a Narragansett man in July 1676 is both complicated and, in a sense, sophisticated. In the century and a half since the Spanish conquest, the proliferation of printing, the expansion of literacy, and the growth of nationalism combined to make for just this kind of sophistication. How these themes express themselves in all of the writing and reading about the war is the subject of future chapters. For now it's worth noting that the scene as Hubbard wrote it could only have been written when it was, in the immediate aftermath of the war. Forty years later, another English colonist, Benjamin Church, related his recollections of the war, which included a scene that seems, at least initially, very similar to the one in Hubbard's *Narrative*. Church's scene is set in March 1676, and its backdrop is almost identical to Hubbard's: with their Mohegan allies, the English have just captured an enemy Indian (this time a Nipmuck). In Church's version, however, it is the English, not the Indians, who first suggest torture, not for delight's sake but "to bring him to a more ample confession of what he knew concerning his countrymen." Moreover, instead of "gratifying" this desire, Church "interceded and prevailed for his escaping torture." Nonetheless, the Nipmuck man was sentenced to die and the Mohegan who captured him "was allowed, as he desired to be, his executioner." If this scene followed Hubbard's direction, we would now expect Church to stand by and watch, but once again, Church's story takes a different turn. While the captured man is "brought before a great fire," Church, "taking no delight in the sport, framed an errand at some distance."⁴⁵ Church refused to form a part of the circle. He simply walked away. A year after this scene took place, after the fighting had ceased, Church was sent on a mission to "scour the woods of some of the lurking enemy." There he found an old Indian man who had fled from Swansea.

The Captain asked his name, he replied, Conscience. Conscience, said the Captain, smiling, then the war is over; for that was what they were searching for.⁴⁶

Forty years after King Philip's War had ended, when Benjamin Church recorded his tales, the stakes had changed. In 1716 Church portrayed himself as a man searching for Conscience, an independent moral agent, acting on the courage of his convictions, more moral than the Mohegans, but also more

moral than the English. Benjamin Church had a different story to tell than William Hubbard. Because Church walked away, it is tempting to believe that the circle of spectatorship has been broken, that it no longer invites both eyewitnesses and readers to share in the complex pains and pleasures of cruelty. We are not Englishmen. We have not been influenced by reading "Spanish Cruelties." But still, in a sense, when we read Hubbard's account, we stand in that circle today. We can't help but be drawn into his narrative, but we can try to measure the genuineness of our compassion, the troubling fascination underlying our revulsion, and the curiosity behind our condemnation.⁴⁷