



## **2<sup>nd</sup> International Workshop on Social Networks and English Sociohistorical Linguistics**

**Palacio de Valdeparaíso, Almagro (Spain)  
24 April 2008**

### **Linguistic variation in the *Salem Witchcraft Papers*: Applicability of Social Network Theory**

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This paper describes a larger research which aims at describing linguistic variation in Early American English by applying the Social Network Theory as developed by Milroy (1987). The community under study is that of Salem Town during the Witchcraft Trials and the corpus, the Salem Witchcraft Papers (ed. Boyer and Nissenbaum 1977). In a previous work, Diaz Vera (1999) states that the information recorded in these legal documents permits the reconstruction of the relationship and links between members of this community.

Although the trials took place during a relatively short period of time, according to Boyer and Nissenbaum (10-14), the witchcraft outbreak must be seen as “the direct consequence of the social changes that affected New England during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century” (in Diaz Vera 280), that is, the growing polarization experienced by the Salem community around the witchcraft outbreak of 1692 gave way to an impoverished rural society of Salem Village and the growing commercial settlement of Salem Town. Trial papers should allow a more or less detailed reconstruction of both this social fragmentation and individuals’ participation within her or his cluster. Furthermore, to establish the network scores of the individual speakers, we will have to adapt the Milroy’s original model to this peculiar community and its own model of society.

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**Session 1 (9:00-10:30)**

**Salón del Conde de Valdeparaíso (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)**