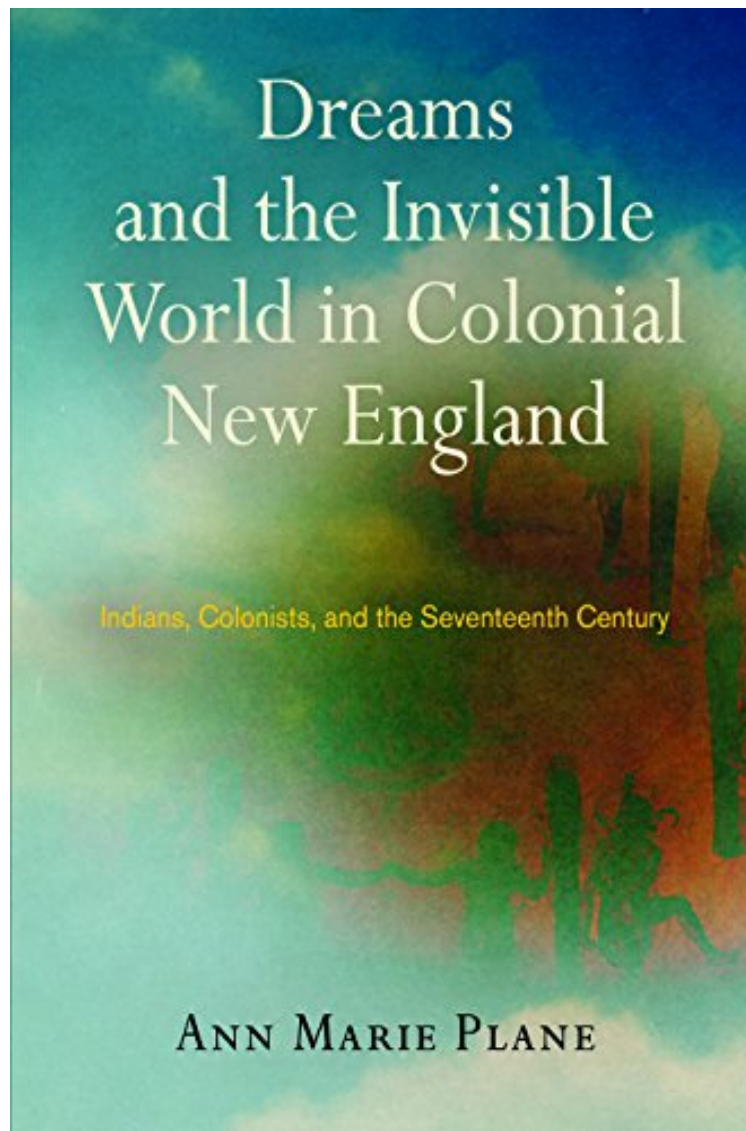


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Dreams and the Invisible World in Colonial New England: Indians, Colonists, and the Seventeenth Century

Ann Marie Plane

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Dreams and the Invisible World in Colonial New England: Indians, Colonists, and the Seventeenth Century:

From angels to demonic specters, astonishing visions to devilish terrors, dreams inspired, challenged, and soothed the men and women of seventeenth-century New England. English colonists considered dreams to be fraught messages sent by nature, God, or the Devil; Indians of the region often welcomed dreams as events of tremendous significance. Whether the inspirational vision of an Indian sachem or the nightmare of a Boston magistrate, dreams were treated with respect and care by individuals and their communities. Dreams offered entry to "invisible worlds" that contained vital knowledge not accessible by other means and were viewed as an important source of guidance in the face of war, displacement, shifts in religious thought, and intercultural conflict. Using firsthand accounts of dreams as well as evolving social interpretations of them, *Dreams and the Invisible World in Colonial New England* explores these little-known aspects of colonial life as a key part of intercultural contact. With themes touching on race, gender, emotions, and interior life, this book reveals the nighttime visions of both colonists and Indians. Ann Marie Plane examines beliefs about faith, providence, power, and the unpredictability of daily life to interpret both the dreams themselves and the act of dream reporting. Through keen analysis of the spiritual and cosmological elements of the early modern world, Plane fills in a critical dimension of the emotional and psychological experience of colonialism.

"With a fresh interpretation of an understudied phenomenon, this book makes important contributions to the history of cultural contact, the history of lived religion in Puritan New England, gender studies, and the nascent field of history of the emotions and interior states of subjectivity." Susan Juster, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor "A fine work of scholarship. Plane makes a significant contribution to Native American historiography, offering a uniquely fine-grained assessment of the worldview of Native New Englanders and English settlers, whose lives were not separate but intricately entangled." Matthew Dennis, University of Oregon

About the Author Ann Marie Plane is Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and is a Training and Supervising Analyst at the Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles. She is coeditor of *Dreams, Dreamers, and Visions: The Early Modern Atlantic World*, also available from the University of Pennsylvania Press.

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Preface Sometime in March or April 1629, an English silversmith cast "2 seales in silver" for the newly formed Massachusetts Bay Company. Shortly thereafter, Samuel Sharpe, a passenger on the *George*, carried one of the two official stamps to the rocky shores of Massachusetts Bay. The following year, Governor John Endecott brought the other along with the official notice of his election, stamped in wax with the seal's imprint. On the seal, inside an oval field, stands a human figure bracketed by two pine trees, with copious foliage gathered strategically to hide the otherwise unclad midsection. The figure bears a bow in one hand, an arrow in the other. Much has been made of this stark image. Its deceptively simple design hides a world of meanings. As one scholar notes, the seal was intended "to define the colonizers and their mission," and it is undeniably true that the seal represents the Indians of Massachusetts Bay, or at least an English silversmith's version of them. Generations of undergraduates have written indignant response papers about the plea that emanates in a banner from the central figure's mouth ("Come Over and Help Us"). The best of them rail at the condescension and arrogance of Europeans who would assume that the Algonquian-speaking indigenous peoples of Massachusetts would have either needed or wanted such help. Further, the absurdity of calling for it in English is highlighted only by the most perceptive. But like so many seemingly transparent issues, the 1629 seal becomes more complicated on deeper acquaintance; and like most things involving the English colonists of Massachusetts, the most pressing reference even in the unstable present of the seventeenth century always referred back to the certainties of the past. This was a past known through scripture, a biblical past whose resurgence in the present was both eagerly sought and breathlessly awaited. For the legend emanating from this Algonquian Indian's mouth had been spoken before. Also known as the Macedonian Plea, it would have been instantly familiar both to puritan gentlemen and English silversmiths through Acts 16:9: "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." The passage continues: "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." Translators who put together the Genevan version of the Bible (preferred by most puritans) added a cautionary footnote: "The Saints did not easily believe every vision," implying that in this exceptional case, Paul's vision was both a true and a reliable communication from God. Paul is famous as a builder of the early church. In Acts 16, he goes into Greece with Silas and finds there a new disciple in Timothy. "As they went through the cities, they delivered them [the new believers] the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." But Paul and Timothy soon run afoul of the local authorities, who throw them in prison and beat them with rods, freeing them only after a providential earthquake had shaken the very foundations of the jail and converted the jailer himself. The men who designed, created, and used the first colony seal knew precisely the example it invoked. Massachusetts was designed to be a missionary enterprise, but it was also intended to build new

churches properly reformed and purified churches" churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." It was to bring order to the New World but always with one eye turned toward the Old World: "delivering the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles." Church builders, law givers, bringers of the Christian message; a generation of scholarship makes it plain that the aspirations of Massachusetts Bay were as much to create an ordered, lawful example for old England as they were to reach out to New England's indigenous peoples. And yet, in all the discussion and analysis, it might be easy to miss one key fact: the fact that the Macedonian's message came to Paul in a vision, a vision which appeared in the night, sanctioned by God, and which directed him to preach Christ's message in the farthest corners, wherever those corners might be. In this way, then, the text of the seal leads us to say, with some accuracy, that the entire colonial enterprise in New England was based on a dream, and that its founders rigorous puritans all trumpeted these visionary origins in this first official image of their enterprise.