

authorizes them to write in the first place, marking them as testimonial witnesses to their own experience of the world and the time in which they live so vividly.

Ann Marie Plane. *Dreams and the Invisible World in Colonial New England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. xiii + 237. \$45.00. Review by WILLIAM J. SCHEICK, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN.

A striking insight introduces Ann Marie Plane's *Dreams and the Invisible World in Colonial New England*. Since an allusion to the disciple Paul's conversion vision is embedded in the official seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, this reference implicitly suggests "that the entire colonial enterprise in New England was based on a dream." Despite the prominence of this colonial seal, Plane observes, "the full significance of dream narratives in unlocking the religious, social, cultural, and emotional history of colonial societies has yet to be explored" by historians.

While recognizing some caveats by other historians who are wary of the scholarly use of dream/vision accounts, Plane persuasively argues that these accounts can be interpreted as reasonably reliable indices to various unconscious issues that were significant to their reporters. Dreams, after all, occur within and reflect cultural and social frameworks, Plane maintains. Moreover, "English dream practices served hidden 'selfobject' functions for the dreamer, allowing for the management and integration of potentially disruptive experiences, and for the maintenance of an idealized masculine restraint in the face of destabilizing feelings and awe-inspiring wonders." (My own sympathy for such a methodological approach, I should confess, is documented in *Authority and Female Authorship in Colonial America*, which likewise emphasizes unconscious impulses resulting in ambivalent resistances and negotiations that accidentally unsettle the surface of male-authorized narrative strategies.)

Mixed, even contradictory, attitudes toward dreams have a long history. Readers of *Paradise Lost*, for instance, witness how prelapsarian Adam benefits from divine instruction imparted benignly through

dreams. Eve's prelapsarian dream, on the other hand, is sharply different—a vexing temptation deftly crafted by Satan. Then there is the curious matter of John Milton's personal claim that all of *Paradise Lost* itself has been revealed to him through dreams.

Plane offers a good overview of similar conflicting colonial responses to dreams in her first chapter. There John Winthrop takes center stage with a dream representing an anxious version of both his personal role as governor and the visionary mission of his colony. Winthrop's antagonist, Roger Williams, appears in another chapter, which explores the spiritual power invested in dreams by the Algonquian peoples. Settlers insisted that Indians' dreams were demonic in origin—an early emphasis that later intensified during King Philip's War. In fact, though, the settlers' fascination with these Native American visionary experiences signaled an unacknowledged intersection of both cultures' notions of a very real invisible world. Ironically, too, the dire prognostic truth of certain Indian visions would eventually seem to be especially validated during the aftermath of King Philip's War.

Michael Wigglesworth, Samuel Sewall, and Cotton Mather, among many others during the middle of the seventeenth century, struggled to understand their disturbing dreams. Some cautiously hoped these phenomena conveyed positive insight into their personal future. Many worried, however, that their dreams were as Satanically sourced as Eve's.

Also, during the mid-century period Peter Easton and other Quakers were far more confident and also far more public about relying on dreams for spiritual direction. Of course, authorities representing the religious establishment dismissed Quakers as deluded dreamers. They did so throughout the entire seventeenth century, including the awful Salem witch-hunt, without facing openly their own experiences of dream-fascination and dream-authorization.

English settlers “could never fully colonize dreams, at least not in the sense of either being able to contain them or render them completely powerless,” Plane convincingly concludes. English settlers tried to shape what dreaming meant, but finally the very dreams they felt compelled to explain away eventually contributed to the shape of their colonizing endeavor, at least in part. For New Englanders throughout the seventeenth century, “dreams would continue to startle, ‘exercise,’ and awaken dreamers, airing knotty feelings, raising surprising juxtapositions, and bringing uncomfortable knowledge.”