

SALEM WITCH TRIALS

English 334: American Literature



"The Trial of George Jacobs, August 5, 1692." By T. H. Matteson, 1855

PURITAN BACKGROUND

- Puritans came to the New World for religious freedom
- Puritans were Calvinists in belief: God was in charge of the Universe
- Salvation is solely within the power of God
- Those who would be saved are called *elect*
- Once elected by God, it is forever



MAP OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS, 1692

<http://www.salemwitchtrials.org/salem/witchcraft/maps/uphamla1.jpg>

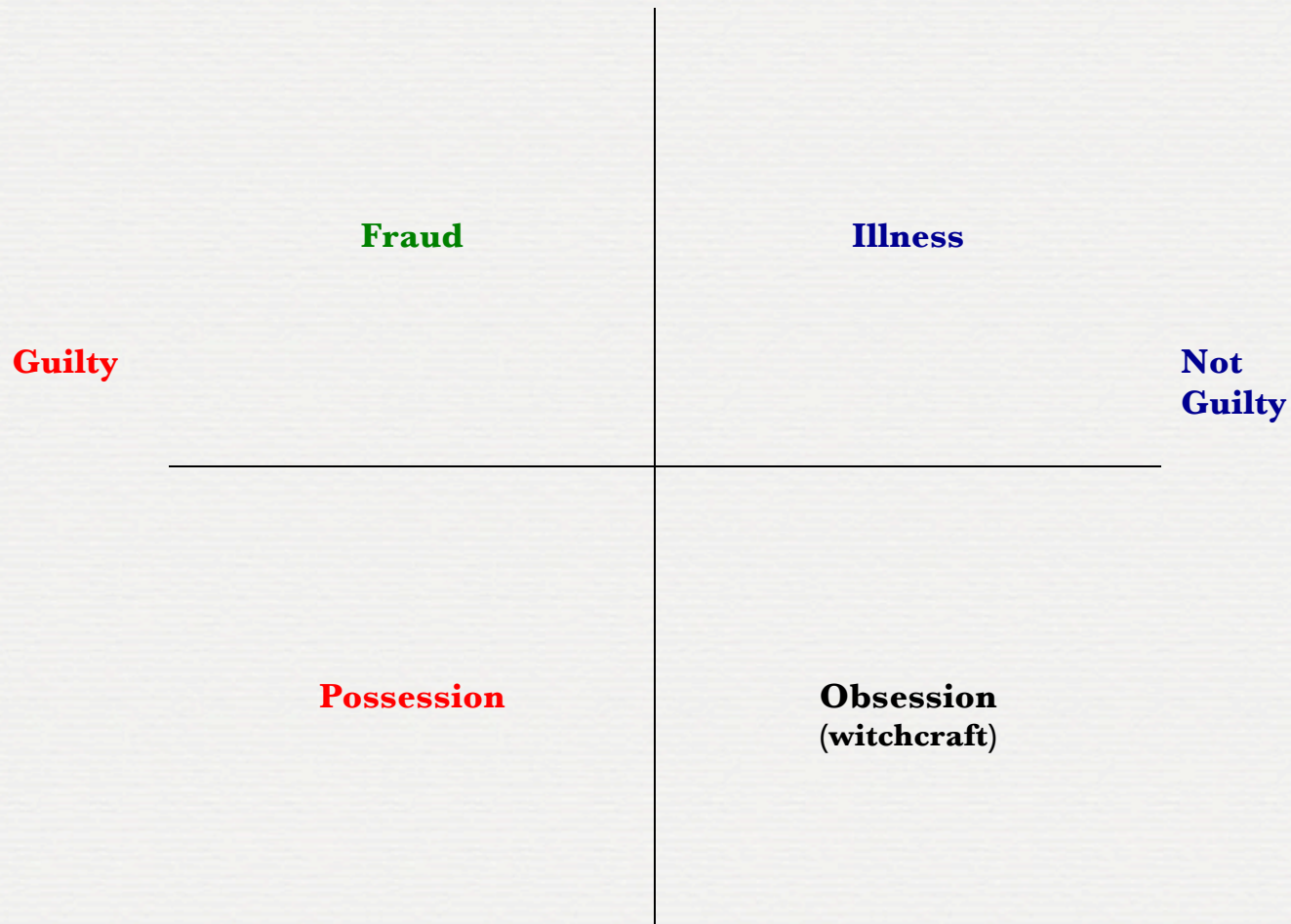
WHAT HAPPENED?

- Puritan religious society became unstable
- Churches began to relax membership and Lord's Supper requirements
- Puritans began actively looking for signs of witchcraft, which, in Salem, Mass., led to the Salem Witch Trials in 1692

WHY?

- Massachusetts Bay Charter revoked
- Colony without a government--unstable

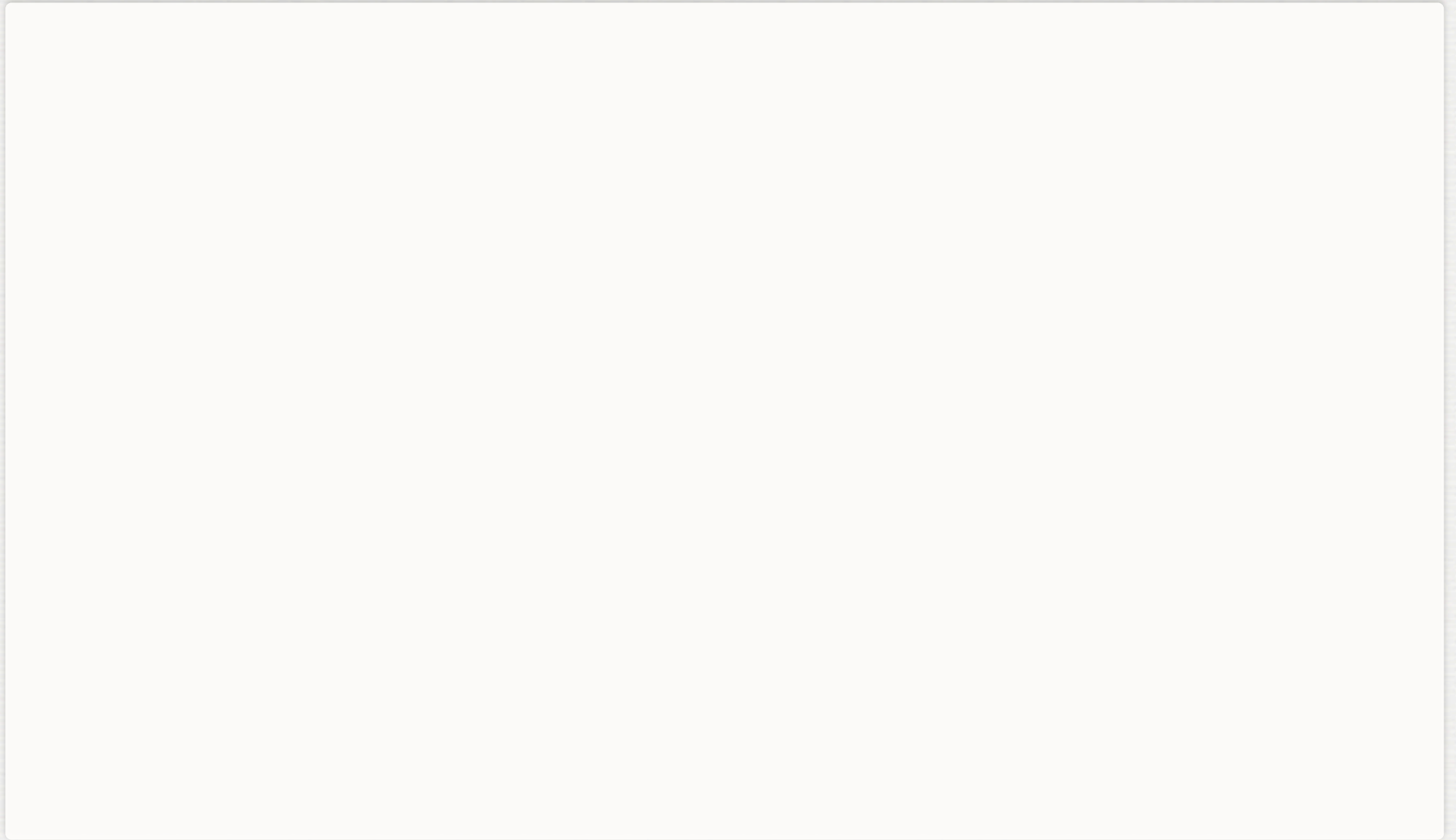
Natural World



Supernatural World

In order to attempt to make sense out of the affliction, certain procedures were followed. First, determine if the affliction is illness. If so, then affliction is of the natural world and the patient is not guilty. If the patient is faking, then the affliction is fraud and is also of the natural world. If the patient is possessed, then the patient is guilty of some sin that caused the possession and is guilty. Finally, if none of the other three categories applies, then the patient must be the recipient of obsession, in which the patient is a victim of witchcraft.

CHRONOLOGY



Abigail Williams testifies & saith that an old man that goes with
two sticks hath appeared to & hurt her many times by pinching &
bringing the book for her to get her hands unto, & the man had
his name was Jacobs the Father of Geo: Jacobs & the Grand-
father of Margaret Jacobs & he had made said Margaret
get her hand to the book & Sarah Churchwell & his son Geo:
Jacobs & his wife & another woman & her husband viz:
Mr. English & his wife . . . also that the said Margaret had
hurt her pretty much to day & at other times & brought her
the book several times to night but not before .

We whose names are underwritten testify that we heard the aforesaid
Abigail relate the charge aforesaid - this - 10. May - 1692

Jonathan Jagersoll

Jonathan 3^d also H

John

ABIGAIL WILLIAMS V.
GEO. JACOBS, SR.
10 MAY 1692

AFTERMATH

- The Witch Trials Memorial was dedicated by Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel in August 1992 as part of the Salem Witch Trials TerCentenary.
- The Memorial consists of 20 granite benches cantilevered from a low stone wall surrounding an area adjoining the Old Burying Point. The benches are inscribed with the name of the accused and the means and date of execution.

SALEM MEMORIAL

“Oh Lord help me...I am no witch”



SOURCES

- “The Trial of George Jacobs.” <<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/texts/>> 24 July 2010
- Map of Salem. <<http://www.salemwitchtrials.org/salem/witchcraft/maps/uphamla1.jpg>> 24 July 2010
- Gaustad, Edwin, and Leigh Schmidt. *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today*. New York: HarperCollins, 2004.
- Abigail Williams v. Geo. Jacobs, Sr. 10 May 1692. <<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/archives/MassHist/H31A.html>> 24 July 2010