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## **The Anatomy of Correction: Additions, Cancellations, and Changes in the Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Trials<sup>1</sup>**

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### 1. Introduction

The Salem witchcraft trials of 1692 hold a special place in early American history. Though limited in comparison with many European witch persecutions, the Salem trials have reached mythical proportions, particularly in the United States. The some 1,000 extant documents from the trials and, in particular, the pre-trial hearings have been analyzed from various perspectives by (social) historians, anthropologists, biologists, medical doctors, literary scholars, and linguists (see e.g. Rosenthal 1993: 33–36; Mappen 1996; Grund, Kytö and Rissanen 2004: 146). But despite this intense interest in the trials, very little research has been carried out on the actual manuscript documents that have survived from the trials. Instead, studies have focused on the content or language of the documents rather than the documents themselves, and these studies have almost exclusively been based on one of the many available editions. However, the manuscript documents contain a great deal of information about the context and procedure of the trials that it is not possible to glean from the currently available editions.

This article focuses on one of these previously neglected aspects of the documents, namely the corrections (i.e. additions, cancellations, changes etc.). It is evident even from a cursory investigation of the manuscript documents that many of them have been subjected to extensive correction. By discussing the extent and nature of the corrections, I will show that, if systematically studied, the corrections can elucidate a number of aspects of the Salem documents. I will be particularly concerned with what the corrections can reveal about the language of the period, about attitudes to language and about the presentation of the documents as texts. I will

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also explore what the corrections can tell us about how the documents were produced and used during the trials. The transmission (including production and use) of the Salem documents is of special importance for the burgeoning linguistic interest in the documents as sources for early American English, for the spoken language of the past, and for courtroom interaction (see e.g. Rissanen 1997; Doty and Hiltunen 2002). To contextualize the findings, I will provide a brief introduction to the Salem documents and to the treatment of the corrections in previous editions, especially Boyer and Nissenbaum (1977).

## 2. Background

### 2.1 The Salem Documents and the Corrections

The corpus of Salem documents comprises a wide range of material, including indictments, arrest warrants, examinations, and witness depositions. Most of these documents pertain primarily to the pre-trial hearings, which were held to determine whether an alleged witch should be formally charged, imprisoned, and brought to trial. Although some of these documents were also used as evidence at the actual trials, no documents taken down at the actual trial hearings at the court of Oyer and Terminer appear to have survived (Trask 1997: xx).<sup>2</sup> The different types of documents exhibit varying characteristics in terms of content, structure, and linguistic form (Grund et al. forthcoming; Grund, Kytö, and Rissanen 2004). Most of this variation can be attributed to the fact that the documents were produced in different contexts and for different purposes. Indictments, for example, are highly formalized court documents that bring formal charges against an alleged witch. Depositions, on the other hand, which relate the testimony of one or more witnesses, were mostly taken down outside court and are highly variable in structure and content (Cusack 1998: 93–94; Kamensky 1997: 206 n. 32; Upham 2000 [1867]: xxxii–xxxiv; Shurtleff 1854: 211–212).

One of the most important aspects of the documents as a group is that they were produced by a large number of recorders, at least more than a hundred (Rosenthal et al. forthcoming; Grund, Kytö, and Rissanen 2004: 157–162; Hiltunen and Peikola forthcoming).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Court of Oyer and Terminer (from French for 'Hear and Determine') was a special court appointed by the Governor, Sir William Phips, to deal with the cases of alleged witchcraft (Hoffer 1997: 70–71).

<sup>3</sup> Following the new edition of the Salem documents (Rosenthal et al. forthcoming), I have opted for the term *recorder*, since terms like *copyist*, *scribe*, *scrivener*, *notary* or *clerk* are either misleading or too narrow. Many of the recorders were not officially involved in the trials and did not have professional training in writing.

Some of these recorders were highly trained officials or clerks of the court, including, among others, such notables as the justices John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin, the court clerk Stephen Sewall, and the attorney general Thomas Newton. Some prominent members of Salem Village or Salem Town such as the minister Samuel Parris, Captain Simon Willard, and the merchant William Murray were also appointed as recorders of examinations.<sup>4</sup> However, many recorders were ordinary villagers from Salem and its neighboring towns. These villagers were primarily involved in writing their own witness depositions or helping out a neighbor or friend who did not know how to write. Some people were also responsible for writing more formal documents such as warrants and summonses as part of their official duties as constables or deputies. In some cases, these recorders can be identified, such as Ephraim Foster of Andover and William Starling of Haverhill, but the great majority remain anonymous and unidentified. As I will show later, the fact that a large number of recorders, both official clerks and ordinary villagers, produced the documents is of great importance for a discussion of the manuscript corrections.

Among the Salem recorders, there must have been a concern to provide accurate records, since the Salem documents constituted legal records that were used to build cases against alleged witches or, alternatively, to provide support for their innocence. At the same time, the accuracy of the records is called into question by a number of facts known about the people involved in producing the court documents (especially examinations and depositions) and the circumstances of recording. As Trask (1997: xx) points out, most of the recorders were not indifferent court clerks but rather people who lived in the community and shared the fear that a covenant of witches existed among them. At the time, there were also complex social, religious, and political rifts in Salem, which may have led to records being fabricated by biased recorders (Boyer and Nissenbaum 1997 [1974]: 181–186). In addition, recording courtroom proceedings entailed difficulties. For example, Samuel Parris states in his record of Rebecca Nurse's examination (Essex County Court Archives 1: 72): "This is a true account of the sume of her examanation but by reason of great Noyses by the afflicted & many speakers many things are pretermitted [i.e. omitted]."<sup>5</sup> All of these factors open the door for different kinds of inaccuracies.

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<sup>4</sup> Henceforth, unless otherwise stated, I will use *Salem* to mean *Salem Village*, present-day Danvers (MA), where most of the proceedings took place. An exception to this is the phrase *Salem documents*, which should be understood as the documents of the whole witchcraft process, that is, documents that may also have originated in other neighboring towns. For a discussion of the complex relationship between Salem Village and Salem Town (present-day Salem, MA), see Boyer and Nissenbaum (1997 [1974]).

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the accuracy and transmission of the Salem documents, see Grund (forthcoming).

The possibility of inaccuracies, especially those based on bias or deliberate distortions, raises the question of possible legal repercussions for recorders, if they were caught. There do seem to have existed safeguards in the New England legal system that would ensure accurate records. For example, legislation dictated a sentence of two months in prison or two hours in the pillory for a person who "deface[s] or rend[s]" a court document (Shurtleff 1854: 263; see also Kamensky 1997: 13). Although it is not completely clear what actions are covered by the verb "deface," the formulation suggests that fraudulently changing the content or formulation of legal records could have serious repercussions. However, I have found no evidence of this or similar laws being enforced during the Salem trials.

This earlier discussion provides an interesting background for the corrections found in the Salem documents, since correcting entails changing the content and/or formulation of documents either in response to an apparent error or possibly with the more sinister intent of "defacing" the records. The corrections demonstrate that correcting could take place during a number of stages in the legal process: when the record was taken down, at the pre-trial hearing etc. Corrections could also be made for a variety of reasons and involve anything from a letter or numeral to whole sentences or passages. It is uncertain, however, whether there were standards for how corrections responding to an error should be made, and, if such standards existed, whether they applied equally to documents originating in court (such as indictments and warrants) and to documents taken down outside court (such as depositions). In the contemporaneous English legal system, there is some information about correction standards. In Richard Chamberlain's *The Compleat Iustice*, a manual for justices of the peace, it is stated that "[t]he Judges may correct or amend any record in the Term wherein the record is to be made, but after they have no power at all over them" (1681: 318).<sup>6</sup> In this manual, records are defined as "nothing else but memorials or monuments of things done before Judges, that have credit in that behalf" (1681: 318). Although similar legal manuals were available in New England at the time and although much of the New England legal system derived from the English framework (Hoffer 1992: xi, 7), it is uncertain how applicable this case is to the Salem documents. As noted earlier, most of the documents that have survived pertain to the pre-trial hearings and are not records taken down during the trial proceedings at the Court of Oyer and Terminer. Furthermore, the ubiquity of corrections in the documents and their varied nature suggest that no such explicit

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<sup>6</sup> I have accessed this and similar manuals referred to later at *EEBO* (*Early English Books Online*).

instructions were available, or at least that the recorders were not aware of them. Whether any changes have been made with malicious intent is difficult, if not impossible, to determine with any degree of certainty.

## 2.2 Previous Editions and the Corrections

The Salem trial documents have been presented in a number of editions over the years. The most recent and widely cited edition is that of Boyer and Nissenbaum (1977), which is based on transcriptions that were made by the Works Progress Administration in 1938. However, this edition does not include all now known Salem documents; it also contains many transcription errors and neglects to record the contributions of different recorders in the Salem corpus as a whole and in single documents (Grund, Kytö and Rissanen 2004: 147–148; Hiltunen and Peikola forthcoming). To respond to this lack of a complete and reliable edition, an international team is now working on a new edition (Rosenthal et al. forthcoming). Although the impetus for this study comes from my involvement in this editorial project, my corrections project is independent.

The corrections in the documents are some of the most important features that have been neglected in Boyer and Nissenbaum (1977). Boyer and Nissenbaum provide imprecise information or, in most cases, no information at all on these corrections. I have summarized Boyer and Nissenbaum's treatment of the corrections in Table 1.

Table 1. Treatment of corrections in Boyer and Nissenbaum (1977)

<b>Boyer and Nissenbaum (1977) (B&amp;N)</b>	<b>N</b>
Correction marked in B&N as a correction (at least part of it)	172
Correction found in B&N (in some form), but not marked as a correction	1003
Correction not found in B&N (in any form)	1381
Document or document page where correction appears not found in B&N	153
TOTAL	2709

As many as 1,534 of the 2,709 corrections that I have recorded (or 57%) are not included at all in Boyer and Nissenbaum (1977).<sup>7</sup> Other corrections have been incorporated in the text with no indication that they are corrections. To illustrate the differences between Boyer and Nissenbaum and the actual documents, I provide two comparative examples. In my examples, I have given material that appears above the line within curly brackets and canceled material has been struck through (for the other transcription principles, see fn. 9). Examples 1a and 1b show how Boyer and Nissenbaum do not mark additions above the line. In fact, only about six percent (or 172 corrections) have been clearly marked as corrections in Boyer and Nissenbaum, illustrated in 2a (2b is my transcription). However, even when the correction is marked, it may not be readily obvious to a reader using the edition that '#[...]' marks a cancellation, unless he or she has also consulted the original documents: no mention of this editorial convention appears in Boyer and Nissenbaum's editorial principles.<sup>8</sup>

1a. The deposition of Eliz: booth the wife of George booth & Allies Booth who testifie and say that on the 12'th of this Isant Sept'r at the widow Shaflin's house in Salem their appeared to us a grate number of wicthes  
[Boyer and Nissenbaum 1977: 245]

1b. [Hand 1] The deposition of Eliz: booth the wife of George booth <sup>^</sup>{&} Allies Booth who testifie and say that on the 12<sup>th</sup> of this I<n>stant sept<sup>r</sup> [Hand 2] <sup>^</sup>{at y<sup>e</sup> widow Shaflin's house in Salem} [Hand 1] their appeared to {us} a grate number of wicthes  
[Essex County Court Archives 2: 91; Elizabeth Booth and Alice Booth's deposition vs. Giles Corey; Hand 1 = Thomas Putnam; Hand 2 = Unidentified hand]<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> My study of the corrections is primarily based on digitalized images of the documents available at <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/salem/home.html>. Some of the images consulted were only in black-and-white, which made it impossible to spot ink-changes. This may have led to some corrections going unnoticed.

<sup>8</sup> In a few cases, only square brackets are used without the hash '#', which also seems to signal cancellation (see e.g. Boyer and Nissenbaum 1977: 420, 702). It is unclear to what extent the Boyer and Nissenbaum system has been inherited from the earlier Works Progress Administration transcriptions.

<sup>9</sup> I have transcribed the examples from digitalized images of the original documents. In the transcription of my examples, I have followed these specific principles (adopted and adapted from Rosenthal et al. forthcoming): Superscript letters have been retained as superscript. The capitalization and punctuation of the documents have been kept. The letters 'u', 'v', 'i' and 'j' have been kept as they appear in the document. Curly brackets, '{}', signal that the feature occurs above or below the line or in the margin. Carets ('^') marking where an addition is to be inserted have been kept. Angled brackets, '<>', mark that the feature is unclear or that the transcription is uncertain to some extent. Square brackets enclose my editorial comments. '[...]' means that a passage has been left out. '[L]' means that the document is damaged and the reading cannot be recovered. Canceled material has been retained and struck through in the transcription. A superscript wavy macron, '~', signals that a mark representing 'r' preceded or followed by any vowel is found in the document. Sometimes this mark is also used to represent other letter combinations. Underlining represents my emphasis. After the example, I have added a reference to the collection where the document appears and its call number. I have also added information on the text category, witness, accused and recorder. The material in the Essex County Court Archives and Essex Institute Archive is from the

2a. I said if he wold have my thoughts i could not compair it to nothing elec but that she was riden with a hot bridil #I said also to isaac that I hered that the said  
[Boyer and Nissenbaum 1977: 447]

2b. I said if he wold have my thoughts i could not compair it to nothing elce but that she was riden with a hot bridil I said also to isaac that I hered that the said  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 331; Mary Cummings's deposition vs. Elizabeth How; written by Isaac Cummings Jr(?)]

Considering different types of corrections provides clues to the possible reason behind Boyer and Nissenbaum's exclusion of some corrections. Boyer and Nissenbaum almost always include additions above or below the line or in the margin, but they rarely mark them as additions. They exclude most (but not all) cancellations and instances of items written on top of earlier items (see 3.1 for a discussion of these categories of corrections). In most cases, the goal seems to be to present the final text, i.e. the text after it had been subjected to correction.

A strategy similar to that of Boyer and Nissenbaum is found in some of the earlier and later editions. Trask (1997), who edits a selection of texts, uses '#[]' to mark crossed-out passages, just like Boyer and Nissenbaum, but unlike them, Trask points out in his editorial principles what he uses the convention for (1997: xxiii). However, spot-checking of Trask's transcriptions reveals that he does not record all cancellations, and additions are included with no indication that they are secondary (see e.g. Trask's transcription of Essex County Court Archives 1: 52 [1997: 107]). Woodward (1864) does not mark corrections at all (as far as I can determine based on a cursory investigation of the transcriptions). He includes additions, but does not signal that they are secondary. Cancellations, erasures, and items written on top of earlier items appear to have been excluded completely. Upham (2000 [1867]) modernizes all transcriptions of the selection of documents that he includes (at least as far as punctuation, spelling, and similar features are concerned). No corrections appear to be marked in the transcriptions (as far as can be judged on the basis of spot-checking).<sup>10</sup>

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Records of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, 1692, property of the Supreme Judicial Court, Division of Archives and Records Preservation, on deposit at the Philips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. The New York Public Library material is from Miscellaneous Collections: Places (Massachusetts. Essex Co. Salem), Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

<sup>10</sup> But at least in one case, Upham (2000 [1867]: 494) notes and discusses a cancellation, in Bridget Bishop's death warrant. However, he appears to mistranscribe the canceled phrase "and buried in the pla<?>" as "and buried her on the spot." On the basis of this cancellation, he argues that the canceled phrase "is the only positive evidence we have

The omission or misrepresentation of the corrections in earlier editions has made a systematic study of the corrections impossible without recourse to the original manuscripts, and has thus, as I will show, withheld important information about the documents and how they were used.

### 3. The Anatomy of Correction

#### 3.1 Material, Definitions, and Classification

My study includes 655 Salem documents, which contain 2,709 corrections. I originally went through 899 documents pertaining to the Salem witchcraft trials. Since I was primarily interested in charting the corrections in documents produced during the trial process in 1692–1693, I excluded 127 documents that were produced after 1692–1693, primarily receipts, accounts, and petitions for restitution written in the 1710s. An additional 117 documents were excluded from further consideration after they were found to contain no corrections. The corrections found in the remaining 655 documents were fed into a Microsoft Excel database and coded along approximately 20 parameters, including type of document, type of correction, item of correction (whether letter, word, name etc.), recorder of document, and possible motivation.

In my discussion, *corrections* should be understood as *correction units*. For instance, in example 3, all the changes made (the overwriting, the cancellation, and the superlinear addition) have been classified as a single correction or correction unit since they were arguably made at the same time.

3. some time after the s<sup>d</sup> Bishop went to this Depon<sup>t</sup> and asked him whither that ['at' written on top of earlier 'e'] ~~above written~~: {which he had reported} was true that he had told to severall  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 138; William Stacy's deposition vs. Bridget Bishop; written in an unidentified hand; correction made by Simon Willard]

Furthermore, although I use the term *correction*, the implication is not that a particular change in a document was necessarily made in response to an error, though most corrections seem to be. As

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of the disposal of the bodies at the time [i.e. after execution]. They were undoubtedly all thrown into pits dug among the rocks, on the spot, [...]" (2000 [1867]: 494). Even if we disregard the mistranscription, the argument seems tenuous at best. Furthermore, he ascribes the officer's return (appended to the death warrant), where the cancellation appears, to Sheriff George Corwin, who signs the return. However, the return is written in the hand of George Herrick, one of the marshals of Salem, and it is difficult to determine whether the phrase and the subsequent cancellation of it originated with Corwin or Herrick.

I will show, rather than correcting blatant errors, some changes appear to have been made to clarify the text. *Correction* is thus simply used as a convenient umbrella term.

As evidenced in example 3, the corrections appear in different forms. There are four major correction types in the Salem documents: cancellations, additions, items written on top of earlier items, and erasure or rubbing out. All of these types are exemplified in 3, except for erasure (see below). The most common of the types is cancellation, which is accomplished by striking through an item one or more times (1,203 instances).<sup>11</sup> In the documents, anything from a letter to a whole paragraph may be canceled. The second most common strategy is addition (1,067 occurrences). Additions are found primarily above the line, but additions below the line and in the margin also occur. Like cancellations, additions may consist of one letter up to one or more sentences. The place of insertion is sometimes marked by a caret ('^').<sup>12</sup> The third type concerns, for want of a technical term, items written on top of earlier items or overwriting (659 instances). This strategy is most common for one to two letters, but examples of whole words written on top of earlier words also occur infrequently. The final category, erasure or rubbing out, is very uncommon (22 examples). This is perhaps not too surprising considering that the recorders used ink and wrote on paper, which would make rubbing out difficult.

### 3.2 Correction Categories

The corrections in the Salem documents fall into a number of different categories in terms of what has been changed and why it has been changed. Some of the categories are not completely discrete, however; rather, there is a continuum of overlapping categories, from linguistic to content-related/semantic to textual and transmissional. Because of the difficulty of classifying the corrections into clearly separate categories, my discussion will be primarily qualitative, although I will mention some approximate frequencies of the major categories.<sup>13</sup> My focus will be on corrections that inform our understanding of the language, presentation, and transmission of the

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<sup>11</sup> The total of all the instances of the correction types is not 2,709 but 2,951. The reason for this is of course that in a correction unit there may be several different types of corrections. For example, there are 161 correction units where an item has been canceled and another item has been added above the line with the intention that it should replace the canceled item.

<sup>12</sup> The recorders use the caret to varying degrees. The minister Samuel Parris employs the caret in 94% of his additions (47 of 50), whereas Sergeant Thomas Putnam, one of the most prolific recorders of depositions, uses carets in 61% of his additions (93 of 153), and the court clerk Stephen Sewall uses it in 44% of his additions (18 of 41).

<sup>13</sup> I have excluded 114 corrections completely from consideration in this regard since it is not clear what has been corrected. These are mostly cancellations (and a few instances of items written on top of each other), where the correction has made the original reading illegible.

documents rather than on corrections that enhance our understanding of the historical context or procedure of individual cases. Owing to the many complex historical issues involved it is outside the scope of this article to deal with the historical ramifications of some of the corrections, although, naturally, this does not mean that some of the corrections that I will discuss do not have historical dimensions. This focus also means that some categories of corrections will not be discussed at all in this article, such as the many changes of names in the documents, which require a separate study.

### 3.2.1 Morphology/Syntax

The most common category of correction (with approximately 700 examples) involves syntactic or morphological changes. This category is fairly broad and contains a variety of subcategories. Some morphological and syntactic changes also entail semantic shifts in that they may change the meaning of a statement (e.g. changes of modal auxiliaries, changes of voice (active/passive), additions of conjuncts such as *thus* and *therefore*). I have nevertheless included these cases in this category and reserved the Content/Meaning category (discussed in 3.2.4) for more substantial changes relating to the content or meaning.

There are a great many changes involving various word classes and constructions. However, there are fairly few changes that appear with some frequency across a number of documents. Some of the more common changes involve verb tense (approx. x20; as in example 4), pronouns (approx. x80; as in 5), and conjunctions such as *and*, *but* and *for* (approx. x60; as in 6).

4. the nayborhud were she lieued [second 'u' written on top of a 'd'] amonkes after she bered: hor fust ho{u}sbon hes tolld us that this John bibbor wife coud fall into {ffitts} as often as she plesed ['d' written on top of 's']  
[Essex County Court Archives: 2: 121; Thomas Jacobs's and Mary Jacobs's deposition vs. Sarah Bibber; written in an unidentified hand]
5. Eliz Hubbard: to y<sup>e</sup> Jury of Inquest: that Giles Cory hath several times afflicted me ["me" written on top of "her"] with several sorts of torments.  
[Essex County Court Archives 2: 89; Elizabeth Hubbard's deposition vs. Giles Corey; written by Simon Willard]
6. [...] Comitted and done before and Since that time against the peace of our Soueraigne Lord and Lady the King and Queen and their Crowne and Dignity.

[Boston Public Library, MS Am. 52; Indictment of Ann Foster; written by an unidentified court clerk]

The corrections reveal that competing morphological and syntactic variants have sometimes been substituted. It must be stressed, however, that most of these changes are insular, and there is no support for systematic changes. Nevertheless, although neither systematic nor frequent, the corrections provide supporting evidence for morphological or syntactic variation that can already be seen in the documents, and they show that some recorders chose between two variants in certain contexts. The following are only a few examples of the changes that occur. There are five changes of past participle or past tense forms. In Essex Institute Archive 24 (f. 7r), for example, the recorder changes the weak form "clouded" to the strong form "clouen" by writing 'n' on top of an earlier 'd.' Variation between different past tense and past participle forms is common in English of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and can be seen regularly in the Salem documents (Alexander 1928: 397; Kytö 2004: 140–143; see also Gustafsson 2002). There is one change in a progressive form from "going" to the now obsolete "agoing," as may be seen in example 7. In an earlier instance in the document, the same recorder uses the form without 'a' with *going*. In the Salem material in general, there is variation between the two forms (Kytö 2004: 143–144). Finally, in example 8, the recorder, Andrew Elliot, originally used the construction *six and thirty* but changed it to *thirty six*.<sup>14</sup> Kytö (2004: 150) shows that the former expression, which may be an imported East-Anglian feature, occurs in early texts written in North America, but she also states that the latter is much more common.

7. I being confident there is seuerall of them has belyed themselu[L] and others as will appeare if not in this word I am sure in the world to come whither I am now {a}going [Essex County Court Archives 1: 294; Mary Easty's petition; written in an unidentified hand]
8. The Deposition of Thomas Gage Aged aboute ~~six &~~ thirty six years [Essex County Court Archives 1: 275; Thomas Gage's deposition vs. Roger Toothaker; written by Andrew Elliot]

Substitution of one variant for another may also be made by a secondary recorder, i.e. not the recorder originally responsible for the major part of the document. In eight

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<sup>14</sup> In Essex County Court Archives 1: 151, Elliot uses the construction "eight & thirty years."

indictments, the court clerk Stephen Sewall or the attorney general Thomas Newton appears to have changed the verbal inflection by canceling the earlier court clerk's third person plural *-s* inflection, as in 9.<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to know whether the original recorder's use of the *-s* inflection is a sign of the earlier, primarily northern, third person plural inflection, or whether the use is a mistake or possibly motivated by other factors. Although a minority form, *-s* in the third person plural is found throughout the seventeenth century in text in England (Lass 1999a: 166). The cancellation of *-s* shows that the usage was not acceptable to some recorders. Apart from these examples, however, there is very little evidence of linguistic updating where competing language variants have been substituted by secondary recorders.

9. [Hand 1] The Juro<sup>s</sup> for our Sovereigne Lord and Lady the King and Queen p<sup>~</sup>esents ['s' canceled by Hand 2] That [Hand 2] John Procter of Salem in y<sup>e</sup> County of Essex husbandman [...]  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 44; Indictment of John Proctor; Hand 1 = Unidentified court clerk; Hand 2 = Stephen Sewall]

Although there is no pattern in the changes between competing variants, what is significant about many syntactic/morphological changes is that they appear to be motivated by a concern for consistency, clarity and, of course, accuracy. In example 5 above, for instance, the recorder changes from a present tense verb form to a past tense verb form. Past tense forms are by far the more common in the deposition. The tense use thus seems to have been streamlined. There are also about 150 instances where a requisite subject, verb, or object has been supplied to complete the syntax of the clause. These corrections demonstrate recorders' attention to language detail. In addition, there are about 40 instances where no change of the sentence structure seems strictly necessary, but items have been supplied all the same, probably to clarify the sentence structure and meaning (as in 10).

10. shee the sd mart<a>n came and took these deponents to do about it and revile<d> them with many foule words saying wee had took a fals oathe and ^}{sayd} that we shoold never prosper and that we shoold never prosper for our so doing:  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 183; John Pressey's and Mary Pressey's deposition vs. Susannah Martin; written by Robert Pike]

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<sup>15</sup> See Essex County Court Archives 1: 44, 1: 122, 1: 123, 1: 124, 1: 234, 1: 235, 1: 236, 1: 312.

A desire for consistency and clarity is also evidenced in some pronoun switches. In the Salem depositions, there is variation between using the first person *I/we* and the third person *he/she/it/they* to record a testimony, and mixing of the two strategies also occurs. Some corrections illustrate that a few recorders mixed strategies but then decided to go with one or the other, or they started with one strategy but decided to continue with another. A concern for both clarity and consistency seems to play a role in these cases. In 11, the Salem marshal George Herrick at first mixed first person and third person forms, but he proceeded to streamline the deposition by using third person forms consistently. In 12, on the other hand, the use of "him" at the end of the sentence could potentially have been ambiguous: the "him" earlier in the sentence is the devil, whereas the final "him" corrected to "mee" refers to Joseph Hutchinson, who is relating what Abigail Williams told him.

11. ~~William allen~~ {John Hughes} further saith y<sup>t</sup> on y<sup>e</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> day of march y<sup>t</sup> Comeing from Goodman sibley aboute Eight of y<sup>e</sup> clock in y<sup>e</sup> night hee saw a Great white dogg whome He ["He" written on top of "I"] came up to but he would not stire but when He ["He" written on top of "I"] was past hee y<sup>e</sup> s<sup>d</sup> dogg fowllowed ~~mee~~ {him} about 4 or 5 pole [Essex County Court Archives 1: 29; John Hughes's deposition vs. Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne and Tituba; written by Marshal George Herrick]
12. shee said at the first shee wos and did goe from him but now shee wos not afraid but Could talke with him as well as shee Could with him mee [Massachusetts Historical Society 37a; Joseph Hutchinson's deposition vs. Abigail Williams; written by Joseph Fuller(?)]

The examples discussed above demonstrate that there was a concern for linguistic accuracy and clarity. Interestingly, this concern is also found in documents (primarily depositions) that were presumably written by ordinary villagers. This illustrates that recorders with no formal training in writing (i.e. at grammar schools, at tutorials given by writing masters, or at a clerk office) paid attention to issues of language (for the education of the Salem recorders, see Hiltunen and Peikola forthcoming). Naturally, this does not mean that all recorders paid equal attention to language or that all linguistic constructions in the texts are syntactically accurate (whatever "accurate" was at a time when there was no standard) or transparent. Mistakes and inconsistencies do remain in the documents.

### 3.2.2 Orthography

Orthographical changes occur about 360 times in the Salem documents. Previous research has shown that the spelling of many Salem recorders was probably guided by pronunciation (e.g. Alexander 1928; Grund, Kytö and Rissanen 2004: 158–162; Kytö 2004: 134–137; Grund and Kytö forthcoming). A standardized spelling system had not yet developed in late 17th-century New England, although printed material shows tendencies of regularized orthography, influenced by standardization processes in England (Venezky 2001: 341–343). The corrections pertaining to orthography in the Salem documents demonstrate that many recorders paid attention to spelling and modified it in accordance with their own individual systems. These corrections are found in documents written by official clerks, whose language is highly regular and resembles Present-Day English in many respects, as well as in documents written by less official recorders, whose spelling systems appear to be more guided by phonetic considerations. It is clear from the corrections that many recorders strove for consistency. In example 13, for instance, the recorder changes the Present-Day English spelling of "dance" (with an 'a') to "daunce" with 'au.' In the two other instances of the verb in this document, the 'au' spelling is used.

13. After y<sup>e</sup> afflicted p<sup>~</sup>sons had accused her & y<sup>e</sup> Rest of Her Comp<sup>a</sup> w<sup>th</sup> afflicting of y<sup>m</sup> and p<sup>~</sup>ticularly Making y<sup>m</sup> da<sub>u</sub>nce & Sing Seuerall houres at M<sup>r</sup> Tylers House [...]  
[Essex Institute Archive 24 (f. 9v); Examination of Sarah Hawkes; written in an unidentified hand]

At the same time, there is also evidence suggesting that some recorders, though concerned about spelling, were not as systematic about their correction or subscribed to a system that allowed for variation. For example, in two instances (as in example 14), Thomas Putnam changes "prizon" with a 'z' to "prison" with an 's.' However, in other documents, he retains 'z,' and 's,' and even double 's' or 'sz' spellings are found in still other documents.

14. I doe beleue in my heart that M<sup>ist</sup> Bradbery is a most dreadffull wicth for sence she has been in prison ['s' written on top of 'z'] she or hir Apperance has come to me and most greuously tormented me  
[Essex County Court Archives 2: 81; Mary Walcot's deposition vs. Mary Bradbury; written by Sergeant Thomas Putnam]

In some cases, recorders may have been torn between the traditional or emerging standard spelling of a word and a spelling promoted by pronunciation. In 15, for example, the recorder first started to use a phonetic spelling ("daf" for "dafter," which occurs earlier in the same deposition), but canceled it in favor of the more common, emerging standard spelling ("daughter"). Example 16 illustrates the vacillation between 'i' and 'e' spellings, which is one of the most common patterns of spelling variation in the Salem documents as a whole (Alexander 1928: 392–393; Kytö 2004: 134–135; Grund and Kytö forthcoming). Unlike in example 15, the recorder, George Herrick, decided on a form that may have been influenced by pronunciation rather than traditional spelling.<sup>16</sup>

15. thai tould us that she was under an euil hand: our ~~daf~~ daughter tould us that when s{h}e came nere the fire or water this witch puls me in  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 325; Samuel Perley's and Ruth Perley's deposition vs. Elizabeth How; written in an unidentified hand]

16. hee ~~æf~~ verly thought that the Diuell ['i' written on top of 'e'] Came before him or behind him all the way  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 251; Elizabeth Bailey's deposition vs. John Willard; written by Marshal George Herrick]

There is very little evidence of one recorder changing another recorder's spelling, and when such changes do occur it is difficult to pinpoint who changed the spelling and when the change was actually made. As is clear from an inspection of the Salem records, some documents are the joint product of several recorders. This is particularly the case with depositions, which were usually taken down outside court, filed in court, and then read out aloud and sworn to by the witness in court (see section 2). There are examples of depositions taken down by two or more people, such as Essex County Court Archives 2: 35, which was written by three different recorders, including John Putnam Jr., a Salem constable. Many of the depositions also contain additions supplied at the end of the document. These additions were probably made when the deposition was read out in court, and additional information emerged or more witnesses stepped

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<sup>16</sup> In this case, it might perhaps also be argued that the previous 'e' was written in anticipation of the later 'e', thus making it into a copying or writing error rather than a spelling phenomenon. I have only found one other instance of Herrick using the word *devil* and then it is spelled "Diuell" (Essex Institute Archive 20). This suggests that the correction was motivated by spelling concerns.

forward. This is indicated by the fact that the passages have usually been added by one of the court clerks or people appointed by the court.<sup>17</sup> Considering these several stages, it is difficult to determine the origin and chronology of some of the changes. However, in a few cases, there is evidence that a court clerk changed the spelling, probably when the testimony was filed or when the witness swore to the testimony in court. For instance, in Massachusetts Historical Society 21b (Andrew Foster's deposition vs. Martha Carrier), the clerk Stephen Sewall changes the spelling "thire", which is normally used by the main unidentified recorder of the document, to "thiere" (possibly trying to make the spelling into "there") for Present-Day English *there*.<sup>18</sup> Sewall is probably also responsible for changing most of the spellings of Dorcas Hoar's name from "whore" to "hore," by canceling the initial 'w,' in Essex County Court Archives 1: 215, 1: 216, 1: 219, which are all written by the same unidentified recorder.<sup>19</sup> Probably, Sewall considered the spellings unclear or inappropriate.

Again, as in the case of morphological or syntactic changes, the evidence presented above does not mean that all recorders exhibit the same concern or that all recorders are consistent in their spelling strategies: variation abounds in the documents, even in one and same text. However, it does show that there were many recorders who were aware or even concerned about spelling. Since the documents were filed in court, perhaps the formality of the context of the documents made some recorders pay special attention to their spelling. This attention may stem from a sense that there was an appropriate way of spelling. However, this appropriate spelling was not necessarily a standard spelling used by all, but may have been an idiosyncratic spelling influenced by pronunciation.

### 3.2.3 Formulaic Usage/Genre Conventions

The category of Formulaic Usage/Genre Conventions comprises changes of language (and to some extent content/meaning) in formulaic use (occurring about 200 times). Not surprisingly, these changes mostly appear in the more formal documents, such as indictments, warrants, summonses, complaints, and mittimuses<sup>20</sup>. However, they are also found in the formulaic opening phrases of depositions and examinations. It is obvious that certain standards existed for

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<sup>17</sup> For examples of this, see e.g. Essex County Court Archives 1: 209, 2: 61, 2: 67.

<sup>18</sup> This unidentified recorder is also found in Essex County Court Archives 2: 45 and 2: 60.

<sup>19</sup> I am grateful to Matti Peikola for discussing this issue with me.

<sup>20</sup> A *mittimus* is an order to a jailer to remand someone to prison or a warrant of imprisonment.

what some legal documents should look like or contain (see also Grund et al. forthcoming). There is very little variation in formulation and content especially between individual indictments, but also between warrants or summonses (apart from information about the accused, the accuser or other witnesses, which necessarily varies from case to case). This similarity between the documents indicates that they were all copied from model documents, that one document was copied from another, or that there were at least instructions for the structure and appearance of legal documents. That such models or instructions must have been known to some Salem recorders is shown by the fact that many manuals for justices of the peace and lawyers, which existed in great numbers in the 16th and 17th centuries, contain model documents that are very close in formulation to the Salem documents. For example, Thomas Fidell's *A Perfect Guide for a Studious Young Lawyer* (1658: 225–236) has several examples of indictments that resemble Salem indictments. Michael Dalton's *The Covntrey Ivstice* (1619: 364–365) contains instructions on what an indictment should include. Although many of the instructions are given in Latin, if translated, the formulations are very close to those of the Salem documents. Similarly, the opening formula in depositions, which contains the name, age, and sometimes profession and place of residence of the witness, is recorded in William Brown's *The Clerk's Tutor in Chancery* (1688: 93). Although these manuals were primarily published in England and catered to an English audience, they were imported into and used in New England. According to Hoffer (1992: 7), Dalton's manual *The Covntrey Ivstice* "was the law book most often imported into the first English North American colonies." Furthermore, in 1722, a book entitled *Conductor Generalis or The Office, Duty and Authority of Justices of the Peace* was printed in Philadelphia. This book adapts earlier English manuals to American conditions (1722: *Preface* a2).

The corrections of some formulations in the Salem documents show that there was a concern that the documents should adhere to a standard format. In depositions, there are sixteen examples of corrections in the opening formula pertaining to the age, profession, or place of residence of the witness (as in 17). In most of these cases, the correction has been made by the recorder of the document, although it is difficult to determine exactly when the change was made. Perhaps it was made after the deficiency of the formula was pointed out by someone who was more knowledgeable about the conventions of writing depositions. In at least two cases (Boston Public Library 6 [MS Am49], and Massachusetts Historical Society 22a [Mercy Lewis's

deposition vs. Martha Cory]), both written by Thomas Putnam, the recorder has added the age at a later stage (as is indicated by ink differences).

17. The testimony of John derich {Agged bout 16 yeares} testifieth and saith [...] [Massachusetts Historical Society 27; John DeRich's deposition vs. George Jacobs Sr.; written in an unidentified hand]

In examinations, there are four examples of an added opening formula that states when and before which justices an examination was performed (as in 18). In two cases, the formula has been added later by the same recorder, and in two cases it has been supplied by a secondary recorder.<sup>21</sup> That this formula was necessary can be seen by the fact that, apart from the three cases where the phrase has been added at a later point, William Murray uses the formula in all his other examinations (x11). That such formulae were required in examinations is further supported by their appearance in model documents in manuals for justices of the peace, such as Richard Kilburne's *Choice Presidents upon All Acts of Parliament Relating to the Office and Duty of a Justice of the Peace* (1690: 473), and *Conductor Generalis or The Office, Duty and Authority of Justices of the Peace* (1722: 93).

18. [Hand 1] The Examination and Confession of Sam<sup>ll</sup> wardwell. [Hand 2] taken Sept 1<sup>st</sup> 92. before John Higginson Esq one of their maj<sup>ties</sup> Justices of peace for the County of Esse<x> [Essex County Court Archives 2: 59; Examination of Samuel Wardwell; Hand 1 = William Murray; Hand 2 = unidentified recorder]

As mentioned earlier, the Salem indictments are very similar in formulation and content. These documents seem to have been "mass-produced" by two clerks in particular. These clerks left gaps for personal information about the accused and the victim (name, marital status or profession, place of residence, time and place of bewitching someone etc.) to be filled in at a later point (Rosenthal et al. forthcoming; Grund, Kytö and Rissanen 2004: 149; Hiltunen and Peikola forthcoming). Deviations from the standard formulations in the indictments are normally (though not always) corrected, often by the secondary court clerk that filled in the personal information about the accused and victim. For example, in two cases, the secondary court clerk

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<sup>21</sup> Essex County Court Archives 2: 59 written by William Murray but formula added in an unidentified hand; Essex County Court Archives 2: 63 written by William Murray but formula added by an unidentified recorder; Massachusetts Archives 33 (vol. 135, p. 32) written by Simon Willard; Massachusetts Archives 39 (vol. 135, p. 37) written by William Murray.

has added the phrase "the peace of" (as in 19) in a sentence that would make sense syntactically and semantically without it.<sup>22</sup>

19. [...] [Hand 1] by the said [Hand 2] Mary Bradbury Comitted Acted [Hand 1] and done before and Since that time against [Hand 2] ^the peace of [Hand 1] our Sou<sup>r</sup> Lord & Lady the King and Queene theire Crowne and Dignity  
[Essex County Court Archives 2: 70; Indictment of Mary Bradbury; Hand 1 = unidentified court clerk; Hand 2 = second unidentified court clerk]

The phrase "the peace of" seems to be part of a legal formula. Except for the three corrected indictments, the phrase is found in 85 documents and only left out and not corrected in three indictments.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the phrase commonly occurs in the indictments shown in Thomas Fidell's *A Perfect Guide for a Studious Young Lawyer* (1658: 225–236). In his *Covntrey Ivstice*, Michael Dalton (1619: 364) states that "in these Indictments of Forcible entry, and Ryots (as also in all other indictments of felony or trespasse) it is good to say *contra pacem* [i.e. against the peace], or other words to that effect."

In seven warrants, the phrase *in/on behalf of their Majesties* is added (as in 20).

20. Whereas Complaint hath bin made by Cap<sup>t</sup> Jonathan Walcott and Thomas putnam of Salem Village vpon the 30<sup>th</sup> of Aprill Last past ^in behalfe of their Majesties against phillip English of Salem Merchant  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 170; warrant for Philip English; written by John Hathorne]

Although this phrase seems to be part of a formula used in warrants, it is not as ubiquitous in warrants as "the peace of" is in indictments. There may be several reasons for this. There appear to be different types of warrants, and the types, which vary to some extent in content and formulation, seem to be connected with different recorders, the principal recorders being the justices of the peace Jonathan Corwin, John Hathorne, John Higginson and Dudley Bradstreet (Grund et al. forthcoming). The warrants in which the phrase has been added are penned by

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<sup>22</sup> Essex County Court Archives 2: 70 and Massachusetts Archives 98 (vol. 135, p. 89).

<sup>23</sup> The phrase is absent in Essex County Court Archives 2: 1, Essex Institute Archives 2, and Massachusetts Archives 100 (vol. 135, p. 91).

Peter Grund. 2007. "The Anatomy of Correction: Additions, Cancellations, and Changes in the Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Trials." *Studia Neophilologica* 79(1): 3–24. (accepted manuscript version, post-peer review)

Hathorne (x6) and Corwin (x1), and they themselves have added the phrase.<sup>24</sup> Both justices use the phrase in other warrants, though not in all. In these warrants, the phrase appears in a particular context: it is connected with the part of the warrant relating that a complaint has been made *in behalf of their Majesties* against one or more alleged witches. That this phrase was important in connection with a complaint can be seen in Salem complaint documents, where accusers first filed their charges against a suspected witch: the phrase appears in 11 out of 14 complaints. As with the other types of documents discussed above, there is supporting evidence in justice of the peace manuals that this phrase was part of a formula (see e.g. *The Practick Part of the Office of a Justice of the Peace* [1681: 260]). The importance of the formula seems to be to anchor the complaint or warrant in royal authority. This ties in well with the notion that the crime was committed "against the peace of our Sou<sup>~</sup> Lord & Lady the King and Queene their Crowne and Dignity," as stated in most indictments (see example 17 above).

### 3.2.4 Content/Meaning

There are many changes in the document that appear to respond to an error in the content or in the sense of a statement (about 400). These changes are of great historical interest since they may inform our understanding of the course of the trial or cases against individual alleged witches. However, these changes (some more than others) are also of relevance for our understanding of the language, presentation, and transmission of the Salem documents, and they sometimes reveal the recorders' and/or witnesses' attitude to the content.

There are several instances of changes that seem to attest to a desire for textual coherence or presentation accuracy rather than primarily for historical facts (as in examples 21 and 22).

21. some time after the s<sup>d</sup> Bishop went to this Depon<sup>t</sup> and asked him whither that ['at' written on top of earlier 'e'] ~~above-written~~: {which he had reported} was true that he had told to severall  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 138; William Stacy's deposition vs. Bridget Bishop; written in an unidentified hand; correction made by Simon Willard]

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<sup>24</sup> Boston Public Library 35 (MS Ch.K 1. 40 v. 2 [400]), 43 (Ms Ch.K 1.40 v.2 [348]); Essex County Court Archives 1: 170, 1: 270, 2: 18, 2: 100, 2: 104. It is also added in one complaint document, Essex County Court Archives 2: 19. See further below for the connection between warrants and complaints. It might be speculated that all the warrants in which the phrase was originally left out were all copied from one and the same document, which lacked the phrase.

22. I pursued it w<sup>ch</sup> went into the stalks near y<sup>e</sup> house and tho it was very calm all the stalks did wave as if there had been a ~~hurricane~~ a strong wind  
[Suffolk Court Files 51, Judicial Archives/Massachusetts Archives, v. 32: p. 49, docket# 2712; John Cole's deposition vs. Sarah Cole; written in an unidentified hand]

In 21, Simon Willard probably changed the original recorder's formulation since the "written" character of the original statement did not chime well with the presentation of Bridget Bishop's "oral" statement; in other words, there was a clash between the originally spoken testimony and the written recording of it.

The correction in example 22 does not seem to be connected with the actual accuracy or veracity of the statement but rather with how a certain event is depicted. Describing the stalks as being blown around by a hurricane may have been felt to be too much of an exaggeration, whereas "a strong wind" was seen as less hyperbolic. As we saw in the discussion of morphological, syntactic and orthographical changes, consistency and clarity are of crucial importance in the documents. The same seems to hold true for content/meaning. There is a concern at least among some recorders that the content should be coherent or credible as a text or narrative.

An important question as regards content/meaning changes is whether the changes originated with the recorder of the document, with the witness, or with a secondary recorder. In most cases, there is no certain way of determining this issue since the change has been made by the same recorder that wrote the rest of the document, which obscures whether the change came from the recorder or the witness. In 22, the recorder probably made the change independently. This is indicated by the fact that "a strong wind" has not been added above the line. This means that the recorder wrote "hurricane" but canceled it immediately and went on to write "a strong wind." In 21, on the other hand, we know that the change most probably represents a later recorder's, i.e. Simon Willard's, reaction to the formulation since Willard has canceled the formulation and added a different one. Captain Simon Willard seems primarily to have been involved in the work of the jury of inquest or grand jury, which determined whether an alleged witch should be indicted and stand trial (Hoffer 1997: 85–86). (He also records a number of examinations.) In depositions, he frequently adds a note at the bottom of the document stating that the witness has sworn to the deposition before the jury of inquest or grand jury. It is likely

that the change in 21 came about when Willard encountered the formulation of the document at this stage.<sup>25</sup>

Studying changes by secondary recorders (as in 21) is very important for our understanding of the use of the documents during the course of the trials and their status as texts. Such changes underscore that some documents are not necessarily homogeneous texts written down at one point in time. Instead, the texts that we have now are the products of the whole court procedure. Appearing primarily in depositions and examinations, these changes are often made by official court clerks, such as Stephen Sewall, or people closely connected with the work of the grand jury/jury of inquest, such as Simon Willard (as in 21).

Sometimes, the changes by secondary recorders take the form of modifications, qualifications or emphases to the original statement, which may have resulted from further prodding of the witness by follow-up questions, or from independent changes by the secondary recorders. For instance, in both examples 23 and 24, the original statement is changed so that the content is toned down, qualified, or even emphasized in one way or another.

23. [Hand 1] shee was a louer of y<sup>e</sup> ministrie [Hand 2] ^in all appearanc [Hand 1] & a dilligent attender vpon gods holy ordinances  
[Essex County Court Archives 2: 83; deposition subscribed by many for Mary Bradbury; Hand 1 = unidentified recorder; Hand 2 = Robert Pike]
24. [Hand 1] The Deposition of Elizabeth Hubburd aged Seventeen years saith: that she saw Abigall Row Ester Elwell & Rebecca Dike [Hand 2] ^or three in ther likeness [Hand 1] apressing Squeezeing & choaking of mary ffitch  
[Massachusetts Historical Society *Misc. MSS* (November 8, 1692); Elizabeth Hubbard's deposition vs. Abigail Roe, Esther Elwell and Rebecca Dike; Hand = unidentified recorder; Hand 2 = Thomas Wade]

Example 23 can be interpreted in two contrasting ways. The addition of "in all appearanc" may underscore that people subscribing to the deposition or petition for Mary Bradbury could only judge according to what they have seen, implying that Bradbury might have feigned godly behavior. However, the addition may also have been made to stress the subscribers' endorsement of Mary Bradbury. In that case, the phrase should be interpreted as 'in every aspect.' Both interpretations of *appearance* seem possible (cf. *OED* s.v. *appearance* 8 and 11a). It is interesting

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<sup>25</sup> Of course, it is possible, but perhaps less likely, that the witness, William Stacy, reacted to the formulation when the testimony was read out aloud in court.

to note that the person adding the phrase is Assistant Robert Pike of Salisbury. He seems to have been a supporter of Bradbury's, since he signed a separate endorsement for her (see also Upham 2000 [1867]: 467, 620).<sup>26</sup> Although the correcting recorder had a connection with the accused, it is all the same difficult to determine which of the two interpretations presented earlier is the more likely: the correction may have originated with Pike or he may have responded to elaboration by (some of) the subscribers in court. In 24, on the other hand, the interpretation is more straightforward: the change opens up the possibility that other people may have assumed the accused people's shapes. The statement is thus made less certain. This change was made by Thomas Wade of Ipswich, a justice of the peace, in a document otherwise written by an unidentified recorder. The change was probably made when the witness swore to the testimony before him, perhaps as a result of further questioning.

A caveat should be added here. Even more changes than identified in this study as secondary may in fact be later corrections by secondary recorders. There are obvious problems of determining the status or chronology of a cancellation. In most cases, the evidence available is primarily connected with ink changes, which can be notoriously difficult to assess with certainty. A case in point is example 25. The cancellation is made in a slightly darker ink than the rest of the document. The color of ink resembles that used by the recorder who adds at the bottom of the document that an oath has been taken in court. However, the ink change may also indicate that the original recorder, Thomas Putnam, returned to the document at some point, using new ink and perhaps a writing implement with a re-cut nib. The status of this cancellation and others thus remains unclear.

25. he told me that he had seuerall books in his studdy which I neuer saw ~~for he said he had~~  
~~counjuring books~~ in his studdy and he could raise the diuell: ~~and that he had bewiethed~~  
~~his Two first wiues to death:~~  
[Essex County Court Archives 2: 25; Mercy Lewis's deposition vs. George Burroughs;  
written by Thomas Putnam; corrected by unidentified recorder]

Examples (21–25) show that the evidence given by a witness was negotiated and carefully considered, sometimes leading to changes in the formulation and a subsequent shift in focus or meaning. Attention was obviously paid even to minute details in some cases, since

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<sup>26</sup> Pike's endorsement is found in Essex County Court Archives 2: 75.

changes occur that entail only the slightest shift of meaning or that seem to be of minor importance. It is thus evident that at least some recorders strove for a clear, accurate, and credible message. This would of course have been of utmost importance in a legal process.

### 3.2.5 Clarifications

Closely related to the Content/Meaning category is the category of clarifications (with approximately 200 instances). These changes are different from most content/meaning changes in that they do not appear to respond to a perceived error in the documents; instead, they seem to clarify the meaning of a statement, responding to questions like *who?*, *when?*, *where?*, *how long/much/many?*, and *why?*. They are thus very much in line with other corrections aiming at clear exposition. Like other types of changes, these changes are sometimes made by secondary recorders, especially court clerks, who presumably considered a statement unclear in some respect or who added a clarification made by the witness after further questioning in court. Consider, for instance, examples 26 and 27.

26. [Hand 1] The depotion of Hannah Harres Aiged twenty seuen <?> yeares or thareabout<s> Testifieth and saith that she Liued at y<sup>e</sup> houc of Georg Burros [Hand 2] {a<t> falmouth}  
[Essex County Court Archives 2: 32; Hannah Harris's deposition vs. George Burroughs; Hand 1 = unidentified recorder; Hand 2 = Stephen Sewall]
27. [Hand 1] timothi Perley aged about 39 and his wife about 33 there be{ing} som diferance betwene goode how that is now seised [Hand 2] {namely Elizebeth: How: wife to James How: Jun~}  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 323; Timothy Perley's and Deborah Perley's deposition vs. Elizabeth How; Hand 1 = unidentified recorder; Hand 2 = Simon Willard]

In 26, Stephen Sewall has added the geographical location where Hanna Harris lived with George Burroughs. This addition may have been a result of further questions in court where it was probably recognized that George Burroughs, the former Salem minister, had lived in various places the last decade or so, including Salem Village, Falmouth (Maine), Wells (Maine), and Salisbury (Norton 2002: 17, 124, 131). In 27, Simon Willard adds a clarification of who "goode how" is. In both 26 and 27, the correcting recorder, Willard or Sewall, also adds a note at the end stating that the deposition has been sworn to in court or before the jury of inquest. Clarifications

like these, whether made by the original recorder or by a secondary recorder in court, ensured that the statement was as clear as possible and left as little room for ambiguity as possible. Details like these may have been crucial in some cases since the documents were used in court to provide support for the innocence of alleged witches or to build cases against them.

### 3.2.6 Copying/Writing Errors

The category of Copying/Writing Errors (occurring about 500 times) contains several subcategories. It covers corrections of fairly mechanical errors such as dittography, lack of writing space, and false starts or anticipations. I have given this category the double name of copying/writing error since it is not always clear whether a particular error should be ascribed to copying from an earlier source, to the difficulties of recording an oral testimony, or to mental skips in the composition of a text. If detectable, possible copying errors are of great interest in revealing the transmission of the Salem documents (cf. Kytö 2000: 279–281). There is still a great deal of uncertainty about this aspect of the documents. Many of the examination records ultimately derive from (short-hand) notes taken down by one or more recorders in court. That copying of full-text examinations was also taking place is shown by the fact that we have two copies of some examinations, one copied from the other or both copied from a third document. However, it is not clear in most cases what stage (i.e. second or third-hand copy etc.) the texts that we have today represent (see Grund forthcoming). Many official documents, like indictments and summonses, were written down from model documents or from instructions about what a particular document should look like or include (see 3.2.3). The transmission of the depositions, on the other hand, remains unclear. In this discussion, I will focus on evaluating what evidence the corrections provide for re-copying of documents.

In the Salem documents, several types of corrections exist that appear to point to the existence of earlier extensive notes or full-text versions. In general, the number of corrections in most documents, especially depositions and examinations, is relatively low. If the texts represented direct records of testimonies, more corrections would have been expected, signaling the recorders' struggle to record what was delivered orally by the witnesses. However, there is also more direct evidence for copying from earlier versions. There are many instances of dittography in the Salem documents where the same letter(s), word(s) or phrase(s) may appear next to each other. In about 130 cases, these instances have triggered a cancellation of one of the

instances. Dittography errors are common in manually copied texts and are usually attributed to a copying mistake from an exemplar (Petti 1977: 30). In my subsequent discussion, I will focus on the corrected examples of dittography.

Most of the 130 corrected examples found in the Salem documents are fairly short (mostly a word) and frequently occur at line breaks. It is of course possible that these, or at least some of them, are not copying errors but rather mental mistakes by the recorder composing the text, especially if he was distracted by a line break. However, there are also longer, clearer instances of dittography where it is unlikely that the doubling of a phrase stems from a compositional mistake. These instances may in turn suggest that most one-word occurrences are likewise the result of copying errors. The corrected dittography examples occur in all types of documents, but most commonly in examinations and depositions. That copying errors of this kind appear in examinations and some of the official documents (e.g. indictments and warrants) supports what is known about the copying and writing of these documents from other sources (as shown above). More interesting is the fact that they also occur in depositions, as in 28 and 29, where Stephen Sewall and an unidentified recorder repeat phrases. As we will see later, this is evidence indicating that, like the examinations, depositions were also written from extensive notes or from earlier copies.

28. when y<sup>e</sup> Majestrates. were Examining George Jacobs his Granddaughter and understanding that She had Confessed ~~that she had Confessed.~~ I this deponent went into y<sup>e</sup> other room where George Jacobs was  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 230; Joseph Flint's deposition vs. George Jacobs Sr.; written by Stephen Sewall]

29. Googe Jacobs and his wife afflicting of hur the last lords day and tempting the said Shellten to sete hur ~~to sete~~ hand ['han' changed from 'hur'(?)] to the booke  
[Essex County Court Archives 1: 241; Susannah Sheldon's deposition vs. George Jacobs Jr. and Rebecca Jacobs; written in an unidentified hand]

Anticipations of words or passages that appear later on in the text are other instances of corrections pointing to copying errors. As in the case of dittography, many of these examples cannot for certain be attributed to a *copying* error. Shorter phrases and letters, for example, may only represent mental skips, where the recorder was thinking ahead of what to write next. However, longer, clearer cases also occur, as in examples 30–32. In 30 and 31, there are clear

eyeskip: "200" to "200" and "hur" to "hur" respectively. In 32, there is probably a skip from *-ly* ("greviously") to *-ly* ("vehemently").

30. [...] but knew not exactly how many their might be 200: ~~& they eat white bread & drank wine that was red:~~ & there was a minister: there that sayd he <w>as to be excicuted: but he was Jolly Joyfull enough: he bid them doe as he did not confess & they should be happy: she ownd y<sup>t</sup> once she had bin at y<sup>e</sup> Villadge meeting of witches & they <had> a sacrement: & there was 200 there ~~& they eat bread y<sup>t</sup> was white & drank wine that was red:~~

[Suffolk Court Archives 35 (2705, vol. 32, p. 28); Examination of Susannah Post; written by Simon Willard]

31. & she always profesing hur Inosency y<sup>r</sup>in offen desiring my <sup>^</sup>{ouer} prayers to god for hur ~~in his fear & supporte hur under y<sup>t</sup> burdin~~ y<sup>t</sup> god would keep hur ~~in his fe<ar>~~ & y<sup>t</sup> god would support hur under hur burdin

[Essex County Court Archives 1: 329; Daniel Warner Sr.'s, John Warner Sr.'s and Sarah Warner's deposition in support of Elizabeth How; written in an unidentified hand]

32. she fell upon me most greviously ~~to writ in hir book~~ almost redy to kill me urging me vehemently ~~to writ in hir book~~

[Massachusetts Archives 44, SC1/Series 45X, v. 135: p. 42; Ann Putnam Jr.'s deposition vs. Sarah Buckley; written by Thomas Putnam]

These examples and others thus support the notion that some documents, including depositions, could be at least secondary copies or that documents may have been produced from fairly extensive notes (cf. example 30 and the discussion of example 34 below). Seemingly, even depositions taken down by unofficial recorders, i.e. not court clerks or people closely involved in the work of the court, are secondary either to notes or to a previous more or less full-text version. Examples 33a and 33b, two depositions, are probably evidence of the latter: one deposition being copied from another, or one deposition used as a model for another. Judging by the phonetically-oriented orthography and the handwriting of the recorder, who is the same in the two documents, he belongs to the group of unofficial recorders taking down depositions rather than to the official clerks or more tutored recorders. The corrections in the second document involving the plural and singular pronouns ("th<a>m," "thare," and "hure," "hure") are strong evidence that 33b was copied from or modeled on 33a. However, it should be noted that, if 33b is a copy of 33a, it is not a slavish copy (although it is very close); it changes some spellings and adjusts some of the text to fit the fact that 33b deals with one alleged witch and not two as in 33a. Another, perhaps stronger, possibility is that 33a and 33b were copied from one and the same exemplar since 33a

ends with the phrase "this is truee cop<i>e." If they are copies of the same text, the closeness of formulation shows that they most likely derive from a full-text version rather than notes.<sup>27</sup> (Note that 33b is badly torn. I have indicated the places of damage by inserting '[L]' for *Lost*. I have changed the lineation of the documents to facilitate comparison.)

33a) Essex County Court Archives 1: 296; John and Mary Arnold's deposition for Mary Easty and Sarah Cloyse	33b) Essex Count Court Archives 1: 289; Thomas and Elizabeth Fosse's deposition for Mary Easty
These May Cartify home it may. Consarne that wee hous names are vnderritten bein<g> dasired by sum of the Realeations of {mary} estwek and Sareh Cleise to giue ou[L] obsarvation how thay behaued t<h>am sal<u>s while thay <del>ware</del> {Remained} in B[L]torn prison we dow affirme [L]<h>at wee [L] sow noe ill carreg or Behauor in <u>tham</u> But that <u>thare</u> daportmon<t> wose varey s<a>bere and ciuell as wittnes our hands	thes may sartifie home it may c[L] that wee hows names are vndorrit[L] Being dasired by sume of the Realeations o<f> marey estweke to giue our obsarvation how she behaued hur self while she Reamai<ned> in Ipswech prison we dow afarme th[L] wee sowe noe ell carreg or behau[L] <del>th&lt;a&gt;m</del> {hure} but <del>thare</del> {that hure} daportmont wose [L] sobor and ciuell as wittnes our ha[L]

Whereas 33a and 33b evidence a deposition or even depositions copied from a full-text exemplar, there might also be evidence for notes being the source of a deposition. In 34, the recorder John Hathorne probably skipped from "the Same" to "the Same" in his exemplar, but, realizing his mistake, he deleted the passage and started over with "the Same afternoone." However, as may be seen in the example, when the information is repeated later in its proper place, it is phrased slightly differently. This would make sense if he only had approximate notes, and perhaps considered some of the information irrelevant. However, even in this case it cannot be ruled out that a full-text version lies behind the deposition.<sup>28</sup>

34. And S<sup>d</sup> King seemeing to mee to be in a passion. I did afterward forbear. ~~The Same Euening after these words being alone in <sup>a</sup>{one Roome of} my house and noe candle or light being in y<sup>e</sup> Roome~~ the Same afternoone I haueing Occation to be at the S<sup>d</sup> Beadles house again I was {and being} in the Chamber where m<sup>r</sup> George Burroughs Keep and I Observed y<sup>t</sup> s<sup>d</sup> Burroughs did [one illegible word canceled] {stedfastly} fix his Eys vpon

<sup>27</sup> It must be acknowledged that 33a and 33b are more formulaic in formulation than most Salem depositions. However, the Salem depositions vary a great deal in formulation and content, perhaps because of the number of recorders involved, who, presumably, were not all equally well versed in writing depositions.

<sup>28</sup> Another possible interpretation is that the deposition is a direct recording of Keyser's testimony. Half-way through the account of being alone in his room, he remembered something prior to the evening's event and broke off the narrative to insert this event, thus triggering Hathorne's cancellation. However, this seems unlikely since the number of corrections in the document is otherwise very low.

mee, the same Eueneing being in my own house, in a Roome and noe without any Light I did see very strange things appeare  
[New York Public Library, Miscellaneous Collections: Places (Massachusetts. Essex Co. Salem) Manuscripts and Archives Division, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation; statement of Elizar Keyser vs. George Burroughs; written by John Hathorne]

The transmission of the Salem documents, in particular of the examinations and depositions, is of special importance for the burgeoning linguistic interest in the documents. There are several recent articles exploring the documents as possible witnesses of the spoken language of the past and of actual courtroom interaction (see e.g. Rissanen 1997 and 2003; Archer 2002; Doty and Hiltunen 2002). However, the evidence presented above suggests that the text versions that we now have are several stages removed from what the witnesses actually said, since the testimony has traveled from the witness's oral testimony to recorder's notes and/or to one or more stages of copying. These texts are thus similar to most medieval and early modern texts that circulated in manuscript format. This kind of transmission opens the door for textual changes at many stages and hence possible "corruptions" of the original spoken testimony (see also Kytö and Walker 2003). A more detailed study that considers evidence other than corrections exclusively, such as multiple copies of the same text, is clearly required (see Grund forthcoming).

#### 4. Summary and Conclusion

It is clear from my earlier discussion that a systematic study of the corrections in the Salem documents can elucidate a number of aspects of the documents and their context. I have shown that the corrections can provide additional information on the variation between competing morphological and syntactic variants, although there were no frequent quantitative patterns. Most of the corrections pertaining to morphology and syntax seem to reveal a desire for consistency, clarity, and linguistic accuracy. The same trend was also obvious in orthography: in choosing between two possible spellings, some recorders opted for consistent spelling patterns. However, the patterns do not necessarily reflect the traditional spelling of a word; rather, they may exhibit pronunciation influences. It is possible that some recorders of the documents paid special attention to language issues owing to the formal legal context of the documents. However, it is also important to recognize that all recorders do not show a similar concern for consistency,

clarity, or accuracy. Rather, inconsistent, unclear and "inaccurate" usage still remains in the documents.

Among recorders of formal court documents (such as warrants and summonses) and to some extent of other documents (such as depositions and examinations), there appears to have been a concern that the documents should adhere to certain conventions, which has led to the addition of a number of legal formulae. Perhaps these formulae were even seen as necessary for the documents to have proper legal force.

Although most corrections seem to have been made by the same person that wrote the main part of the document in which a correction appears, there are also changes made by secondary recorders. In particular, there is plenty of evidence for official clerks or officials of the court changing linguistic or content-related features of documents written by unofficial recorders. These changes were presumably made when the documents (primarily depositions and to some extent examinations) were filed in court or when the testimony was read out and sworn to in court. This underscores that the documents are the products of the whole court procedure and that, to a certain degree, the content and language of some documents resulted from several stages of writing.

Evident from a large number of corrections is that many documents are based on earlier full-text versions of the text or on extensive notes. Instances of dittography and anticipation clearly demonstrate that not only examinations and formal court documents like indictments and warrants, but even depositions written by ordinary villagers were copied from exemplars and/or notes. This is a crucial feature to consider when the documents are used for linguistic research. The original language of the witnesses and other court participants may have been filtered through several recorders, and the language of the final document is thus a mixture of several usages.

This study highlights that information valuable to our understanding of the language and context of the Salem documents can be obtained from investigating aspects of the manuscript trial documents. Many of the manuscript features still remain unexplored, including the role and contribution of different recorders in the Salem corpus, paleographic characteristics of the documents (paper, watermarks etc.), and, as mentioned above, the transmission of the documents. These characteristics will undoubtedly provide vital clues to our understanding of the Salem trials and the language of the documents.

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