



The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England

Carol F. Karlsen

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"A pioneer work in . . . the sexual structuring of society. This is not just another book about witchcraft."--Edmund S. Morgan, Yale University

Confessing to "Familiarity with the Devils," Mary Johnson, a servant, was executed by Connecticut officials in 1648. A wealthy Boston widow, Ann Hibbens, was hanged in 1656 for casting spells on her neighbors. In 1662, Ann Cole was "taken with very strange Fits" and fueled an outbreak of witchcraft accusations in Hartford a generation before the notorious events in Salem took place. More than three hundred years later the question still haunts us: Why were these and other women likely witches? Why were they vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft? In this work Carol Karlsen reveals the social construction of witchcraft in seventeenth-century New England and illuminates the larger contours of gender relations in that society.



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