

*Abstract: Encountering New England was, for the seventeenth century Puritans, one of the hardest tests. From the moment of landing on the shore of what they believed and what the promotional tracts described to be their Promised Land, the community of the so-called "visible saints" tried to come to terms with the harshness of the new environment by appealing to metaphor. Wilderness became thus a paradoxical concept designating both a sacred place and the devil's territory. By its predominance in both real life and literary production, wilderness is, together with the frontier at the foundation of the American myth.*