

## Gender and the Salem Witchcraft Trials

The Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692 were iconic events in American History. They have been the subject of historical articles, religious debates, novels, plays and films. In both the world of academia and pop-culture of American society, the Salem Witch Trials have fascinated audiences from right after they occurred through the twentieth century. In some ways, the very fact that interest in this event has spanned across both time and disciplines makes the trials worthy of study. Although the United States is a young country, there is a lot of rich history. Yet, the American population still returns to the Salem Witchcraft Trials throughout different periods.

For years, historical analysis was focused on the elite. History reflected the events that concerned those who were in power. The Salem Witchcraft Trials are decidedly the opposite. The people who were involved in the trials were very much so part of the “common” people. In part, this is what makes the trials so interesting after the turn of the twentieth century, the study of history changed to include more “common” historical events. One of the things that makes the trials interesting is this aspect that they were an event that was fully and singularly about the ordinary citizens of Salem, Massachusetts.

The Salem Witchcraft Trials became during the twentieth century a way for people to learn, not only about Puritan culture but also how to cope with contemporary issues—especially issues involving gender and sexuality. In the early twentieth century, literary scholars did the majority of scholarship on the trials, and only later did historians really focus on the trials. This paper will look at the works of historians, literary scholars and others to showcase the way in which the Salem trials have become an outlet through which people could make sense of their own contemporary issues. The primary goal is to show that the reason that the Salem Witchcraft Trials have continued to be a focus of scholarship, particularly gender scholarship and a focus in popular culture is because they are a relatable event to many contemporary issues.

This paper will start with what actually happened during the trials briefly and then talk about one of the most well known names connected to the trials, Cotton Mather and outline some of the Puritan beliefs surrounding witchcraft. It will then go into different scholars who wrote about the trials in the twentieth century. There are three different popular culture works that this paper will focus around; Esther Forbes' *A Mirror for Witches* (1928), Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953) and Maryse Conde's *I, Tituba, the Black Witch of Salem* (1986). Each of these will be placed in the context of the scholarly works that were being done at the time asking questions about the gender issues that were happening at those specific times and how the trials were used to reflect those issues and the scholarship that had been done.

The Salem trials of 1692 were a series of events where twenty people were examined, and then hanged for being witches. Most of these people were women, although there were a few men. They became an early instance of what some have termed "mass murder" or "mass execution" in the United States. Young girls were the primary accusers; testifying against various people for multiple offenses including actual practice of witchcraft, coming into their rooms late at night, and more. The leaders of the community reacted quickly to these accusations. More than were hanged were jailed, forced to go into debt to pay their jail fees. Many lost land, influence and dignity. Some lost their lives simply due to the dismal conditions of the jails. Although not the only cases of witchcraft trials in the colonies, they tend to be the most focused on.

Cotton Mather is a notorious name when it comes to studies on the Salem Witchcraft Trials. In 1862, his work, *The Wonder's of the Invisible World* was published. It was a reprint; the original was most likely published [or at the very least probably written] much earlier as Mather was an active participant in the Salem trials. The fact that Mather's work was republished in 1862 shows that even prior to the twentieth century, audiences were using the trials contemporarily. Mather is important because he was a main figure in the Seventeenth Century and part of his purpose in writing [and preaching for that matter] was to give people something virtuous to read. In his book,

he stated that it was "...because I was concern'd, when I saw that no abler Hand emitted any Essays to engage the Minds of this People, in such a holy, pious...Improvements, as God would have..." that he wrote *The Wonder's of the Invisible World*.<sup>1</sup> Cotton Mather was not a historian, at least not in the modern context of what defines a historian. He was a minister, a leader and a chronicler. It is this ambiguity that makes him an important source. Mather was one of the first people to write about and defend the trials. Mather's identity as a minister and as a leader in the community influenced the things that he wrote. The fact that he wrote in defense of the trials is a prime example of that. His background as a Puritan minister and as a leader in the community helped to shape his belief in the necessity of the trials by immersing him in the ideology surrounding the trials. Thus his account, although a very good one, is also very biased.

Cotton Mather gave an account of many of the specific trials that took place. He was either a part of or at least present at many of those trials. As a minister, Mather's observations were based on the belief that witchcraft is not only real but that it is also a major threat to the entire Puritan belief system as well as to the structure of the society since it was so closely linked to Puritan ideology. Like many of his contemporaries, Mather believed that the nearby Native American tribes represented the greatest threat of witchcraft. Mather wrote about the events that led to such prolific accounts of the "devil" tempting New Englanders: "First, The Indian Powawes, used all their Sorceries to molest the first Planters here..."<sup>2</sup> Throughout Mather's work there was an overarching theme of blame towards the so-called Powawes. This blame was because they represented an other-worldly sphere for the Puritans that was foreign and non-Christian and therefore bad and scary. This theme of Mather's is important because it comes up in later works, especially in the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Cotton Mather and Increase Mather. *The Wonder's of the Invisible World: Being An Account of the Tryals of Several Witches Lately Executed in New-England*. London: John Russell Smith, 1862. Pg. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Mather, 74.

In *The Wonder's of the Invisible World*, Mather not only warns against witchcraft, he gives his own version of what the women, who were both prosecuted and used as witnesses, said during the course of the trials. This is significant for a couple of different reasons. Mather is an example of a man writing about what women are saying in response to an issue that was largely female-centric [the men who were involved tended to be the ones passing judgment, however there were a few men who were accused themselves like Giles Corey and John Proctor but they were a minority]. Most of the people accused were women; also most of the accusers and witnesses were women. Yet, Mather does not mention gender other than to spout the general belief that women were more susceptible to coercion from the devil.

At this point, it is important to deviate a little and look at what the Puritans believed about women and their roles in society. Puritan women were, beyond a doubt, subservient to the men in the community. The whole family would always attend Church, but it would be the men and only the men who would teach the Bible.<sup>3</sup> This is really important because it shows why women were more susceptible to influence by the devil. Women, and girls were both somewhat distanced from the teachings of the Bible. They only learned what the men in the town taught them. They did not read the Bible for themselves. In fact, they actually had very limited education that tended to be restricted to domestic duties.<sup>3</sup> The fact that there was this great distance between women and the teachings of the Bible is probably what made women seem to easily coercible by the devil.

Since he was there, in many ways Cotton Mather is considered an expert on the trials. As such, he has become an important source for many historians. Even though he was not a historian. Mather's goal was to educate. He combined his own observations with letters and pamphlets that were written by his contemporaries. One thing that Mather is somewhat famous for is that he spoke out against the use of "spectral evidence" in the trials. This is a deviation from what his contemporaries like the Reverend Samuel Parris who was also a very famous participant in the

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<sup>3</sup> Demos, John. *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Salem trials. This is not to say that Mather was against the trials; he very much so believed in the necessity of purging Salem of witches. Instead, he argued that there actually was other evidence, even aside from “spectral evidence” that many of the women who were accused were in fact witches.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, Mather is extremely vague as to what other evidence he considered relevant. It does seem that many of these women had been accused by other witches or had been caught doing something such as fortune telling or some other ritual. Perhaps this is the other evidence that Mather would have preferred but there is no way to know if that is true or not.<sup>5</sup>

Mather’s writing lays the foundation for the evidence on which historians as well as novelists and playwrights who work on the Salem trials must rely. He is also important because he wrote a detailed account and [biased] analysis of the trials right after they happened. In this particular paper, he is included because of the fact that so many people used his work as a basis for their own studies even in the Twentieth Century. Among those who used Mather’s work as a basis for their own was Chadwick Hansen and George Orians, both of whom will be mentioned later in this paper.

The twentieth century brought a number of changes including a “social turn” that took place at the turn of the century. The social turn shifted focus away from elitist history and towards a more “common people” history. It also affected the literary world. Actually, literary scholar George Kittredge, who will be discussed later in this paper, wrote one of the earliest studies of the Salem trials in the twentieth century. The literary scholarship of the early twentieth century is important because it developed in conjunction with popular culture sources and was more prevalent than scholarly historical sources.

It is unclear as to why historians did not become more involved in writing about the trials until closer to the 1930s, despite the social turn. Since novel writers and other non-scholarly

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<sup>4</sup> Mather, 286.

<sup>5</sup> Mather, 286. This was not clearly stated in the work, but it is my opinion that Mather may have preferred that accused witches testified against one another rather than the use of “spectral evidence”.

literary authors were writing about the trials though, it makes sense why literary scholars would be interested. After all, literary scholars study literature and trends in literature; in 1930 George Orians wrote a detailed article about the way in which non-scholarly literary authors of the nineteenth century wrote about the trials. At the very least, the reason that literary scholars were looking at the trials can be explained. Perhaps historians just did not feel the trials were of much importance since they concerned predominantly women or perhaps they did not feel that they had the tools to explore these events [there were, after all, a limited amount of sources for historians to use in comparison with the abundance of literary sources that literary scholars could use].

The literary scholarship of the early twentieth century provided a base for the novelists who also wrote about the trials at that time. George Kittredge eventually served as a source for author Esther Forbes' novel, *A Mirror for Witches* (1928). Forbes' novel was published towards the end of the 1920s, which was a time of great turmoil especially for women. Women had gained the right to vote but the fight for equality between men and women was not over. There was still a major imbalance between what was socially expected of women and men, specifically concerning sexuality. Women were also trying to gain representation within the legal system. This turmoil was reflected in popular culture works of the time, which will be seen with Forbes' novel. Kittredge chose to focus on ideology in his article and avoided the tumultuous issues of the women both in the trials and of the early twentieth century [Kittredge actually wrote before women gained the right to vote, his choice to ignore gender issues says a lot about his beliefs on female representation in the community].

George Lyman Kittredge, who was a professor of literature, wrote an article called "Notes on Witchcraft" that was published in 1907 in the journal called the *American Antiquarian Society*. This article essentially argued that the Salem Witchcraft Trials were not a unique event, that the ideology behind the trials came from England and that the belief of witchcraft that permeated these

trials makes sense within the context that they occurred.<sup>6</sup> Kittredge used a couple of main ideas to support these claims. The main idea pertains to the idea that the Salem trials were not unique: “It is a common practice to ascribe the tenets of the New Englanders in the matter of witchcraft to something peculiar about their religious opinions...their Puritan theology. This is a very serious error.”<sup>7</sup>

Kittredge argued that Puritans and non-Puritans [such as Catholics, other Protestants, etc.] believed in the existence and evil of witchcraft. He referenced a number of individuals who wrote about the witch hunts in England such as Jeremy Taylor who wrote *Holy Living* in 1650, and according to Kittredge “It is a sin, he [Taylor] tells us, that is ‘infallibly desperate’...he has even given the weight of his authority to the reality of sexual relations between witches and the devil.”<sup>8</sup> This became extremely important later in the twentieth century when literary works reference the sexual aspect of the trials.

Kittredge also referenced Sir Thomas Browne, who wrote *Religio Medici* in 1643. This work defined the effects of witchcraft as some kind of disease linked with hysteria.<sup>9</sup> Kittredge’s point about Browne was that his view was one that was in line with what some have deemed Puritan ideology but that Browne himself was not a Puritan and he wrote before the Salem trials occurred. In fact, most of the authors that Kittredge referenced who wrote about the dangers of witchcraft were not Puritans Kittredge stated, “It is a common practice to ascribe the tenets of the New Englanders in the matter of witchcraft to something peculiar about their religious opinions...this is a very serious error.”<sup>10</sup> He explains how other Churches such as the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches also had strong beliefs and convictions against witchcraft and conducted so-called “witch hunts” accordingly in England.<sup>9</sup> Another important thing about the authors that Kittredge

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<sup>6</sup> George Lyman Kittredge. “Notes on Witchcraft.” *American Antiquarian Society*, April 1907, 211.

<sup>7</sup> Kittredge, 151.

<sup>8</sup> Kittredge, 154.

<sup>9</sup> Kittredge, 157.

<sup>10</sup> Kittredge, 151.

referenced is that they all tended to be male scholars who had either written formal or informal works pertaining to the witch trials of England. The fact that Kittredge focused on England reinforces his argument that the witch trials of Salem were not unique, nor was the witchcraft belief that the trials were based upon.

Kittredge does not really cite historians in this article, which is an important feature. It is important because it shows that significant work was being done on witchcraft and the Salem trials in general outside of the historical community. Kittredge chose instead to focus on generalizations such as the idea that the Salem Witch Trials were unique. Another important aspect of Kittredge's analysis is that gender is not addressed at all. In fact, it almost seems like Kittredge makes a point of distancing himself from the fact that there were human beings involved in these trials and that they were not simply about whether or not witchcraft was real. Instead, he emphasized the role of popular thoughts about witchcraft and bases his analysis on the idea that the people who were a part of the trials did believe that witchcraft was real. Kittredge does not debate this, and even says that Jeremy Taylor, who was quoted above "was surely no Puritan; but he believed in witchcraft."<sup>7</sup> It was statements like this where Kittredge talked about other's beliefs of witchcraft and the reality of its existence. He did so without committing to his own perspective on if witchcraft was real or not. Kittredge also does not ask the question of why women were frequently the targets of accusations of witchcraft, nor does he track this pattern in Old or New England like he tracks the different religious groups with beliefs about the existence and persecution of witchcraft.

More than twenty years after Kittredge published his work, Esther Forbes, in 1928 published the literary novel *A Mirror for Witches*. Forbes was an educated woman who was actually from Massachusetts. An article published by David D. Hall in *Notable American Women* in 1980, paints Forbes as an educated woman from a family that was wealthy and embraced knowledge. Both of Forbes' parents were well educated and came from socially established families. Her mother was a particular influence on Forbes; she was a writer of history as well. Interestingly,



Forbes' views on marriage, which are reflected in her main character, were probably shaped by her ill-fated marriage to Albert Hoskins whom she divorced. According to Hall, the focus of the majority of her work seemed to be the struggle to reconcile female gentility with passion and fantasy with reality.<sup>11</sup> *A Mirror for Witches* was her second novel and it chronicled the evolution of Doll Bilby from young orphan to accused and convicted witch. This novel expressed a couple themes; the first and most major was sexuality. The second was the idea of what it meant to be a proper Puritan woman. Both of these themes are closely linked together. Doll Bilby was a young girl who watched her parents die for being witches and was then adopted by Mr. Bilby and taken to Cowan Corners, Massachusetts located very near Salem.

From the very beginning of the novel, Forbes established the theme of sexuality as it related to Doll and to the accusations of witchcraft that would come later in the novel: "...from the beginning, the child bewitched him [Mr. Bilby]...the affection which [Mr.] Bilby gave his Doll [did not] ever seem like the love which men feel to their children, but rather the darker and often unholy passion which is evoked by mature, or almost mature women..."<sup>12</sup> This supposed inappropriate attraction that Mr. Bilby felt was blamed, not on himself, but rather on Doll. It became the first mark against her, especially with Mr. Bilby's wife Hannah. Hannah hated Doll as soon as she met her, and later this hatred motivated Hannah to become a witness against Doll at her trial.

Doll seemed to attract a great deal of male attention, including that of Titus Thumb who was the town's most eligible bachelor. He often thought of her, and in fact the sight of her "...stirred his blood, so that at nights he felt desire for her, and often dreamed impossible things of her."<sup>13</sup> This seems very un-Puritan since Puritans tended to emphasize the need for women to have children while downplaying the sex aspect. The fact that Forbes wrote this during a time of sexual

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<sup>11</sup> Sicherman, Barbara, and Carol Hurd. Green. *Notable American Women: The Modern Period : A Biographical Dictionary*. David D. Hall. "Esther Forbes". Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980. Pg. 247-247.

<sup>12</sup> Esther Forbes. *A Mirror For Witches*. Chicago, IL: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1928. Pg. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Forbes, 39.

revolution is really important. Women in the 1920s were being criticized for exploring their sexuality, and here Forbes paints a picture of both a man and a woman who are doing just that. Doll, as a young woman exploring her sexual desire will eventually be persecuted. Titus will become the victim because Doll not only embraced her sexuality [which be discussed a little more later] she also rejects Titus as a husband.<sup>14</sup> As Doll and Titus were pushed towards each other by their fathers Titus continued to feel these types of feelings. When he went to supposedly propose, he felt a carnal feeling towards Doll.<sup>15</sup> He was also rejected.

In the fictional trial of Doll Bilby, part of what sealed her fate was that she not only confessed to being a witch but also confessed to having “carnal knowledge” of the devil. The ironic thing is that Forbes made it clear that it was not the “devil” who Doll had sexual relations with. There were three escaped pirates that Forbes described in detail. One of the men who fit that description was the one who Doll had sexual relations with.<sup>16</sup> This relationship solidified both Doll’s and the community’s belief that she was a witch because they either did not or chose not to make the connection between the escaped pirates and the timing of Doll’s sexual encounter [it is unclear which]. Since they made that choice, there was great mystery as whom Doll could have had this encounter with, and she was the only one whose moral character was being questioned so it must have been the devil with whom she has copulated. This was used against her when she was on trial, along with witness testimony from her foster-mother and from Mr. Zellely to whom she had confessed to being a witch. The fact that Forbes had Doll confess to being a witch reflects the struggle in the 1920s between the people who still held conservative beliefs about female sexuality and the participants of the sexual revolution that was taking place.

As Doll was being persecuted for her relations with the devil her friend Goody Greene tried to defend her. Goody Greene was a woman who was a healer and worked outside of the traditional

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<sup>14</sup> Forbes, 57.

<sup>15</sup> Forbes, 61.

<sup>16</sup> Forbes, 119.

gender roles that the Puritans embraced. According to Forbes, she “...continually [associated] herself with the heathen tawny savages and thus learn[ed] arts – doubtless often evil arts – from them.”<sup>17</sup> She was a shady character because of her association with the Native Americans and because of her independence from the rest of the town. Then she presented a logical explanation for Doll’s sexual encounter with the devil. According to Goody Greene, the man [who was one of the escaped pirates] was a son no one knew that she had.<sup>18</sup> She offered a logical solution to what had been going on, and she was called a lunatic. Her husband refused to corroborate her story, which made her even less credible in the eyes of the court. Doll was being persecuted for her sexuality, while Goody Greene’s testimony was rejected because her husband did not support her.

Forbes’ novel reflects ideas that Cotton Mather was preaching about in his work. It also reflects some issues with that were happening in the late 1920s. Cotton Mather spoke against Native Americans, as was noted on page three of this paper. Forbes applied this idea to the community that Doll Bilby was a part of. It is important to look at the novel within its historiographical context. Forbes based much of what she knew on other literary studies and accounts of the trials. The people that she had to use were those such as Mather and Kittredge.

Forbes’ novel is important as a representation of the time period in which it was published and in historiographical context. Doll Bilby’s tale reflects the tension between those who believed in the sexual conservatism that existed prior to the twentieth century and those of the 1920s who were creating a sexual revolution that gave them a sense of autonomy and a reason for both men and women to have legitimate interest in sex.<sup>19</sup> Doll was conflicted because she labeled herself as a witch because she felt all of these sexual feelings and the older people around her condemned those feelings. Thus she felt like she had to have been a witch since she had “carnal knowledge” of someone and that someone had to have been the devil. Forbes uses Doll to showcase this struggle

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<sup>17</sup> Forbes, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Forbes, 185.

<sup>19</sup> John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. Pg. 233.

between generations that was taking place. Also the fact that Doll was against [conventional] marriage causes her to be a target and may be a reflection of Forbes' own views on marriage and her experience with her failed marriage.<sup>20</sup> This pattern of contemporary issues being showcased via the trials is a pattern that will repeat throughout the course of the twentieth century.

The changes in how the Salem Witchcraft Trials were addressed by scholars and literary authors as well as the meaning behind them for contemporary audiences cannot necessarily be mapped in a linear way. Mather was part of a group of ministers who wrote about the trials as a warning about witchcraft to others. Centuries later, Kittredge analyzed the trials from a literary background, building an understanding on the basis of historical understanding of those sources. Esther Forbes was one author whose novel addressed themes relating to sexuality and gender roles using the Puritan beliefs as a vehicle for exploring those ideas. For Forbes, the Puritans were a good contrast to the sexual revolution ideas that she had embodied in her invented character, Doll Bilby. The fictional witchcraft trial of Doll was a way for Forbes to make a contemporary commentary inadvertently and thus reach a wider audience because she was least likely to be censored.

As the twentieth century proceeded, scholars such as G. Orians asked new questions regarding the sources that other authors had consulted. The literary world looked more closely at the historical sources previous authors had used. It was as though later writers recognized that so much of the popular knowledge about the trials actually came from fictional accounts and not from historical studies. That realization prompted them to start asking more critical questions of their sources. Scholars had to start looking for historical evidence to back up their claims. Some chose to look more scientifically as this was a point when social science methodology of looking at empirical data was often used.

In 1930, another author published an article about the Salem Witch Trials. G. Harrison Orians wrote "New England Witchcraft in Fiction." This article is important because Orians

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<sup>20</sup> Sichertman, 247.

examines works written in the nineteenth century about the trials, asking questions similar to what the present study is exploring. According to Orians, "...fictional accounts of the witchcraft delusion are much more numerous than the relative insignificance of the outbreak in New England would lead on to expect."<sup>21</sup> Orians examines the different fictional works from the 1700s-1800s, with a critical eye on the historical research that each author included and/or did. This is important because his study evaluates the validity of the information that different literary writers relied upon or presented. The fact that Orians examined the historical evidence that literary authors used is important because he evaluated the accuracy of the information that most writers had about the Salem trials and their impact on popular understandings of that historical event.

Orians pays particular attention to John Neal's *Rachel Dyer* (1828). According to Orians, Neal's novel made "a definite attempt to describe the Salem excitement in 1692, and opens with fifty pages of history and apologetics."<sup>22</sup> This is significant also in that it resembles Orians' assessment of *Delusion; or the Witch of New England*, which was published in 1840. Orians criticizes this work as having "no factual basis" and "descriptive of scenes and characters which are wholly fictitious." In contrast, Neal's work had a few characters that were based on "real life" people and information gathered from "historical" sources such as the trial transcripts from Cotton Mather. For many people, especially non-historians the only knowledge about these trials comes from novels, plays and other popular sources and Orians documents how those sources often deviated from the evidence in the historical record.

Orians also mentions Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous work, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) which was based on Hawthorne's own family history. The interesting thing about his criticism of Hawthorne's novel is that he bases it on his own research into the Salem Witchcraft Trials. Among the sources that Orians used were records that Cotton Mather [and some of his contemporaries]

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<sup>21</sup> George Harrison Orians. "New England Witchcraft in Fiction." *American Literature* 2, no. 1 (March 1930): 54.

<sup>22</sup> Orians, 57.

authored. These records included works like *The Wonder's of the Invisible World*. This is important because it has been established that other authors have also used Mather's work as a basis for their own. Yet, Orians asked different questions. That is probably because Orians was writing in 1930 which was after the social turn, after a turn towards more scientific methods and during a time when people were beginning to question the previous knowledge that they had.

Kenneth W. Porter [who was a "white" man often mistaken for being African-American himself]<sup>23</sup> published an article in 1932 entitled "Association as Fellow Slaves." This article was published in a journal entitled *The Journal of Negro History*. It is significant that Porter was a "white" man who was writing about African American history because it shows that during the 1930s not only was the majority of scholarship on the trials done by men, it was also predominantly done by "white" men. Porter addressed the specific issue of Tituba who was not only one of the first witches accused in the trials but she was also the [non-"white"] slave of Reverend Samuel Parris.

Porter's 1932 article discussed the fact that Tituba has been seen as multiple identities: slave, "Indian", and "Negro." This is rather interesting since Porter's own race is often misrepresented. Porter argued that in many ways these could all be "correct" because "Negroes" and "Indians" were often combined in Barbados plantations. To quote Edward Byron Reuter, Porter said "Slavery of the native Indians existed in a number of the English colonies before the coming of the Negroes".<sup>24</sup> There are a couple of things that set Porter's analysis apart from other works of this time. Firstly, he is one of the earliest historians to write about the trials. Secondly, he focused less on the trials themselves but on one of the key female figures who was not only a slave but was also not "white." Porter seemed to be the exception though and not the rule because at this point most

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<sup>23</sup> "Kenneth Wiggins Porter, Kansas Author, Sterling, Map of Kansas Literature." Kenneth Wiggins Porter, Kansas Author, Sterling, Map of Kansas Literature. 2012. Accessed June 01, 2012. <http://www.washburn.edu/reference/cks/mapping/porter/index.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth W. Porter. "Association as Fellow Slaves." *The Journal of Negro History* 17, no. 3 (July 1932): 297.

scholars were not quite looking at individual historical figures so much as focusing on “big picture” ideas and themes.

Fannye N. Cherry, in a 1934 essay that followed the lead of Kittredge and Orians, examined the sources that Nathaniel Hawthorne used for his story “Young Goodman Brown.” Cherry emphasized that much of the information about the “Witches Sabbath” that Hawthorne described in “Young Goodman Brown” goes along with the Puritan ideology that Mather wrote about. However, Cherry predominantly argues that much of Hawthorne’s information was based on Cervantes’ “El Coloquio de los Perros” (“The Conversation of the Dogs”), which was written in the early Seventeenth Century. Cherry bases that on the fact that “witches ointment” is explained in detail in Cervantes’ work and Hawthorne’s recipe in “Young Goodman Brown” is very similar to Cervantes’.<sup>25</sup>

Cherry tried to draw conclusions about what Hawthorne thought about witches. “...we may judge that Hawthorne considers the witchcraft delusion a manifestation of sin in the human heart.”<sup>26</sup> This is based on a quotation from Hawthorne to the effect that “Evil is the nature of mankind.”<sup>13</sup> Cherry’s analysis is interesting because it suggests how the trials were viewed by people in the nineteenth century. Cherry’s argument was not necessarily based on empirical research but rather drew on other narratives. It was a literary approach that relied on authors who had not done a lot of groundwork researching the trials. This is important because it shows that literary authors [like Cherry] were among the first scholars [in the twentieth century] to look deeper into the trials. They asked questions about the ideology behind the trials and wanted to know what “really happened.” As historians got involved in the scholarship, these questions remained. At this point, gender was still not a lens through which the trials were being viewed. In part, this could be attributed to the fact that the cultural and feminist turns in the historical profession developed only later in the twentieth century.

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<sup>25</sup> Fannye N. Cherry. “The Sources of Hawthorne’s ‘Young Goodman Brown’” *American Literature* 5, no. 4 (January 1934): 342-348.

<sup>26</sup> Cherry, 346.

A few years after Cherry, and reflecting a turn towards more scientific methods of research, Louis Taylor Merrill wrote an article entitled “The Puritan Policeman” (1945). The article was published in the *American Sociological Review*, although he was a professor of history who both attended and taught at Beloit College.<sup>27</sup> Merrill seemed to aim his argument at sociologists, which suggests that he believed they would appreciate his analysis of empirical data and find his conclusions useful from a sociological standpoint. Perhaps they would accept his approach more universally than historians who debated the usefulness of social science methodology. Merrill used specific court cases from the Seventeenth Century, including those of the Salem Witchcraft Trials, to outline the power struggle that existed between the ruling body of the settlement and the “common people” as divided into different religious factions. Merrill outlined the ways in which different people were punished by the magistrates. Part of his argument was that, “Puritan courts recognize no double standard in morality, and the records show repeated instances of both men and women thus standing out their sentences together...”<sup>28</sup> This is interesting from a gender studies standpoint. According to him, the atmosphere that the Salem trials occurred in was more gender equal than what the trials suggest. This makes sense. In terms of roles within the community and within family life, men and women often had semi-equal roles [although women were still subservient to men]. They were most unequal when it came to knowledge of the Bible.<sup>29</sup>

Merrill’s approach was more scientific than his predecessors in that he went through each case and abstracted the data describing who was punished and how and why they were punished. His article also reflects a more personal side in that he emphasizes individual people and their punishments in detail. This seems to contradict the scientific approach because science tends to have a reputation of being impersonal but really it is not because Merrill is simply making an

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<sup>27</sup> “Louis Taylor Merrill.” Beloit College. Accessed May 21, 2012.  
[https://www.beloit.edu/archives/documents/archival\\_collections/alumni/louis\\_merrill/](https://www.beloit.edu/archives/documents/archival_collections/alumni/louis_merrill/).

<sup>28</sup> Louis Taylor Merrill. “The Puritan Policeman.” *American Sociological Review* 10, no. 6 (December 1945): 770.

<sup>29</sup> Demos, *A Little Commonwealth*, pg. 82.



observation based on his collected data. Merrill is also significant because he made mention of gender as it related to the trials, though he chose to ignore the gendered landscape that produced the data he was examining.

Four years after Merrill's article was published, Marion Starkey wrote a book titled *The Devil in Massachusetts* (1949). Starkey constructed a narrative based on archival evidence, personal narratives/accounts and general background on the Seventeenth Century.<sup>30</sup> Starkey is unique because she is a woman writing about the trials. In fact, she is one of the earliest women to examine the trials. According to Starkey, the trials were caused by some little girls who were influenced by older girls with no other outlet for their fears than to accuse others of witchcraft.<sup>31</sup> Starkey herself identified her work as being in response to authors such as Charles Upham [not to be confused with Reverend Upham] and Winfield Nevins. She claimed to have "uncovered a number of vital primary sources [of] which they seem to have been ignorant" and that she has attempted to construct a dramatic account allowing "the characters [to] speak for themselves..."<sup>32</sup> In doing this, Starkey set herself apart from previous authors because she offered a very close examination of the trials. However, she also based some of her research on the work of previous authors, including Kittredge's article cited above. Starkey's monograph is in tune with the practice of looking at individual people and cases. She even specifically looks at Tituba, who is also mentioned in multiple other works.

A few years after Starkey's work appeared in print and coming on the heels of the McCarthyism Red Scare, Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible* (1952), an iconic play that chronicled the life, witch trial and then execution of John Proctor. Miller's play includes many of the more well known, actual participants in the trials such as the Proctors, Tituba, Abigail Williams, Samuel Parris,

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<sup>30</sup> Marion Lena Starkey. *The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Inquiry into the Salem Witch Trials*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1949.

<sup>31</sup> Starkey, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Starkey, 16-17.

both Anne Putnam's [the mother and daughter who had the same name], Rebecca Nurse and Giles Corey. The 1996 edition of the play includes an introduction by Christopher Bigsby, a professor of American studies at the University of East Anglia. The play itself explores the themes of both sexuality and fear. It is also a reflection of what was going on during that time period which was the era of McCarthyism. McCarthyism targeted anyone who was different including those who seemed to deviate from sexual norms [such as homosexuals] and those who did not agree with McCarthy methodology for finding said people. All who fit into those categories were labeled "Communist" and persecuted.<sup>33</sup>

In the introduction to that 1996 edition of Arthur Miller's play, Christopher Bigsby discussed what inspired Arthur Miller and the historical works that he used. One was Marion Starkey's book noted above. Bigsby noted Starkey's notion that Salem had wider implications significant beyond the seventeenth century specifically the connections to the McCarthyism trials. Starkey insisted that the witch hunt had been "revived...on a colossal scale by replacing the medieval idea of malefic witchcraft by a pseudo-scientific concept like 'race', 'nationality' and by substituting for theological dissension a while complex warring of ideologies."<sup>34</sup> This is important because it was coming on the heels of World War II, and the Holocaust. Also this play was first produced after the peak of Anti-Communism in an era of tension pitting capitalist against communist ideologies. This was still a time of immense fear, much like the climate that the trials took place in. For Miller, *The Crucible* and the Salem trials were a way of expressing his feelings about what had been going on with McCarthyism without having to have too much fear of repercussions. The trials were distant enough that they weren't connected to McCarthyism and yet they were obviously relevant to the modern audience. This is a trend that was also seen with Esther Forbes' novel. It is the trend of the trials being used to interpret contemporary issues.

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<sup>33</sup> D'Emilio, 293.

<sup>34</sup> Christopher Bigsby. Introduction to *The Crucible*, by Arthur Miller. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1996. Pg. xi-xii.

It is easy to draw parallels between the McCarthyism of the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the witch-hunt that occurred in Salem during the early 1690s. Miller used the trials and the character of John Proctor to make this connection: “People were being torn apart, their loyalty to one another crushed and... common human decency was going down the drain.”<sup>35</sup> These were Miller’s own words when describing the parallel between Salem 1692, and the United States in 1953. It was very true. Miller’s hero, John Proctor made the choice to die rather than give the names of other so-called witches. Miller himself went through a similar experience when he was called to testify in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) [in 1956] and was pressed to give the names of many of his friends and associates as “enemies of the state” or “communists” or be labeled himself as such.

“*The Crucible*” Bigsby observed, “ is a play about the seductive nature of power and that seductiveness is perhaps not unconnected with a confused sexuality.”<sup>36</sup> In the play, Abigail Williams was one of the main accusers. She had an affair with John Proctor and was jealous of the fact that he did not want to leave his wife. He in turn was a man who did not openly speak about the dangers and evils of witchcraft, nor was he rash in his own condemnation of witches. This made him susceptible to accusations of witchcraft. This draws direct parallels with those called to testify in front of HUAC. Those who did not give the names of communists were automatically assumed to be guilty themselves and were often “black listed” and restricted from owning homes, gaining employment or at the very least from getting any promotion in their job. It was not as extreme as John Proctor’s fate, but still crippling.<sup>37</sup>

Much like Forbes did in her novel, Miller’s play depicted Abigail Williams as a sexual being. Unlike Miller, Forbes specifically emphasized the double standard in terms of societal expectations

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<sup>35</sup> Bigsby, xv. It is unclear where Bigsby got this quote from. He had several excerpts in the introduction from what seemed to be an interview of Arthur Miller but there is no citation for it.

<sup>36</sup> Bigsby, xviii.

<sup>37</sup> On a side note, the Rosenbergs were actually executed as a result of the HUAC trials. However, it was not as prolific at the executions at the Salem trials.

of sexuality. Miller, however, portrayed Abigail as a lovesick and vindictive harlot. Miller's play included a line that would have been deemed as scandalous by Puritan standards: "I know how you [John Proctor] clutched my back behind our house and sweated like a stallion whenever I come near!...you loved me then and you do now!"<sup>38</sup> Abigail, like Doll Bilby, was not a traditional Puritan woman. She was portrayed to be this young woman who flirted publically and went to any length to attract John Proctor. This is interesting because Abigail was strong willed as well and the antagonist of the play. It was somewhat contradictory because on the one hand, Miller seemed to argue that the McCarthy trials were wrong. On the other hand he also seems to advocate this ideal of chastity that McCarthyism was touting. Women who did not conform to certain 1940s and 1950s ideals like domesticity were seen as subversive and suspicious.<sup>39</sup>

Proctor was a man who spoke against some of the methods of the trials. In *The Crucible* he asks what proof the accusers had against Sarah Goode. When he was told of the evidence against the woman, which was that she could not recite the Ten Commandments, Proctor showed doubt toward the witch hunting process.<sup>40</sup> This is important because Miller was making the point that Proctor did not agree with the methods that the courts were using to prosecute witches. Again, there seem to be many parallels between the trials and the HUAC trials.

In terms of gender analysis, Miller did not portray the young women involved in the trials in a positive light. It seems more like he was blaming the system that these girls were in rather than the girls themselves. Post war gender roles were being re-defined once again. Women were being asked to go back into the home and capitulate to their men. Puritan ideology was much the same. Women were also held to an impossible virtuous standard by the McCarthy administration. Many believed that Puritans also held women to that kind of standard [although that has been proved

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<sup>38</sup> Miller, Arthur. *The Crucible*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1996. Pg., 21.

<sup>39</sup> Richard M. Fried, "What Do You Think of Female Chastity?" *Disloyalty in American Politics*. In *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*, 59-86. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

<sup>40</sup> Miller, 55.

false]. For Miller, the girls who were accusers alongside Abigail Williams were followers who conformed to her agenda. By portraying them in negative light it seems like Miller was saying that this conformity was a bad thing and that if they had fought against Abigail then the trials would not have reached the extremes that they did.

Miller also changed some of the historical events, at least the order of them to make them more dramatic. The important aspects though are that Tituba, the slave, [incidentally referred to as the “Negro” slave in the play] is also included and somewhat accounted for. Also, it is significant that Miller based the events that were portrayed in the play on the actual events that took place during the trial. From a historical point of view, it may be hard to see the relevance of *The Crucible*. After all, most academics know how to do the research themselves and draw their own conclusions. However, there are those who are not ensconced in the world of academia and get much of their historical information from popular culture such as Miller’s play.

In 1957, a few years after Arthur Miller’s iconic play, Richard Beale Davis wrote an article that talked about the role of the devil in Virginia during the Seventeenth Century. “The Devil in Virginia in the seventeenth century” discussed the absolute power that belief in witchcraft and the devil had over seventeenth century Virginians. Davis brings up Alexander Whitaker, stating that “Whitaker was a Puritan clergyman, and his comments remind us that the theology of the period, especially as interpreted by the Puritans, more than accepted a belief in witchcraft.”<sup>41</sup> This is something that most historians and literary scholars would not debate. Davis based much of his analysis on the writings of Puritan ministers such as Cotton Mather. Thus far, there seems to be a common theme of using these ministers as historical sources no matter what discipline one is coming from. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century the ministers were used somewhat naively as simply illustrating Puritan ideology. Although still used that way, scholars and writers in

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Beale Davis. “The Devil in Virginia in the Seventeenth Century.” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 65, no. 2 (April 1957): 135.

the second half of the century seem to be looking more critically at the ministers themselves as well as at their works.

Much like Merrill and Starkey both, Davis' goal was to show that witchcraft was prevalent during the seventeenth century and the Salem incidents were not necessarily unique. Davis did not employ gender-based analysis, which, in some ways makes sense as feminist theory was not quite emerging as a popular lens through which to view history. However, like some of the other scholars considered in this paper, he did use different asides to convey a point about the women involved in the trials. For example, "whenever she [Goody Wright] lost her temper, it is probable that she at least presented to possess these powers."<sup>42</sup> This comment suggests that an angry woman was the same as a witch. Much of Davis' analysis provided examples that painted women as mystic creatures whose fury was so powerful it seemed to invoke magic. What is equally significant is that Davis pointed out a major difference between the Salem trials and the witch trials that had occurred in Virginia prior to 1692. The major difference was that in previous witch trials, women served on some of the juries.<sup>43</sup> In the Salem cases, men were the ones who were making the rulings. Women were witnesses, accusers, and sometimes examiners [of accused witches' bodies] but they never had a say in the final decision.

Davis never addressed why Salem was so different. In fact, in many ways it is hard to see why the Salem trials themselves were singled for be examination in both the academic and pop-culture spheres. In reality, Davis' article only slightly touched on the Salem trials. For the most part he talks about other trials. Perhaps this is because some of the conclusions that he drew could not be applied to Salem. For example, Davis argued that the fact that people could sue for defamation did not seem to have been a right that the people in Salem had at the time of the trials. Davis seemed to parallel what many of the other people who have been discussed in this essay have been

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<sup>42</sup> Davis, 141.

<sup>43</sup> Davis, 145.

talking about. Each, even Forbes and Miller, based a lot of their information on the writings of Cotton Mather and his contemporaries. In addition, each of these works was done prior to the cultural revolution which took place not only in the academic world of history but also in the world of literature and pop-culture in the 1960s. The cultural turn was important because it moved the study of history from being focused on empiricist data to an analysis of people and their thought processes and stories.

In 1970, John Demos wrote an article entitled, "Underlying Themes in the Witchcraft Trials of Seventeenth-Century New England." Demos decided to take a social sciences approach to history by way of anthropology which is a reflection of the historiographical field's turn away from predominantly empirical methods and its re-focus on the human aspect, while still using some scientific methodology. This is part of the legacy of the cultural turn that took place in the 1960s, which made room for new approaches to both history and these trials in particular. According to Demos, "...the anthropological work is far more analytic, striving always to use materials on witchcraft as a set of clues or 'symptoms'. The subject is important not in its own right but as a means of exploring certain larger questions about the society."<sup>44</sup>

Demos looked at the empirical data including the division of males and females accused as witches, their marital status and their ages. He also did this with those who were accusers and those who were witnesses.<sup>45</sup> In interpreting this data, Demos drew upon other pieces of evidence to support his claims. For example, he found that there were a high number of male witnesses. To account for this, Demos said that if a person studies trial records from the seventeenth century then they will see that men tended to take a more "active part in legal proceedings of any type."<sup>46</sup> This actually connects with what Forbes had been emphasizing with the idea that women, even in this

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<sup>44</sup> John Demos. "Underlying Themes in the Witchcraft of Seventeenth-Century New England." *The American Historical Review* 75, no. 5 (June 1970): 1312.

<sup>45</sup> Demos, 1315-1316.

<sup>46</sup> Demos, 1316.

situation where women were such major parts of the event, did not have an active role in legal proceedings.

Demos also used empirical data of age ranges of the accused, accusers and the witnesses to draw conclusions about the relationship between the accused and the accusers. He found that “the witches themselves were chiefly women of middle age and the accusers were girls about one full generation younger...it is quite probable that adolescent girls in early New England were particularly subject to the control of older women, and this may well have given rise to...resentment.”<sup>47</sup> In this case, Demos used empirical data that gave him the ages of those involved in the trials to create a context within which the accusers would have been operating. Demos tended to reference specific cases such as Mercy Short and Sarah Good as well as Glover and Martha Goodwin. These particular situations were referenced to argue the idea that the “accusations began after some sort of actual quarrel.”<sup>48</sup> Demos’ conclusions were that the girls who were accusers were acting out their own pent up aggression. Demos recognized, however, that this conclusion is limited since generations of people reached adulthood in Puritan New England without becoming accusers of witchcraft, thus the people cited in this case cannot represent a whole.

Demos did not address the question of gender specifically. This is slightly surprising considering the fact that it was 1970, and gender analysis was beginning to emerge. Unlike Kittredge and Merrill, Demos did tend to stick closely to the cases from New England. Although Demos did not clearly talk about gender, he did follow the example of his literary and historical predecessors by covertly mentioning the issue of gender. Demos looked at the way in which young women were raised as a cause of their aggression. This is more than had been previously done in that he examined the cause of the young women’s discomfort versus passing judgment on them,

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<sup>47</sup> Demos, 1318-1319.

<sup>48</sup> Demos, 1321.



which Starkey, Davis and even Forbes and Miller had previously done. In this way, Demos did actually address the gendered expectations of the society that existed in Salem at the time.

People who were studying the Salem Witchcraft Trials were beginning to ask new questions and take a different look at the trials. This was in part due to the emergence of postmodernism. Although not in full swing yet, postmodernism was beginning to rise with the increase in feminist theory. Postmodernism asked new questions of sources and texts and also opened the door for new approaches which is why it emerged along the same time as feminist theory as it pertains to the study of history. This new approach emerges because historians, particularly those interested in women's history were not happy with the unequal representation of men and women in history. Historians began to realize that there needed to be a new approach to studying women because just as people of different races had vastly different experiences throughout history, so did people of different genders. This concept would be more fleshed out in the 1980s when historians like Joan Scott would write about the need for and methodology of gender analysis.<sup>49</sup>

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum published a work called *Salem Possessed* in 1974. In this work, they took a new look at some of the trial documents and other pieces of evidence from the Salem trials. This also included the story behind Samuel Parris and a chapter entitled "1692: Some New Perspectives." They made an important observation: "Salem witchcraft. For most Americans the episode ranks in familiarity somewhere between Plymouth Rock and Custer's Last Stand...As a dramatic package, the events of 1692 are just too neat, highlighted but also insulated from serious research by the very floodlights which illuminate them."<sup>50</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum seemed to argue against using the popular culture sources that have popped up as credible sources.

Boyer and Nissenbaum, like Demos, asked questions about the children and how they were raised. For them, it was the adults who manipulated the situation that turned into the Salem

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<sup>49</sup> Joan Scott, "Joan Scott: Excerpts from Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." In *Historians on History: Readings*, by John Tosh, 141-49. Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Paul S. Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum. "1692: Some New Perspective". *Salem Possessed; the Social Origins of Witchcraft*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974. Pg. 22.

Witchcraft Trials. They also quote Cotton Mather [a consistent source] who apparently said the outbreak was due to “the ‘conjurations’ of thoughtless youths, including, of course, the suffering girls themselves.”<sup>51</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum argue that it was the adults and not the children who “determined...the direction the witchcraft accusations would take; it was they, it seems, who first concluded that witchcraft was even in the picture at all.”<sup>39</sup> This was not an approach that had really been taken before. Boyer and Nissenbaum were asking historians to look at the accusers as more than victims of witchcraft and to look to the parents for the true sources of accusations. This is interesting in that it would have been a good reason for them to do a gender analysis of the trials. They could have looked at parenting roles and the impact that specific gender roles had on the girls who were involved in the trials. At this point, they had the tools to do so. Yet, they chose not to.

Demos focused on “big picture” ideas and conclusions while Boyer and Nissenbaum returned their focus to individuals as well as to some major thematic issues. The same year that Boyer and Nissenbaum published *Salem Possessed*, Chadwick Hansen wrote an article called “The Metamorphosis of Tituba, or Why American Intellectuals Can’t Tell an Indian Witch from a Negro” (1974). This was a very important article because Hansen chose to look at the way in which a singular woman was addressed in different works about the Salem Witchcraft Trials. Tituba was one of the first women to be accused of being a witch in Salem. She was slave to Samuel Parris and was the first to confess to being a witch yet very little is known about her. In fact, and this is part of Hansen’s point, even the way in which her race was portrayed changed over time.

Hansen began with the statement that Tituba “appears in the seventeenth century court documents and contemporary narratives.”<sup>52</sup> According to those same documents, Tituba is always described as an Indian, although the spelling of her name varied. Hansen references John Hale who, around 1702, referred to her as the “Indian Woman” who assisted in “occult experiments” that

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<sup>51</sup> Boyer and Nissenbaum, 23.

<sup>52</sup> Chadwick Hansen. “The Metamorphosis of Tituba, or Why American Intellectuals Can’t Tell an Indian from a Negro.” *The New England Quarterly* 47 no. 1 (March 1974): 4.

began the Salem trials.<sup>53</sup> Moving to the Nineteenth Century, Hansen references the Reverend Charles W. Upham [whom other scholars had also referenced] who suggested in his work, *Salem Witchcraft* (1867) that the magic practiced by Tituba was not English magic [which had been presented in the court documents from the Seventeenth Century] but “Indian” magic.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly there is no contestation of the assertion that Tituba did practice some type of magic. From Mather to the fictitious works of Forbes and Miller, Tituba was always assumed to be a witch. This makes sense. She has always been connected with nature and up until this point she was also connected with magic and mysticism. Tituba’s unique race in the sea of Puritan “white” people and her status as a slave [which was rare in Salem] meant that she held a great air of mystery and therefore was easily a scapegoat for fear. Hansen deviated from Porter’s earlier analysis of the change in the portrayal of Tituba’s race because he was arguing the opposite of Porter: that there was no basis for the change in the portrayal of Tituba’s race that took place over time.

One year after Upham’s narrative, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote *Giles Corey of the Salem Farms* and in Act I, Scene III of that play, the script refers to Tituba as the “half-Indian meaning that she had an “Indian” mother and a “black” father.<sup>54</sup> Hansen argues that, although Longfellow’s play was not particularly popular, it did become a source for other authors. Thus, this was one of the ways that Tituba’s race was changed. The idea of Tituba being “half-Indian and half-Negro” remained until the 1950s when historians and dramatists “emphasized the Negro half of her by endowing her with invented characteristics which seemed to them appropriate to a Negro.”<sup>55</sup> Hansen cited John Fiske who described Tituba as being of “low intelligence.”<sup>43</sup> Even Marion Starkey, whom Hansen also quoted described Tituba as “half-savage” and as a person who was “lazy.”<sup>44</sup> These are attributes that are not flattering and they are reflective of a culture that still viewed

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<sup>53</sup> Hansen, 5

<sup>54</sup> Hansen, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Hansen, 7.

African Americans through a lens of racism. This is not something that Hansen pointed out specifically, although he did not agree with many of the previous portrayals of Tituba's race.

Hansen refuted many of the changes in the portrayal of Tituba by citing the idea that there is no evidence to support any of these changes. In fact, he even criticized the sister discipline of sociology, stating that "...unless the sociologist is aware of this [the different criteria used by sociologists and historians to determine relevant facts] when he borrows from the work of historians, he runs the risk not only of writing second-rate history but second-rate sociology as well."<sup>56</sup> This was Hansen's response to people like John Fiske who used racial generalizations to portray Tituba without evidence to substantiate those impressions of this shadowy figure who is barely present in the historical record. The last aspect of Tituba's identity as an "Indian" was erased with Miller's *The Crucible* that was previously discussed in this paper. In Miller's play, Tituba is known as the "Negro slave."<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, Hansen criticizes John Demos for calling Tituba a "Negro slave" and cites him as an example of historians paying "more attention to each other than to primary source material."<sup>58</sup> Demos does not seem to cite anything specific that would explain why he labeled Tituba as such.

Hansen called for historians to stick to the primary evidence offered from the Seventeenth Century. This is evidence that Porter tried to address but not to the satisfaction of defining what race Tituba was. In 1976, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich did stick to the evidence and wrote "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735." Her goal was different from Hansen's in that she was trying to show how women were viewed from a religious standpoint at the time that the trials took place. Her premise was that "well-behaved women seldom make history", which is her reasoning behind the popularity of the trials and people of the Salem Witchcraft

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<sup>56</sup> Hansen, 8-9.

<sup>57</sup> Hansen, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Hansen, 11.

Trials.<sup>59</sup> She writes also to challenge the assumption of Edmund Morgan that the Puritan wife was weak and could not be expected to do much.<sup>60</sup> The way that Thatcher Ulrich supported her ideas was through the writings and sermons of Cotton Mather, Thomas Foxcraft, Benjamin Wadsworth and more. Using these, in some ways Thatcher Ulrich refuted popular conceptions of how Puritan women were viewed. For example, she states that “a virtuous woman wrote” and one piece of evidence was Cotton Mather’s funeral sermon for Elizabeth Cotton where “he drew from [her own] writings at several stages of her life.”<sup>61</sup>

Thatcher Ulrich drew conclusions predominantly based on primary source materials. One conclusion that she came to was that “the marriage discourses support the implication of the funeral literature that women were expected to be rational as well as righteous, capable of independent judgment as well as deference, and as responsible as their spouses for knowing the word of God and for promoting the salvation of the family.”<sup>62</sup> Essentially, Thatcher Ulrich argued that men and women were viewed as predominantly equal spiritually. Much like Kittredge, Thatcher Ulrich challenged general scholarship that had gone before her. She states that there is importance in a “narrow study” of the witchcraft trials and that there is a need to “move from static concepts like ‘patriarchal New England society’ to more intricate questions about the interplay of values and practice over time.”<sup>63</sup>

As stated, Tituba was not only a prominent figure in the early days of the Salem Witchcraft Trials, since then she has also remained elusive. The only account that historians have of her life before, during and after the trials comes in the form of a literary novel by Maryse Conde. Maryse Conde was born in Guadeloupe in the French Caribbean and is a professor with a doctorate in

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<sup>59</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. “Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature 1668-1735.” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 20.

<sup>60</sup> Thatcher Ulrich, 22.

<sup>61</sup> Thatcher Ulrich, 25.

<sup>62</sup> Thatcher Ulrich, 30.

<sup>63</sup> Thatcher Ulrich, 40.

literature. She has taught French Studies at Columbia University since 1995 and is currently on their faculty list.<sup>64</sup> First published in 1986, and then again in 1992, with an English translation by Richard Philcox, Conde's novel *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* gives an account of who Tituba was as a human being. This novel begins with the fundamental assumption that Tituba is an African slave who was brought to Barbados. One of the major themes throughout the novel is sexuality. This is a theme that has been reflected previously in works of literature and theater that have been discussed in this paper already. Conde is very explicit with her feelings, and she begins her novel with the startling line "Abena, my mother, was raped by an English sailor..."<sup>65</sup>

Part of what makes this book so interesting is the very nature of Tituba herself. Conde creates her as a very sexual woman and takes the reader through Tituba's evolution from an innocent child to an old woman. When Tituba first meets the man who will become her first husband, Conde writes a passage that describes Tituba discovering her body's response to the man. "As I neared my pudenda, it seemed that it was no longer me but John Indian who was caressing me. Out of the depths of my body gushed a pungent tidal wave that flooded my thighs."<sup>66</sup> Tituba becomes a feminine figure who is in touch with her sexuality.

Tituba as constructed by Conde did not fit the general ideals of women [and slave women specifically] from the seventeenth century that people in the twentieth century had. Tituba was sexual, she did not capitulate to her husband and she was not afraid of defining herself as a witch. Another thing that sets Conde's version of Tituba apart from other accounts is that she is willing to speak up. When she was first accused, Conde has Tituba asking "Why is it you pick on me as soon as it's talk of spells? What about your neighbors?"<sup>67</sup> Tituba was targeted, at least from Conde's view,

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<sup>64</sup> "Department of French and Romance Philology." Department of French and Romance Philology. Accessed June 01, 2012. [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/french/department/fac\\_bios/conde.htm](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/french/department/fac_bios/conde.htm).

<sup>65</sup> Condé, Maryse. *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992. Pg. 3.

<sup>66</sup> Conde, 15.

<sup>67</sup> Conde, 81.

because she was different and because she had knowledge of herbs and such. Conde's Tituba reflects a woman who is very confident in herself and very much so willing to stand up for herself. For the first time Tituba has a strong voice and this seems appropriate to someone writing in the context of the 1980s. Women were becoming more and more independent and self-confident in their roles as social and political citizens.

Conde's Tituba was married twice. After the trials ended by this account, Tituba was released from prison and sold to Benjamin Cohen d-Azevedo who was a Jewish merchant with many children. After many of the children died in an epidemic, Tituba went home to Barbados and lived in a couple of different places before settling where she had begun. There she took in a young man who became her lover and it was there that Conde had her end her days. Of course, much of what Conde wrote does not have a lot of historical evidence to back it up. As far as historians can tell, Tituba's story ends with her being sold to pay off prison debts somewhere around 1693.<sup>68</sup>

Conde's novel reflects the idea that women could be sexually free. Published in the 1980s it came at a time when "Second-Wave Feminism" had just given women the chance to break out of traditional roles. Women were becoming more career focused and taking charge of their own lives and sexuality. They were coming off of a time of sexual liberation. The 1980s were a time where there was a struggle once again between conservative groups hoping to re-establish sexual boundaries and groups that liked the freedom of the 1960s and 1970s as well as a whole new fear of sexual freedom and the AIDS epidemic.<sup>69</sup> Conde seemed to be fighting against this fear and attempting to come out of the 1980s with a renewed sense of sexuality reflected in Tituba. In this way, like Forbes and Miller before her, Conde used the Salem trials to comment the cultural world around her.

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<sup>68</sup> Conde, "Historical Note".

<sup>69</sup> D'Emilio, 354-355.

In the vein of Conde, Porter and others, Bernard Rosenthal wrote an article in 1998, that challenged previous scholarship on Tituba. His article, ironically entitled “Tituba’s Story” called into question many of the myths that seem to surround Tituba. Rosenthal, like Starkey and some of the other previous authors, was not afraid to root some of his argument in literary analysis. “...Tituba has a unique role in the literature about Salem, for her story has taken on nothing short of mythical dimensions.”<sup>70</sup> This is true, as Hansen addressed in his critique of the change in portrayal of Tituba’s race. This is also evident in the fact that there is a fictional work dedicated to telling a story of Tituba’s life. Rosenthal specifically names Charles Upham and Elizabeth Gaskell as people who, in both the historical and literary sphere, respectively wrote of Tituba as a Negro without any real factual basis.

The authors discussed here all did comprehensive analyses of the Salem Witchcraft Trials. As the century went on, scholarship changed focus from being about the general ideologies surrounding the trials to looking at specific people. Each scholarly work went hand in hand with the literary works that were produced in that time frame. There has been a progression from asking general questions about the belief system surrounding the trials to asking more specific questions about the people involved. Yet, the questions that remains are; why are these trials of such interest? And why look at literary works?

By examining the scholarship that has been done on the Salem Witchcraft Trials in conjunction with the literary novels and plays that have been done on them, it is easier to see the connection between how the portrayal of the trials has changed over time. The study of the trials was done in multiple spheres, and only by looking through each of those spheres can people in general really understand the importance of them. The trials are important to study because they have been used as a way for people who are academics and people who are not to make sense of their own contemporary issues. Scholars from Kittredge to Orians all the way through to Porter,

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<sup>70</sup> Bernard Rosenthal. “Tituba’s Story”. *The New England Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (June 1998): 190.



and Hansen, into the twenty-first century have continued to come back to the trials in part because the general population keeps coming back to them. People keep coming back to the trials because they are so mysterious. There is so little that is known absolutely about the trials. The mysteriousness allows people to bend the trials to get across a specific agenda. The trials have the potential to have so many political, social, religious and economic connotations applied to them that it makes them one event that people from multiple disciplines and backgrounds can relate to.

The public interest in the trials comes from popular culture works such as Forbes, Miller and Conde. Each of these authors used their own works to make a commentary on the issues that were going on at the time that they were writing. The popularity of their works is significant because it shows that the people also find the trials to be a good way to make sense of the tumultuous issues that have happened, particularly in the twentieth century. The present condition of an author's life and world affects what they write and study. They can project the issues of their world onto another one. The trials are an easy target because so much is unknown about them. Yet, there is also so much known. It seems like there are endless approaches to the trials, and that is what makes them so relatable to troubled times. As historians, it is important to take a comprehensive look at all of the things written on the trials because they each shape the collective knowledge that society has about the trials. From literary criticism to novels, to plays to historical articles; all help to influence what people know about the trials and how they use them to make sense of their own lives.

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