

CHAPTER 7: “THE GOVERNOR’S HALL”

WORDS

burnished	forsooth	jurisdiction
caprice	garb	morbid
cuirass	gauntlets	pacified
dauntless	gorget	panoply
draught	greaves	proprietor
exigency	heirlooms	scorn
extant	ignominy	sombre
folio	ingenuity	tome

QUESTIONS

1. Name 2 reasons Hester visits Governor Bellingham.
2. *Explicate*:
The brilliancy might have befitted Aladdin’s palace, rather than the mansion of a grave old Puritan ruler.
3. Describe the hall of portraits in Bellingham’s house. What seems to be the purpose of the paintings? What might Hawthorne be saying about family history?
4. What is interesting about Bellingham’s suit of armor? What was it used for (ie., what was the Pequod War)? Why is Hawthorne connecting Bellingham to that war?
5. How does the breastplate function like a mirror? What peculiar effects does it create?
6. Combine the answers to the previous two questions into an analysis of the armor’s symbolic value and how it in (symbolically) controls and manipulates Hester and Pearl.
7. How are the Scarlet Letter and Pearl alike?

NOTES

the Chronicles of England: Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, London, 1577

Pequod war: The Pequot War (1637): the Pequot Indians occupied the Connecticut River Valley. In 1636 the Massachusetts settlers charged a Pequot with murdering John Oldham, a member of the colony. They burned a Pequot village in revenge. The next year, with the help of the Narragansett, the colonists attacked an Indian village and burned alive 600-700 Indians; most of the surviving Pequots were sold into slavery in Bermuda. Cotton Mather called this ‘a sweet sacrifice, and... gave praise to thereof to God’. Hawthorne appears to have adopted his spelling of several names from Felt’s *Annals*: *Pequod* rather than *Pequot*, *Endicott* rather than *Endecott*, Ann Hutchinson rather than *Anne Hutchinson*. Please see the extended note on the “Pequot War”.

Bacon, Coke, Noye, and Finch: Bacon, Sir Francis (1561-1626), eminent writer, scientist (natural philosopher), and proponent of education; Coke, Sir Edward (1552-1634); Noye William (1577-1634); Finch, Sir John (1584-1660)... all made important contributions to English Common Law.

Pequot War (from Wikipedia)

CAUSES FOR WAR

Before the war's inception, efforts to control fur trade access resulted in a series of escalating incidents and attacks that increased tensions on both sides. Political divisions between the Pequot and Mohegan widened as they aligned with different trade sources-- the Mohegan with the Puritan English, and the Pequot with the Dutch. The Pequot attacked a group of Mattabesic Indians who had attempted to trade at Hartford. Tension also increased as Massachusetts Bay Colony began to manufacture [wampum](#), the supply of which the Pequot had controlled up until 1633.

In 1634, John Stone, a smuggler, privateer, and slaver, and seven of his crewmen were killed by the Western Niantic, tributary clients of the Pequot, in retaliation for atrocities committed by the Dutch, and more recently, by Stone. A principal Pequot Sachem, Tatobem, had boarded a Dutch vessel to trade. Instead of conducting trade, the Dutch seized the Sachem and demanded a substantial ransom for his safe return. The Pequot quickly sent a bushel of wampum, and received Tatobem's corpse in return.

Stone, the privateer, was actually from the West Indies and had been banished from Boston for malfeasance. Setting sail from Boston, Stone had met his end near the mouth of the Connecticut River while kidnapping Western Niantic women and children to sell as slaves in Virginia Colony. Colonial officials in Boston protested the killing. The Pequot Sachem, Sassacus, refused the colonials' demands that the Western Niantic responsible for Stone's death be turned over to them.

Then on July 20, 1636, a respected trader named John Oldham was attacked on a trading voyage to Block Island. He and several of his crew were killed and his ship looted. To this day, it is unclear who was responsible for John Oldham's death. In the aftermath of the Pequot War, the Pequot were implicated in the trader's death. However, in the weeks following, in the eyes of colonial officials from Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, the Narragansett were the likely culprits. Knowing that the Indians of Block Island were allies of the Eastern Niantic, who in turn were allied with the Narragansett, Puritan officials became equally suspicious of the Narragansett. Even so, the colonial English response to Oldham's death, the last in a series of escalating incidents, has traditionally been viewed as the beginning of the Pequot War.

BATTLES

News of Oldham's death became the subject of sermons in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In August, Governor Vane sent John Endicott to exact revenge on the Indians of Block Island. Endicott's party of roughly 90 men sailed to Block Island and attacked a Niantic village there. Most of the Niantic escaped, but 14 were killed, while two of Endicott's men were injured. The Puritan

militia burned their village to the ground. Whatever crops the Niantic had managed to store for the winter which the English could not carry away with them were burned as well. Endicott then went on to Fort Saybrook.

The Puritans at Saybrook were not happy about the raid, but agreed that some of them would accompany Endicott as guides. Endicott sailed along the coast to a Pequot village, where he repeated the previous year's demand of payment for the death of Stone and more for Oldham. After some discussion, Endicott concluded that the Pequot were stalling and attacked. The Pequot ruse had worked however, and the Pequot were able to escape into the woods. The former Puritan Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony once again had to content himself with burning an Indian village and crops before sailing home.

PEQUOT RAIDS

John Endicott's Massachusetts Bay Colony forces had gone home, but Connecticut Colony Puritans were left to deal with the anger of the Pequot. The Pequot attempted to enjoin their allies, some 36 tributary villages, to their cause but were only partly effective. The Western Niantic joined them but the Eastern Niantic remained neutral. The traditional enemies of the Pequot, the Mohegan and the Narragansett openly sided with the Puritan English. The Narragansett had warred with and lost territory to the Pequot in 1622. Now their friend Roger Williams urged them to side with the English.

Through the fall and winter, Fort Saybrook was effectively besieged. Any who ventured outside were killed. As spring arrived in 1637, the Pequot stepped up their raids on Connecticut Colony towns. On April 12, during a raid on Weathersfield, the Pequot killed nine men and women, a number of cattle and horses, and took two girls hostage. In all, the towns lost about 30 settlers.

In May, leaders of Connecticut Colony's river towns met in Hartford, raised a militia, and placed John Mason in command. Mason set out with 90 militia and 70 Mohegan warriors under Uncas to repay the Pequot. At Fort Saybrook, Mason was joined by John Underhill and another 20 men. Underhill and Mason proceeded to the principal Pequot village, near present-day Groton, but the Pequot chose to defend their fortified village. Ill-equipped to take it, Mason sailed east, and stopped at the village of Misistuck (Mystic).

THE MYSTIC MASSACRE

Believing that the English had returned to Boston, Massachusetts, the Pequot sachem Sassacus took several hundred of his warriors to make another raid on Hartford. But John Mason had only gone to visit the Narragansett, who joined him with several hundred warriors. Several allied Niantic warriors also joined Mason's group. On May 26, 1637, with a force up to about 400 fighting men, Mason attacked Misistuck by surprise. He estimated that

"six or seven Hundred" Pequot were there when his forces assaulted the palisade. Some 150 warriors had accompanied Sassacus, so that Mystic's inhabitants were largely comprised of Pequot women and children. Surrounding the palisade, Mason ordered that the enclosure be set on fire. Justifying his conduct later, Mason declared that the holocaust against the Pequot was also the act of a God who "laughed his Enemies and the Enemies of his People to scorn making [the Pequot] as a fiery Oven . . . Thus did the Lord judge among the Heathen, filling [Mystic] with dead Bodies." Mason also insisted that should any Pequot attempt to escape the flames, that they too should be killed. Of the 600 to 700 Pequot at Mystic that day, only seven were taken prisoner while another seven made it into the woods to escape.

The Narragansett and Mohegan warriors who had fought alongside John Mason and John Underhill's colonial militia were horrified by the actions and "manner of the Englishmen's fight . . . because it is too furious, and slays too many men." Repulsed by the "total war" tactics of the Puritan English, and the horrors that they had witnessed, the Narragansett returned home.

Believing the mission accomplished, John Mason also set out for home. The militia became temporarily lost, but in doing so Mason narrowly missed returning Pequot Indians who, seeing what had occurred, gave chase to the Puritan forces to little avail.

PURITAN HUNTING PEQUOT

The slaughter at Mystic broke the Pequot, and deprived them of their allies. Forced to abandon their villages, the Pequot fled -- mostly in small bands-- to seek refuge with other southern Algonquian peoples. Many were hunted down by the Mohegan and Narragansett warriors. The largest group, led by Sassacus, was denied aid by the Metoac (Montauk, or Montaukett) from present-day Long Island. Sassacus led roughly 400 warriors west along the coast towards the Dutch at New Amsterdam and their Native allies. When they crossed the Connecticut River, the Pequot killed three men that they had encountered near Fort Saybrook.

In mid-June, John Mason set out from Saybrook with 160 men and 40 Mohegan scouts under Uncas. They caught up with the refugees at Sasqua, a Mattabesic village near present-day Fairfield, Connecticut. Surrounded in a nearby swamp, the Pequot refused to surrender. Several hundred, mostly women and children, were allowed to leave with the Mattabesic. In the ensuing battle, Sassacus was able to break free with perhaps 80 warriors, but 180 of the Pequot were killed or captured.

Sassacus and his followers had hoped to gain refuge among the Mohawk in present-day New York. However, the Mohawk had seen the display of English power and chose instead to kill Sassacus and his warriors, sending Sassacus' scalp to Hartford, as a symbolic offering of Mohawk friendship with Connecticut Colony. Puritan colonial officials continued to call for the merciless hunting down of what remained of the Pequot months after war's end.

AFTERMATH

In September, the victorious Mohegan and Narragansett met at the General Court of Connecticut and agreed on the disposition of the Pequot and their lands. The agreement, known as the first Treaty of Hartford, was signed on September 21, 1638. Those Pequot who had survived the war and genocidal massacre at Mystic were distributed as slaves to the Mohegan, Narragansett and the Metoac. Others were enslaved and shipped to the West Indies or were forced to become household servants in Puritan households in Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay. Moreover, colonists appropriated Pequot lands under claims of a "just war", and attempted to legally extirpate the Pequot by effectively declaring them extinct and making it a crime to speak the name Pequot. Those few Pequot who managed to evade death or slavery were later recovered from captivity from the Mohegan and assigned reservations in Connecticut Colony.

This was the first instance wherein Algonquian peoples of what is now southern New England encountered European-style warfare. The idea and reality of total war was essentially new to them. After the Pequot War, the uneasily allied colonies represented such a power that no Native alliance could stand against them for a generation. In 1675, a fairly long period of peace came to an end with King Philip's War.