

UC Santa Cruz

UC Santa Cruz Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

The Unreportable: (Re)reporting the Archive in Maryse Condé's I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2jz3721j>

ISBN

9798184183978

Author

Yu, Sung Wok

Publication Date

2026-05-29

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

**THE UNREPORTABLE: (RE)REPORTING THE ARCHIVE IN MARYSE
CONDÈ'S *I, TITUBA*, *BLACK WITCH OF SALEM***

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

LITERATURE

by

Sung W. Yu

June 2026

The Thesis of Sung W. Yu
is approved:

Professor Susan Gillman, Chair

Professor Vilashini Cooppan

Professor Zac Zimmer

Peter Biehl
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Copyright © by

Sung W. Yu

2026

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Section 1: Reassembling Historical Reports.....	12
Section 2: Reanimated Voice: Redefine Puritan Fear.....	20
Section 3: Rework the Archive: Refusal of Puritan Authority.....	44
Section 4: (Re)report with Fiction and History: A Conclusion.....	62
Bibliography.....	74

Abstract

The Unreportable: (Re)reporting the Archive in Maryse Condé *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*

Sung W. Yu

This thesis examines how *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* by Maryse Condé (1934-2024) rethinks the limits of historical knowledge through “(re)reporting” the archive. A term coined to describe the way the novel revisits the documented event of the Salem witch trials, (re)reporting exposes the conditions that determined whose voices could appear as credible, coherent, or fully human subjects in the first place. Because Tituba’s interiority is inaccessible in colonial archives, Condé’s novel does not attempt to recover historical truth but rather reworks the terms of reportability through speculative narration, first-person voice, and formal experimentation. By positioning Tituba as a (re)reporter, the novel reassembles Puritan records and redefines religious fear as stemming from Puritan authorizing of the language of guilt, fear, and racialized difference. (Re)reporting operates in the thesis as a narrative practice that both engages and unsettles archival authority. The theological and legal frameworks that construct Tituba as deviant are (re)reported so that her voice is reanimated through the language of fear, and the novel refuses Puritan epistemology through an ethic of care and spiritual continuity. Situating Condé alongside black writers such as Sylvia Wynter, Toni Morrison, and Saidiya Hartman, the thesis ultimately argues that fiction functions as a critical method to confront and reconfigure the conditions under which history becomes interpretable.

Acknowledgements

Two years have passed since I first began research on this thesis. During that time, my work has been shaped by my experience in the graduate program at UC Santa Cruz, where I developed as a scholar and encountered the power of literature and history across courses, writing, and shared intellectual life. I am especially grateful to my graduate committee members, professors, and colleagues, as well as to the program itself, for the thoughtful feedback that deepened this project.

This project began in my earliest days of study, when I took *The Fantastic* with my advisor, Susan Gillman. Her engagement with Condé's work and her kindness as a mentor guided this project from its inception. I am deeply grateful to Professor Gillman for her careful attention to language, which challenged me to write with greater precision and nuance, and for encouraging me to broaden the scope of my research through engagement with both scholarship and fiction. Under her guidance, I learned not only to historicize literary texts, but also to attend more closely to the textures and possibilities of language within primary works.

I also would like to thank my committee members, Professor Vilashini Cooppan and Professor Zac Zimmer, whose guidance has shaped this project over the years. In Professor Cooppan's Proseminar, I began to develop the initial framework for this project, which I continued to refine in her Time course. Through her courses and detailed feedback, she has deepened my attention to time as a critical dimension of analysis, enabling me to connect questions of temporality and speculative form with greater clarity and coherence across the project. Professor Zimmer's insights into

speculative fiction and time travel have encouraged me to engage colonial history from new angles, prompting me to revisit its narratives and question the logics of conquest that structure them. His rigorous and generous guidance helped me refine the project's central concepts, avoid overextended claims, and bring my readings of refusal, haunting, intertextuality, and nonlinear time into sharper formal focus.

I am grateful to the Department of Literature at UCSC for its support and for providing opportunities to participate in academic conferences as I developed this project. Over the past year, I presented portions of this thesis at conferences that helped me clarify and strengthen my arguments. I also thank my professors Renée Fox, Dorian Bell, and Kirsten Silva Gruesz, whose teaching and engagement with my work contributed to the development of this project. In addition, I would like to thank the Department of History, as well as history professors Nathaniel Deutsch and Catherine Jones, for shaping how I approach and think through historical questions. I offer special thanks to my colleagues, Lily, Rosa, Joan, Anthony, Ocean, Ariane, Lena, J, and Jose, whose support and companionship sustained me throughout this time. Even while commuting from San Jose, I never felt isolated in Santa Cruz because of the community we built together.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my mother, who has sacrificed herself to support me for my education by giving up her East for my West.

Introduction

In “Venus in Two Acts” (2008), Saidiya Hartman confronts archives that record enslaved Black life only in fragments, where the subject cannot report her life within records mediated by those who exercise power over her.¹ As Hartman writes, “no one remembered her name or recorded the things she said” (2). She underscores the archive’s preservation of presence and erasure of voice. In *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), Hartman notes that “Without a name, there is the risk that she might never escape the oblivion that is the fate of minor lives and be condemned to the pose for the rest of her existence, remaining a meager figure appended to the story of a great man” (15). The girl is *underreported* in partial and distorted forms—images, case files, captions, and surveys that document vulnerability without preserving interior life. Perpetuated by strategies of silence that regulate the field of articulation, her lived experience remains *unreported* and therefore *unreportable*.

The *unreported* names that which has not yet been recorded or has been omitted from the archive, including forms of interior experiences, memories, and feelings that remain outside conventional modes of record. While the term might imply the possibility of recovery, as though a missing account could be found, supplemented, or restored, the historical unreported could also reflect deliberate silence produced by dominant historical narratives. Some subjects disappear from the record altogether whereas others remain visible only through hostile or externally

¹ For instance, in analyzing Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), Avery Gordon shows how slave narratives were mediated by white abolitionist sponsors for tone, content, and acceptable representation.

imposed categories that reduce them to evidence, criminality, pathology, labor, or accusation. Between these poles lies the *underreported*, referring to lives that appear only partially, or distorted within the record. An enslaved woman, for instance, may be documented as property or deviance without her interiority becoming recognizable within the archive's terms.

The *unreportable*, in comparison, marks a structural limit: it refers to subjects who cannot be recognized as coherent historical subjects within the conditions that organize historical knowledge itself. To be unreportable often presupposes a condition of being unreported or underreported as partial records approach a threshold beyond which the archive can no longer identify a subject. Partial visibility does not necessarily resolve unreportability. Rather than treating absence as a simple lack of information, I approach reporting as a mediated act shaped by narration, institutional authority, and power that selects, organizes, and authorizes the terms of knowledge. Reporting always implies a relation: one reports on, reports about, or reports good to someone else.

Tituba, one of the first people accused during the Salem witch trials, is underreported and unreported, and is thereby rendered unreportable within the Puritan archive. She is underreported because her name appears in unstable and partial forms within the trial records. Her interiority remains unreported as her condemnation for witchcraft and non-biblical knowledge silences her voice under religious authority. As a result, her story becomes unreportable within an archive that cannot capture her interiority.

Scholars have discussed her relegation to the margins of history. In an earlier analysis of *Tituba*, Chadwick Hansen (1974) highlights the uncertainty of *Tituba*'s race as he writes, "her own race has been changed from Indian, to half-Indian and half-Negro, to Negro" (3). Elaine Breslaw (1996) notes, "[*Tituba*'s] fate after that date is unknown. *Tituba* disappears from the public record at that point" (175). Merinda Simmons (2014) also points out that "*Tituba*'s story is fodder for historical and anthropological debate" (111). But what produced her as unreportable? How to confront the power that authored both the report and its silence? Might the systems that produce the archive—naming, judgment, and authority—be unreported, revealing some things while concealing others? Maryse Condé ponders these questions by reimagining the very conditions under which the archive reports as her novel *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* (1986) reimagines the Salem witch trials.²

The interview with Condé, appended as one of a series of paratexts following the end of the novel proper, clarifies how her method responds to these constraints when she rejects the category of the historical novel: "For me *Tituba* is not a historical novel. *Tituba* is just the opposite of a historical novel. I was not interested at all in what her real life could have been" ("Afterward" 192).³ Condé draws a distinction between the historian, who "studies the facts," and herself as a "dreamer"

² *Tituba* also reflects how she would be stripped of the means by which history usually recognizes personhood. Her reduction to "a slave originating from the West Indies and probably practicing 'hoodoo'" (147) just as the black girl in Hartman's book to "item number 304" demonstrates the reduction of Black life to data, evidence, or illustration within racialized systems of knowledge—appendages to the story of a "great man"—rather than subjects worthy of history in their own right.

³ This "Afterword" in the book includes Ann Armstrong Scarboro's interview with Condé as a paratext and the former's analysis on *I, Tituba*.

(192), committed to imagining past lives from within rather than verifying them from without. Reading in light of the archive's limits, this refusal signals a reorientation of its conditions of reportability. Condé relocates historical inquiry into speculation, affect, and narrative invention. This method also extends her rewriting of Hester Prynne, whose story is reframed from the margins of Puritan judgment, allowing forms of resistance to appear beyond the limits imposed by earlier narratives.⁴ Condé's refusal of archival realism becomes a theory of historical knowledge itself. For subjects like Tituba, truth becomes reportable through a reworking of the forms that determine the terms of reportability. Thus, Condé blends history and fiction to restore the unreportable.

I, Tituba traces a life that extends beyond the fragmentary record: from her birth in the violence of transatlantic slavery in Barbados, to her formation within Afro-Caribbean spiritual practices, to her entry into plantation life under Susanna Endicott, where she is subjected to religious discipline before being sold to Samuel Parris. In Salem, the sudden afflictions of young girls precipitate Tituba's accusation, reporting her presence as evidence of witchcraft. Following the trials, Tituba is sold once more, this time to Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo. The narrative follows her movement across spaces—plantation, household, prison, and exile—while foregrounding forms of experience the archive does not record, including her interior reflections on the Puritans and healing practices. By centering Tituba's voice within

⁴ In an interview, Condé notes her familiarity with *The Scarlet Letter* and situates Tituba alongside Hester Prynne through historical proximity and literary association. She remarks that although she did not consciously aim to "subvert existing versions of history," she recognized a "link between Tituba and Nathaniel Hawthorne," suggesting an implicit dialogue with earlier representations of Puritan womanhood ("Afterward" 193).

these events, the novel articulates the repeated recasting of her life into forms recognizable to the archive, marking the limits of reportability that structure the conditions of historical appearance.

If the unreportable marks the limits of what the archive can inscribe, those limits also expose something about the archive itself. The same structures that construct Tituba as unreportable, by fixing her as evidence, accusation, or type, also constrain the reportability of those who produce the record. Puritan ministers, magistrates, and observers appear as authoritative voices, yet they are recorded only through the language of piety, judgment, and moral certainty that their own system authorizes. Their fears, contradictions, and uncertainties remain unarticulated within the discourse that secures their authority. They, too, are unreported, not through absence but through the narrowing of articulation. The archive organizes all subjects through selective forms of reportability. By returning to these conditions, Condé's *I, Tituba* shows that the problem is not only that Tituba is unreportable, but also that the archive's reporting practices limit the production of knowledge including those who claim to speak with certainty.

Unlike the historical Tituba, Condé's Tituba becomes the one who observes, interprets, and reports them. Both earlier and recent critics of *I, Tituba* such as Elisabeth Mudimbé-Boyi (1993), Gema Ortega (2014), and Junghyun Hwang (2021) explore the reworking of Tituba's voice and rewriting of Puritan historiographies.⁵

⁵ Mudimbé-Boyi argues that Condé's decision to let Tituba tell her own story is both a literary and political act: a counter-history that restores voice to a woman erased from both archive and imagination. Condé "withdraw[s] to the unauthorial position of an interpreter or mediator," allowing Tituba to become "the narrator and the narrated" (752-753), a voice that speaks from the border of history and restores "the voiceless black woman" to authorship (754). Condé's act of giving voice is

Tituba is a “narrating subject” emerging from silence (Mudimbé-Boyi 755), a self-creating, “speaking subject” (Ortega 115), and reconfigured “subject of history” (Hwang 6). These three critics in common understand Tituba as a subject who emerges through narrative against the conditions that silence, marginalize, or fix her within history.

To extend these critical views, I introduce the role of a (re)reporter and the idea of (re)reporting what has already been recorded, turning attention to both the Puritans and Tituba herself. Just as Tituba appears in the archive as an unreportable enslaved woman, the Puritans, too, are revealed as unknown, opaque, obscured by the language of their hollow faith. To name a witch is to demonstrate faith, to redirect guilt outward and reaffirm communal order. The novel foregrounds this process by repeatedly staging acts of naming within Tituba’s narration, allowing the readers to witness the production of moral categories by language.⁶ Given that the novel reports who the Puritans are, I understand this as an act of (re)reporting—the capacity to be made reportable again, rewritten through the unreportable voice, both referring to and refusing the existing terms. Condé accomplishes her (re)report by reanimating Tituba’s voice, appropriating and reworking the Puritan language to redefine both the

also an act of inversion—one that dismantles the author’s control as much as it dismantles the Puritans’. Ortega argues that reimagines identity as a fluid, hybrid, and self-authored process, produced through ongoing encounters with others rather than determined by fixed historical or ideological categories. Hwang draws on Walter Benjamin’s concept of historical materialism, showing the novel’s challenge to linear historiography and reclamation of the past as a living site of struggle, survival, and remembrance. By juxtaposing fragments of history, myth, and memory, Condé “ruptures the narrative of progress” and re-articulates Salem from its periphery (3). In Benjamin’s sense, this act “brushes history against the grain” and establishes the constitutive entanglement of civilization with violence and exclusion.

⁶ Terms such as “witch,” “sin,” and “evil” produce the categories that Puritan authority becomes enforceable.

Puritans and herself as Puritan faith and fear rely on constructing Tituba as unreportable.

By (re)report, I refer to a narrative practice that works within and against the archive at once. The prefix “re,” held in parentheses, marks a tension: Tituba must report, yet what she reports has already been recorded, named, and fixed by the Puritans in power. Therefore, her speech does not begin from an untouched origin; it returns to existing knowledge in order to “transform” it. (Re)report involves the reassembly of fragmented archival traces like the Salem witch trials, the reanimation of a voice reduced to silence, and the reinterpretation of the language by which judgement has been imposed. This process is not the recovery of a complete past. (Re)report is a reworking of its conditions of intelligibility, particularly its use of first-person voice: Puritan belief is reinterpreted, Tituba’s subjectivity is redefined beyond the categories of witchcraft and sin, and Puritan historiography is renarrated as a site of ongoing contestation rather than fixed knowledge.

Tituba’s act of speaking back to her Puritan superior, which was impossible within the archive, becomes imaginable. The novel constructs moments of direct address in which Tituba’s first-person narration reverses the structure of accusation, positioning her as a speaking subject who interrogates Puritan authority. For example, when her master Samuel Parris condemns her for witchcraft, Tituba strives to prove her innocence: ““Why is it you pick on me as soon as it’s talk of spells?”” (79). Further, the readers gain access to Tituba’s interiority when she speaks of the operation of racism and religious fear as everyday, spoken discourses of power:

“‘Tituba, a slave originating from the West Indies and probably practicing ‘hoodoo.’ Why was I going to be ignored? This question too had crossed my mind. Is it because nobody cares about a Negress and her trials and tribulations? Is that why?’” (147). Tituba mourns her reduction to a racialized caricature imposed by the colonial archive.

The narrative strategy can be understood through Ortega’s account of Tituba’s emergence as a speaking subject who constructs her own representation through language. Tituba becomes the agent of her own narration, reworking the discourses that once fixed her identity rather than remaining “an object to be talked about or spoken for” (Ortega 115). Appropriating the language of accusation and turning it back on her accusers allows Tituba to (re)report the constitutive force of discourse. In this context, (re)reporting functions as a form of refusal that unsettles the archive.

This thesis develops its argument in four sections. To provide a better understanding of the tension between the Puritans and Tituba, the first section, “Reassembling Historical Reports” observes both the reported trials and the historical archive of Tituba. Drawing on texts such as Cotton Mather’s *On Witchcraft* (1692) and Salem trial records, this section argues that fear of witchcraft and non-Christian spirituality functions as a theological and legal framework that reports racial and cultural differences as guilt, constructing Tituba as a racialized figure of deviance. This process leads her to be only a figure of suspicion while the archive itself reinforces Puritan authority by privileging its language and Christian faith and suppressing alternative forms of belief. This framework shapes the problem of her

reportability by determining in advance the terms under which she can appear, constituting her as visible as accusation but not as subject. The later sections take up this problem through (re)reporting, which reengages these archival forms in order to make reportable the domain of their exclusion.

The second section, “Reanimated Voice: Redefine Puritan Fear” moves beyond fiction alone, placing the novel alongside historical accounts to trace Puritan fear. This section closely examines Tituba’s act of (re)reporting by focusing on how religious fear is narrated in *I, Tituba*. Her perspective does more than describe the raw violence of Puritans; it reengages the very language by which violence was articulated. This constitutes (re)reporting because Tituba repeats and repositions Puritan speech, returning to the terms of accusation in order to illuminate the production, circulation, and perpetuation of fear through them. To examine the operation of Puritan fear as a theological and social structure through Tituba’s narration, this section addresses four different fears: sin, shame, guilt, and loss of Puritan power. Tituba uses the very language that condemns her to reveal the Puritans’ dependence on fear to sustain their authority.⁷ Tituba’s voice (re)reports Puritan life by hollowing out Puritan piety and centering cultural fear as the narrative engine through which the archive is reimagined.

The third section, “Rework the Archive: Refusal of Puritan Authority” observes the relationship between (re)report and refusal of the Puritan archive

⁷ Tituba, in Betsey’s words, proves it: “‘You’re a Negress, Tituba! You can only do evil. You are evil itself’” (75). Tituba does not censor the derogatory term. From the novel’s opening in Barbados, where Tituba begins to encounter and reframe colonial language, to her interactions in Salem, language becomes a space in which meaning is neither fixed nor owned by the Puritans.

through spiritual elements. It argues that Condé redefines non-Christian practices by opposing Puritan violence with Tituba's ethic of care. Scenes of healing and refusal of vengeance dismantle the Puritan claim to truth by showing dependence on violence.⁸ Tituba's spiritual practices threaten the Puritan community because the former offer another form of power—one that centers on community rather than the hierarchies to which the Puritans cling. This section concludes as Tituba's spiritual presence disrupts the established history, allowing her to be a figure of collective memory and resistance: "My real story starts where this one leaves off and it has no end" (171). In doing so, the novel reimagines the archive as a space where suppressed histories return, persist, and speak. At this point, (re)report takes precedence as the novel continues to ventriloquize Tituba after her death through shifting registers—song, prophecy, and communal memory—extending her voice beyond the historical record.

Engaging with Sylvia Wynter, Toni Morrison, and Saidiya Hartman, the final section, "(Re)report with Fiction and History: A Conclusion," situates *I, Tituba* within a broader theoretical framework that rethinks the relationship between history and fiction and the role of historians and fiction writers. Alongside Condé's work, I examine Wynter and Morrison's texts to argue that they (re)report the archive through unreportable characters, extending its intervention beyond a single narrative. This

⁸ Parris, for instance, exemplifies how his fear performs authority. His power as minister and patriarch relies on visible discipline. He converts his insecurity into control by punishing Tituba, using her body as a stage on which his authority is restored. Tituba's narration reveals this logic by repeating their words, such as Parris's threat to see her hanged as "a magnificent fruit swinging from the trees of Massachusetts" (73), so that their own language lays bare the violence and fear that underwrite their holiness. Even though lynching as we know it is historically later, Condé uses this metaphor deliberately to trace the continuum of racial violence leading toward later American atrocities. Parris's language anticipates the racial logic that will turn Black people's bodies into public displays of terror.

final section looks at how each writer crosses the boundary between fiction and history where speculative narration functions as a (re)report that works within the limits of the archive. By foregrounding unreportability as both a condition of archival violence and a mode of resistance, this section shows the necessity of fiction as a method for accessing interior life, collective memory, and suppressed histories.

This thesis rethinks history by tracing the structures of reporting. It suggests a wider field of inquiry into the dispersed and ongoing forms of accusation including the criminalization of other religious practices, the demonization of Indigenous and African spiritual systems, and the juridical construction of racial guilt beyond the Puritan archive. Rather than presenting a single, imposed version of Tituba, *I, Tituba* reimagines history as a space where unreportability is confronted, and where the act of narration itself becomes an unresolved, open-ended form of critique and of refusal.

This commitment is embedded in the novel's form. The first-person narrative positions Tituba as a witness, interpreter, and (re)reporter, reshaping the terms that structure the reportability of the Puritans. The footnotes interrupt the narrative surface, drawing attention to the limits of historical verification while exposing the instability of the archive. The postface materials, including the afterward and interview, further displace narrative authority by situating the text between history and invention as author, narrator, and archive remain in tension. Even the glossary, which appears to stabilize meaning, instead suggests how language itself carries the traces of report, power, and misrecognition. Fiction assembles history differently, making the silenced report and (re)report. Fiction and history are interdependent. This

shared practice of historical thinking recognizes reportability and unreportability as the very condition that makes historical truth possible.

Section 1: Reassembling Historical Reports

Cotton Mather

The Salem trial transcripts, sermons, and writings of figures such as Cotton Mather denied Tituba the status of a speaking subject. Reassembling these fragmented materials unmask the archive's construction of her as simultaneously unreported and unreportable. On one level, Tituba remains unreported as her life is only partially recorded or omitted, leaving open the possibility of recovery. On another, she is unreportable since the terms of the archive foreclose her interiority in advance. At the same time, this reassembly reveals that the Puritans themselves are not fully transparent within their own records. Their authority is preserved through a restricted language of piety and judgment that leaves their fears, contradictions, and uncertainties only partially articulated. Arguably, these writings are a field of constrained reportability in which both Tituba and the Puritans are differently shaped by the same structures of narration. Tituba appears only as an object of accusation, her interiority foreclosed, while the Puritans appear as speaking authorities whose inner contradictions remain only partially expressed.

Cotton Mather's *On Witchcraft* offers biblical guidance on how to act against the Devil. Mather viewed America as previously "the Devil's Territories" before the settlers arrived (14), but the phrase establishes a theological geography in which the land and its peoples could be morally condemned. Those outside the community,

especially slaves and Indigenous peoples with their own distinct religious practices and cultures, were construed as aligned with Satan's dominion as Mather's writing heightened the public fears of witchcraft and the supernatural: "a Foundation of WITCHCRAFT then laid, which if it were not seasonably discovered, would probably Blow up, and pull down all the Churches in the Country" (15). He warned that unchecked witchcraft would destroy the Puritan churches, reflecting the Puritans' deep anxiety that witchcraft was an existential threat to their community. This view relegates the richness of pre-colonial spiritual and non-Christian practices and cultures to something to be feared.

Puritan and colonial writings consistently report hostility toward forms of knowledge that fall outside Christian authority. The Puritans' rejection of other spiritual practices can be read alongside Danielle Boaz's analysis of colonial law's criminalization of African-derived faiths. Christian theologians in early modern England helped enforce witchcraft laws due to the belief that anyone with seeming supernatural powers must have made a pact with "Satan" (428). In the Anglophone Caribbean, obeah was not outlawed for proven harm but for "pretend[ing] to possess supernatural powers" (429), reflecting Protestant and Enlightenment hierarchies distinguishing "true" religion from superstition. This distinction, Boaz argues, stemmed from a theological and racial logic that denied African peoples the capacity for legitimate worship, branding their spiritual knowledge as sorcery or devilry. Such legal and moral taxonomies produce a condition of unreportability in which alternative spiritual systems cannot appear as belief but only as crime. Puritan and

colonial writing might have preserved its own authority within a discourse defined by its inability to account for its fears and contradictions. Christian monotheism does participate in a broader colonial modernity that turns other modes of being into offenses against both God and empire.

Puritan fear was entangled with their perception of other religious practices as both alluring and threatening. Critic Veta Smith Tucker captures the positioning of Tituba's racial identity as a focal point for Puritan anxieties:

The salient characteristic in the Puritan mind, shared by both Indians and Africans, was their degeneracy due to their alien culture, pagan rituals, and corrupted skin color. Therefore, being perceived as both African and Indian served not to diminish but to intensify the satanic stigma attached to Tituba and to heighten fears and fantasies Puritans projected on her. (628)

The historical Tituba became a convergence point where the Puritan imagination fused anxieties about the devil, race, and cultural difference. While magical demonic forces could create religious fear as Mather warned, these accounts demonstrate that the fear of witchcraft in Salem was also about the colonists' anxieties regarding the presence of racial others. "God's condemnation," Tucker writes, "was visible in the color of [Tituba's] skin" (625). These descriptions position Tituba as the surface onto which fear is projected through accumulated language.

In Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indian and Puritan Fantasies (1995), Elaine Breslaw underscores the ways in which the historical Tituba's identity alone made her a perpetual object of suspicion: "To the Puritans, as to most Englishmen, Indian religious practices were associated with Devil worship. As an

Indian, then, [Tituba] continued to symbolize a unique and fearful presence” (167).⁹ Tucker also shows that Tituba’s racial identity has been continually misrepresented and shaped by both Puritan fears and modern racial myths. Her “purloined identity” articulates the instability of racial categories, which are ideologically constructed, with “occult practice” often linked to West African traditions (Tucker 627). Whether seen as Native or Black, Tituba’s skin color signifies “alienation from God” and “reprobation” (625). Their sense of righteousness depends on having someone like Tituba to condemn.

In Condé’s *I, Tituba*, this racialized view is already established in the town. Samuel Parris points out Tituba’s physical appearance: “I know that the color of your skin is the sign of your damnation” (40). Colonial authorities had already carried a racialized definition of witch, whose servitude relegated into satanic affiliation. Even before the trial, Tituba’s husband John Indian, whom she met in Barbados, innocence holds no weight within this system: “Guilty? Oh, yes, you are and you always will be in their eyes” (90). John sees no point in clinging to innocence when guilt has already been presumed while Tituba insists on her innocence.¹⁰ However, her innocence does not enter the terms where she is recorded. It remains unreported since the trials can represent her only as evidence of guilt. The “truth” of her testimony does not exist on its own terms; it is refracted through religious prejudice. Within this racial and religious prejudice, Tituba’s innocence becomes unreportable. The trial makes plain the convergence of stereotypes of deceit and witchcraft in foreclosing

⁹ Breslaw’s *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem* is dedicated to analyzing the historical Tituba.

¹⁰ Ironically, Tituba is already labeled as an “imprudent” liar and is encouraged to lie to survive by denouncing others.

Tituba's subjectivity. By virtue of her race, Tituba is already ontologically harmful, cast out as a means of containing the Puritans' fear of sin.

The Trials and Systematic Silence

In "Warrant for the Apprehension of Tituba and Sarah Osborne, and Officer's Return" (1692), the language portrays the Puritan legal system's production of Tituba as a visible symbol of deviance. The categorization of Tituba as "an Indian Woman servant" frames her as an outsider whose actions are "contrary to the peace and Laws of our Sov'r Lord & Lady W'm & Mary" (John Hathorne).¹¹ By identifying her as an "Indian Woman servant" charged with witchcraft, the court embedded racial and cultural differences into the logic of legal guilt. As already condemned and her innocence unreportable, Tituba's identity made her an easy target. As noted in the indictment, Tituba was accused of "wickedly, maliciously, and feloniously [making] a covenant with the devil."¹² Elizabeth Hubbard, one of the girls who accused Tituba, referred to Tituba as "The [Apparition] of Tituba Indian."¹³ This phrasing racializes her guilt; the term "apparition" confirmed the Puritan imagination that had already determined her guilt. The Puritans inscribed their authority over her by perceiving her as both evidence and warning, a figure whose alleged "lawlessness" justified their own claims to divine and colonial law.¹⁴

¹¹ A magistrate of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and Salem

¹² "(Indictment of Tituba, for Covenanting (Returned Ignoramus))" by Abraham Haseltine, a foreman of the Grand Jury (1693)

¹³ "The Deposition of Elizabeth Hubbard" (1692)

¹⁴ In examining Tituba's historical records, Zubeda Jalalzai's essay (2009) analyzes the Reverend John Hale's *A Modest Enquiry* (1702), which inscribes Tituba into the origins of the "witchcake." Jalalzai notes that Hale describes Tituba and John Indian as the ones who made the cake. Jalalzai emphasizes that these contradictions show how even contemporary accounts cannot be taken as transparent facts: each narrative is shaped by bias, mediation, and the purposes of its recorder. Hale's writing may itself reflect projection and invention rather than truth. For Jalalzai, the witchcake episode exemplifies the

Breslaw highlights how racialized stereotypes shaped the community's response to witchcraft accusations. Historically, the Puritans condemned Tituba while restoring the Puritan woman Mary Sibley, who had instructed Tituba and John to prepare a witchcake to identify the source of the girls' afflictions.¹⁵ Consider the following analysis from Breslaw's book:

Sibley, a full member of the church—a saint—and supposedly immune to such pagan practices on the basis of her ethnicity, could be restored to the congregation of faithful with an act of repentance. But Tituba was an outsider and never fully accepted by the Puritans. She had been born somewhere in the West Indies, came from an alien culture, and spoke of strange imps and creatures [...] The Puritans underscored the gulf that separated themselves from the Indians by accusing Tituba and not Mary Sibley of witchcraft. (169)

Sibley's identity as a Christian "saint" provided a path back into the fold of the congregation. Through the juxtaposition of Sibley's restoration and Tituba's condemnation, the Salem trials consolidated colonial identity against non-white and non-Christian people. When Tituba pointed to Sibley's role, Parris did not respond with the same urgency or severity that met Tituba's testimony. Instead, he set aside Sibley's culpability, only addressing it later "in a less punitive fashion" (Breslaw 109). The silence in the record around Parris's "immediate response" shows the

problems of "historical verification" and highlights how Tituba's identity and her role have been continually rewritten through conflicting records (416).

¹⁵ According to Breslaw, a witchake is a cake made with the afflicted person's urine and fed to a dog, believed to reveal or harm the witch responsible for the affliction (89). She also explains that magical practices such as fortune-telling are "not unusual in Puritan communities" (90). Since Puritan eschatology only accepts "prayer" to exorcise (95), Mary Sibley, despite her being a "covenanting member of the church," turns to this form of folk magic as an alternative means of intervention, drawing on practices that circulate alongside, and sometimes beneath, official religious doctrine. It was Sibley, who called upon both John Indian and Tituba, the Parris family's cook, to perform a counter-magical ritual in order to unmask the witch (95-96). Condé also illustrates this as Sibley tells Tituba to mix urine in the cake (76).

selective nature of justice: a white congregant could be disciplined quietly while Tituba's accusation marked her permanently as an outsider aligned with witchcraft.

Rethinking this historical imbalance, Condé imagines Tituba's verbal denial by pointing at Mary Sibley when Parris accuses the former of witchcraft. Tituba confronts, "“Why is it you pick on me as soon as it's talk of spells? What about your neighbors? Mary Sibley seems to know quite a bit about them! Ask her!”" (79). This moment, which would not have been possible in the historical record, marks a shift in narrative authority. While Mary Sibley appears in the archive, her role is only partially reported, her involvement contained within a framework that preserves Puritan legitimacy. Condé's Tituba (re)reports this partial record by recalling Sibley as an initiator of suspicion, redistributing the burden of accusation that the archive had fixed onto Tituba alone. In doing so, the novel uncovers the historical record's protection of Puritan authority and maintenance of Tituba as the emblematic witch. *I, Tituba* opposes the idea that Puritan stories are the only source of history and truth.

Tituba is relegated to the status of both a witch and a slave. Once in Salem, Tituba finds herself surrounded by Parris's daughter Betsey, and his niece Abigail, and the other village girls. Abigail expresses her curiosity about witchcraft, "“Tituba, do you think there are people in league with the devil living in Salem?”" (58). They press her for tales of witchcraft and begin naming women in Salem as companions of the devil. Betsey proves receptive to the witchcraft stories that Abigail spreads as the former asks Tituba: "“Do people in league with the devil actually exist, Tituba?”" (59). As Breslaw observes, such questioning reflects a familiarity with magical

thinking already present within Puritan culture. Within this charged atmosphere, Tituba suggests that Puritans such as Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne might be associated with the devil (58). Tituba navigates the need to secure her own position while participating in the very process that identifies and designates others as suspects.

While slavery and witchcraft operate as distinct categories within Puritan society, they converge in Tituba's case through a shared logic of exclusion. Slavery fixes her as a racialized and subordinated body within the household whereas witchcraft supplies the theological language in which that body is interpreted as dangerous. The accusation of witchcraft does not replace her status as enslaved; it intensifies it by casting racial difference as spiritual threat. This convergence unfolds first within the household as Tituba recounts how her mistress Susanna Endicott begins to regard her with suspicion, questioning whether she might be a witch. When Tituba relays this encounter to her husband, John Indian situates that suspicion within a broader colonial pattern: ““Not a year ago Governor Dutton had two slaves who had been accused of dealing with Satan burned in the square at Bridgetown. For the whites that's what being a witch means...”” (26). This racialized definition of witch collapsed servitude into satanic affiliation.

The second section of the thesis examines how Condé reimagines history through Tituba's voice, which (re)reports the four religious fears of sin, shame, guilt, and the loss of power that lies unreported behind a history that once silenced her. Puritan rituals, recorded in the archive as acts of sanctification—confession,

purification, and the expulsion of evil—are (re)reported in the novel as expressions of fear. The Puritans displaced their own fears onto Tituba’s body, turning her into the embodiment of the evil they sought to purge. The violence lies in the fear that shapes speech, turning racial difference into the language of evil. Her persecution becomes the ritual by which the Puritans cleanse their own conscience, redirecting inward guilt into outward domination.

Section 2: Reanimated Voice: Redefine Puritan Fear

Fear I: Skin/Sin and Social Order

Tituba’s (re)reporting produces an alternative account by reworking the language that reports history. Tituba inhabits the Puritan language to expose the Puritans’ perception and naming of those they feared. In doing so, Tituba’s narration (re)reports the unreportable dimensions of Puritan discourse, redefining their religious language as a system that marks and disciplines racialized bodies. The novel presents a subject whose speech is produced within layered authorial and discursive frameworks, where “Tituba’s story does not hover in isolation as a simple, unfettered, or unstructured truth” (Simmons 113). This lens underscores that reassembly does not yield a stable or fully recoverable subject, but instead identifies how all subjects—enslaved, accused, or authoritative—are constituted through narrative constraints. Arguably, these Puritan and colonial writings form a field of constrained reportability in which both Tituba and the Puritans are shaped, albeit differently and differentially, by the same structures of narration.

Puritans such as Samuel Parris and Susanna Endicott, both of whom are Tituba's masters, are constructed through speech and command, where authority operates through the language they impose on others. When a sailor warns others about Tituba's presence, "'Be careful, she's one of the witches of Salem!'" (Condé 133), the words echo Puritan racial and religious fear. Such acts of naming translate religious anxiety into racialized suspicion, producing her as a figure to be avoided. Religious fear becomes bound to the fear of Tituba as Black, perceiving her as both unreportable and dangerous. This section focuses on redefinition of the conceptualization of fear as the novel shifts it from a sign of sin to a mechanism of racialized control.

In *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment* (1989), the historian David D. Hall demonstrates that fear of sin and divine judgment served as the moral discipline of the community. If witch hunts allowed Puritan communities to "cleanse the land of sin" through familiar rituals such as fast days and public executions, the fear of sin functions as sacred discipline (189). The Puritans inhabited "a world of wonders," an "enchanted" universe where every storm, illness, or misfortune signaled divine warning or satanic assault (71-72, 116). As Mather warned in *On Witchcraft*, Satan's "flood" threatened to carry away the Church itself (14). Within this world, fear is embedded in religious language, where expressions of salvation simultaneously signal anxiety and threat. Expressions of fear function as markers of spiritual awareness. Yet, when it comes to the racial and spiritual other like Tituba, that theology of inner vigilance becomes an ideology of external domination. The shift from "sin" to

“sinners” is produced through repeated naming, where abstract theology becomes attached to specific bodies.

While the fear of sin, as Hall shows, is reported as spiritual self-discipline, the fear directed at Tituba, whose underlying purpose remains unreported, is redefined as a tool for policing the social order. Tituba is the visible emblem of invisible sin. When she meets Samuel Parris for the first time in Barbados, Tituba narrates, “sickness and death are written into our existence” (35). Tituba proves it by showing how Parris condemns Tituba: ““On your knees, dregs of Hell!”” (35). Parris’s command that forces Tituba to kneel and names her “Hell” stages purification through gesture and speech. His authority depends on turning spiritual anxiety into visible discipline. Parris’s threat is framed as a performative act, where fear is enacted through exaggerated imagery and command: ““I’ll have you confess what you did to my children and I’ll have you hanged by the neck. What a magnificent fruit swinging from the trees of Massachusetts”” (73). In making Tituba the “fruit,” Parris converts his own dread of failure into the image of her destruction.

The image of “fruit” hanging in trees functions as meaningfully anachronistic for the contemporary readers.¹⁶ The “fruit” produces a cross-temporal recognition in the readers, where Salem’s disciplinary language resonates with the imagery of lynching, recalling the visual and symbolic field of “Strange Fruit,” written by Abel Meerpol and made widely known through Billie Holiday. This resonance is reinforced by Condé’s own paratextual remarks, where she describes writing *I, Tituba* as a way

¹⁶ See Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit” (1939), which famously cast as lynching through the image of Black bodies as “fruit” hanging from trees.

to express her feelings about present-day America and insists that “racism...little has changed since the days of the Puritans” (“Afterward” 193-194). Thus, the metaphor travels across contexts and traces the conversion of bodies into signs of terror through naming. Tituba positions herself not only as the object of Puritan accusation but as a witness who can capture the recurrence of such violence across different historical forms. In this way, Condé uses language to reorient fear—from witchcraft to the structures of racial domination—and to teach the readers to read across time. Tituba is thereby positioned as the figure through whom Puritan fears are externalized and, crucially, reinterpreted.

Instruction in Christian doctrine is framed through commands and expectations that mark Tituba as perpetually outside the system she is made to enter. The Puritan woman Mary Sibley could reintegrate into society through repentance, but the historical Tituba’s marginal status meant her confession of guilt and repentance could not restore her to the Puritan fold. Breslaw writes, “But only Tituba was arrested and questioned by the magistrates and then jailed. Sibley was questioned, counseled by Samuel Parris, permitted to repent of her transgressions, and then excused for her behavior. She was never arrested or accused of witchcraft and yet she was just as guilty of occult practices as Tituba” (168). Jailing Tituba allowed the magistrates to symbolically purge the threat, making her body the vessel in which collective anxiety about the devil was deposited and controlled.

This implicit act of “jailing” her is manifested through her confinement within the boundaries of Puritan fear, but Condé’s Tituba is able to speak back to a social and

spiritual logic of exclusion. Though she is sold to Samuel Parris, Tituba still recalls how her physical appearance and non-Christian spirituality are racialized by Susanna Endicott, the mistress of Tituba in Barbados: “Susanna Endicott had already told me she was convinced my color was indicative of my close connections with Satan...In Salem such a conviction was shared by all” (63). By recalling the treatment of the mistress, Tituba reports to the readers that racial descriptors operate as preemptive accusations, assigning guilt before any action occurs.

Religious language operates as a demand for conformity and control as Tituba hears the Puritan women talk: “‘I hope she’s a Christian at least.’ ‘John Indian is going to teach her her prayers’” (23). Tituba’s potential protection is contingent on whether she can declare herself a Christian. To be non-Christian is to be marked for dispossession and suspicion. Further, when she is brought into his household in Salem, Tituba is subjected to a form of forced religious discipline as Parris commands Tituba to pray: “‘I know that the color of your skin is the sign of your damnation, but as long as you are under my roof you will behave as Christians. Come and say your prayers’” (40). This moment enforces a regime of reportability in which Tituba can remain within the household only by conforming to Puritan norms while her inherited spiritual identity is marked as unreportable within that framework. Parris’s declaration folds racial difference into theological categories of sin, reporting Tituba as a figure of deviance in need of correction. Disciplinary discourse circulates the conditions under which she can be recognized at all and in doing so demonstrates fear as the mechanism by which authority is organized.

The following scene demonstrates the structuring of reportability by Puritan discourse, positioning Tituba as unreportable even as it names and produces her as an object of fear. This dynamic unfolds as Puritan women collectively speak about her while Tituba observes their exchange:

They were talking about me and yet ignoring me. They were *striking me off* the map of human beings. I was a nonbeing. Invisible. *More invisible than the unseen, who at least have powers that everyone fears*. Tituba only existed insofar as these women let her exist. It was atrocious. Tituba became *ugly, coarse, and inferior* because they willed her so. I went out into the garden and heard their comments, which proved they had inspected me from head to foot while pretending to *ignore* me.

“She has eyes that turn your blood cold.”

“The eyes of a witch. Susanna Endicott, *do be careful*.” (23-24, my italics)

This passage foregrounds the violence embedded in their speech, in which naming produces erasure. Here, the reader witnesses the linguistic production of Tituba as a “nonbeing.” As Merinda Simmons observes, “The idea of how society will continue to define witchcraft and consequently define her by her dubious connection to it is a worry that accompanies Tituba throughout the text” (134). This ongoing process of definition attests to the persistence of Tituba’s erasure as a structuring condition of her existence. This violence manifests formally through a shift in narration: Tituba moves from first person to referring to herself in the third person, making a rupture in subjectivity as the self displaced by the terms imposed upon it. The transition “Tituba” reflects the mediation of her selfhood through the gaze of others, becoming an object rather than a speaking subject. The narrative maps the production of the conditions of her reportability by language.

Puritans' fear of sin stems from the impulse to exclude, reducing Black, Indigenous, and non-Christian women to the unspeakable margins of being. Tituba reflects: "More invisible than the unseen, who at least have powers that everyone fears" (23). Her condition surpasses simple invisibility. She becomes a projection screen for the community's anxieties, figured as a disruption of order, a refusal to conform, an unknowable excess. The whispered remarks of the Puritan women reflect the racialized coding of the Puritan imagination. Tituba conveys the weight of this psychic violence: "I was reduced to what she wanted me to be: a gawk of a girl with skin of a repulsive color" (25). These shifts in voice and gaze (re)report the violent production of identity through naming and gaze.

The belief that repentance or inner vigilance cleanses sin discloses its own limits. These rituals indicate that their faith draws its force from the fear of racial others perceived as "sinners." Anne Putnam, one of the Puritan girls, gives this fear a voice: "'It's someone who has made a pact with the devil...Are you a witch, Tituba? You must be'" (59). This projection is ontological as it defines whiteness and Christianity as the standard of being while everything outside it becomes the site of evil. Perceiving Tituba as a witch becomes necessary to preserve the illusion of the community's purity—a ritualized displacement that secures divine authority. That same fear finds its most tangible expression in Samuel Parris, whose authority depends on transforming spiritual anxiety into control, redirecting the threat of disorder within his household onto Tituba's racialized and religious difference.

Religious fear becomes the medium that enables the novel to imagine the domain of historical omission.

By structuring the narrative through Tituba's perspective, the act of (re)reporting redefines religious fear as the means that the novel reimagines the historical unreported. This is a method that works within and against the archive's limits to reconfigure how the past can be known. Tituba's (re)reporting extends this method by repeating Puritan language while showing its distortions, allowing fear to be defined not as a theological truth but as a structure of domination. This strategy enables the novel to transform the archive from a site of authority into a field of contestation, where the fear of sin is reinterpreted, redistributed, and made to reveal the conditions that produced it. (Re)reporting compels the archive's violence to speak differently.

Fear II: Public Shame / Parris's Shame

Puritan authority in Tituba's household centers on Samuel Parris, whose role as minister and patriarch merges spiritual leadership with social control. According to the scholar Dominik Nagl, Puritan society was governed by a "pastoral power," a structure modeled on the Christian image of the shepherd, where the head of the household "guards and leads his flock by providing spiritual leadership" and is "held accountable not only for the management of the group as a whole, but also for the failings of individual members" (15). Within this established history, Parris is reported as a disciplined spiritual leader responsible for maintaining moral order. Charged with maintaining order over both his family and congregation, Parris

embodies pastoral power. In *I, Tituba*, this historical pastoral power is redefined through (re)reporting as an authority structured by fear rather than spiritual care.

Anxiety over disorder within Parris's household threatens not only his religious credibility but also his public image. Moments of disruption are framed through Parris's responses, where anxiety is shaped as accusation directed outward. His actions establish that authority is secured through performance, the repeated display of control, discipline, and punishment. Parris channels private anxiety into public spectacle to see that Puritan authority relies on the production of fear and the strategic displacement of guilt and thus demonstrates its dependence on the very instability it seeks to suppress.

Breslaw's analysis of the historical Parris helps understand the novel's critique of pastoral power. She notes that the historical Parris was "determined to prove Tituba's guilt and bring her to trial" because her participation in the witchcraft incident implicated not only Tituba but his authority as minister and head of the household (111). In Parris's view, Tituba's "improper approach to the problem of evil" cast doubt on his ability to govern both his family and his congregation: "Perhaps he was concerned about his own image as a clerical leader and the imputation of a diabolical presence in his household. The behavior of the two girls Betty and Abigail, as well as of Tituba, was his responsibility" (Breslaw 111). This framing reveals fear as tied to reputation: concern for public perception shapes his responses and actions. Taking responsibility for both his family and his position—his

image—meant that any sign of disorder within his household threatened to identify him as a failed patriarch and minister.

Condé's Tituba is positioned as a visible surface that Parris uses to manage his public identity. To reassert control, Parris redirects blame away from his daughter Betsey and onto Tituba when the family discovers her bodily symptoms. Evidence of Tituba's supposed pact with the Devil replaces Parris's own failure of discipline as he condemns her: "'Explain yourself! You've said one word too many. What did you do them?'" (73). In a Puritan culture that demanded "the imitation of the example of pastoral leadership of religious congregations" (Nagl 15), the slightest disorder within a minister's home signified moral failure. His violence functions as a performative extension of pastoral authority, inscribing fear as visible discipline. In forcing Tituba to name others, Parris reaffirms both his paternal and pastoral authority, even as he exposes her to greater peril. If witchcraft was seen to originate in his household, his moral credibility would be undermined. The act of naming Tituba as guilty redirects attention, preserving his reputation through the displacement of blame.

Through (re)reporting, Tituba's perspective unseals the fragility of pastoral power that Puritan authority seeks to conceal from both its congregation and those it governs. Parris's fear of public disgrace and shame is explicitly acknowledged by Tituba's husband: "'Samuel Parris is as anxious as anyone not to let the rumor out in Salem that his daughters have been bewitched'" (72). This tension operates across different audiences. Before the broader Puritan community, Parris must appear as a disciplined minister whose household reflects divine order while within the household

his authority depends on coercion and control directed at figures such as Tituba. Only his image as a composed patriarch remains reportable to the community while his fear, uncertainty, and instability circulate privately and are displaced onto those under his authority. Even as he whips Tituba into confession, Parris is aware that any association between his daughter and witchcraft would compromise his standing among fellow Puritans. By positioning Tituba as the source of disorder, Parris reshapes the situation through a controlled narrative of blame. As a result, he maintains his public “image” while sacrificing Tituba’s humanity, forcing her into the role of the “othered” woman who absorbs the failures he cannot acknowledge in himself.

While watching Parris’s wife, Tituba notes the domestic metaphor through which the former defends her husband’s authority when their neighbor Goodwife Sheldon worries about the girls being bewitched: ““What are you thinking of, Goodwife Sheldon? Don’t you know that a child is like bread that requires kneading? And believe me, Samuel Parris is an excellent baker!”” (70-71). The metaphor of the “excellent baker” frames discipline as a process of shaping and molding, reinforcing his authority through figurative language. In public, this image of Parris as an “excellent baker” must be reported even as it is reinforced by an unreportable fear of shame and loss of control. When that control appears to slip—when Betsey and Abigail begin to convulse and scream—it is both a crisis and reaffirmation of male Puritan authority. The exchange functions as a rhetorical defense, using analogy to

reinforce and legitimize Parris's authority. Without (re)reporting his fear of shame, Parris would be presented as a rigorous and capable minister and patriarch.

Tituba's presence is recast through Parris's speech as a figure of threat, produced through his choice of language. When he commands Tituba, "'but as long as you are under my roof you will behave as Christians'" (40), the phrase "under my roof" underscores that he needs to show authority, because, as long as his household could be disciplined and purified, his image as minister might remain intact. This formulation preserves his authority while reinforcing her marginal position. When the doctor Griggs comes to the household to examine Betsey's health, his presence intensifies the need for visible control as authority must now be demonstrated before an external observer. As a doctor in the Puritan community, Griggs's diagnosis of Satanic influence subjects Parris's household to public scrutiny. In such a moment, Parris's role as minister depends on the impression that he governs both his family and his congregation with discipline. Parris, "came out onto the landing and with a shove sent [Tituba] hard up against the wall," threatens Tituba: "'I shall have you hanged!'" (79). As Kaiama L. Glover suggests, Condé's narrative "makes visible those elements that remain buried in the subtext" of historical accounts (103), making the dependence of authority on spectacle. Parris turns Tituba into that spectacle, reasserting his dominance through her vulnerability.

In the presence of both Tituba and Grigg, it is clear that Parris needs to represent himself as an "excellent backer" but also a "good shepherd." As Nagl puts it, a good shepherd "guards and leads his flock by providing spiritual leadership,

teaching the religious truth, and seeing to it that the godly commands are obeyed” (15). Parris performs the dual logic of “pastoral” authority: benevolence and surveillance. To appear as the guardian of faith, he must also enact control over those within his spiritual domain, especially the enslaved and the socially marginal. Under this reading, Tituba’s and Grigg’s presence threatens to unseal the instability of that pastoral identity. To maintain his image as the shepherd of a “pure” flock, Parris must symbolically cast Tituba as the source of impurity. Language of guidance and redemption merges with that of discipline and expulsion, blurring their distinction.

In *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (1987), the historian Carol Karlsen reinterprets Puritan patriarchy by locating its foundation in fear of women’s independence. She argues that the witchcraft crisis in colonial New England resulted from gendered fear and patriarchal control.¹⁷ When women did not submit themselves to men, the former were seen as aligning themselves with the Devil: “Puritans argued that men and women were spiritual equals, but they did not mean to extend this equality to earthly relations, even that of women to the church. Equality of the sexes would threaten the very foundations of New England’s social hierarchy” (Karlsen 32-33). Witch trials thus became a social and religious mechanism to enforce female submission: “the story of witchcraft,” Karlsen writes, “is primarily the story of women” (xxi). For Karlsen, Puritan fear centered on the anxiety that women might claim power in a world built on their silence. Accusing was a way of restoring moral and social “purity” by punishing women who embodied independence. As Karlsen

¹⁷ Genesis 3:16 shows God ruled over men, and men ruled over women.

puts it, “the fear of independent women lay at the heart of New England’s nightmare” (213).

Reading Condé’s portrayal of Parris alongside the history of Puritan expectations that Breslaw, Nagl, and Karslen offer makes him newly legible, clarifying who Parris is. Karslen shows that the disciplining of women was central to maintaining authority, where dissent could be recast as witchcraft (197). Yet in Condé’s novel, Parris’s reliance on Tituba appears less stable than this model suggests. While Puritan men depended on women’s obedience to mirror divine hierarchy, Parris’s reliance on Tituba is more defensive than structural. Her subjugation is a performance whereby he reclaims spiritual legitimacy rather than a stable expression of patriarchal order. Extending Glover’s insight that Black women’s narratives are authorized even as they are undermined, this dynamic conditions Parris’s power on the control of visibility and credibility. Condé’s novel (re)reports the unreported within the historical record: Parris’s fear of shame, which cannot appear within the terms of pastoral authority but nonetheless organizes his actions. Pastoral power is less divine calling than anxious performance—one that depends on sacrificing those it fears.

Fear III: Girls and Guilt

Religious fear within the Puritan world does not remain confined to ministers or public authority but takes root within the household, where it is internalized and reproduced before a more intimate audience. Betsey Parris, the young daughter of Samuel Parris, functions as a central figure through whom this process becomes

visible. Subject to strict discipline and constant theological scrutiny, Betsey's religious fear is shaped by guilt. Even minor deviations from prescribed behavior appear as signs of spiritual failure within the household. Yet, these private experiences do not remain contained. Once interpreted as evidence of bewitchment, her bodily distress becomes reportable to the wider community as proof of disorder. In this shift, Betsey's voice becomes a conduit for communal anxieties, channeling private fear into public accusation. The process shows the structuring of perception by religious language and the determination of the terms of moral recognition. By tracing the absorption, reproduction, and redirection of Puritan fear across these audiences, accusation does not arise from individual malice but from a system in which guilt turns outward and uses the most intimate relationships to perpetuate authority and produce the very evidence it claims to discover.

Betsey's speech reflects an internalized vocabulary of guilt and makes evident the operation of Parris's authority through the repetition of doctrinal language. The severity of Samuel Parris's discipline imposed on even the youngest members of his household might have, the novel suggests, instilled fear in his daughter. Tituba hints at this severe discipline when she encounters Abigail, who says, "[Betsey] hasn't said her prayers yet. Do you want my uncle to whip her?" (39).¹⁸ Then Betsey's guilt and fear are produced by a system in which the line between spiritual weakness and transgression is blurred with Parris policing the boundaries of biblical teachings through force.

¹⁸ Tituba also recognizes that Betsey "received a beating from Samuel Parris" (61).

Breslaw's account of the historical Betsey and other Puritan girls underscores their fear connected to the spiritual and familial pressures that defined their household:

Perhaps the fortune-telling had been observed by others and they feared the wrath of their parents for their unorthodox behavior. Their guilty anxieties were manifested in a variety of erratic physical symptoms, from the temporary loss of speech, sight, and hearing to loss of appetite and sensations of being pinched and bitten. (93)

Breslaw suggests that Betsey's symptoms may have stemmed from the guilty anxiety provoked by forbidden practices such as fortune-telling and the constant weight of her father's doctrine (93–94). Breslaw also notes that Betsey may have internalized Parris's "regular diet of reprimands" and warnings of an "evil conspiracy" in the village. Her symptoms can be read as bodily expressions of guilt and fear, produced by the demand to embody Puritan orthodoxy.

If spiritual weakness is always scrutinized, punished, and reinterpreted as evidence of Satan's presence, one's non-Christian practices must remain unreportable, even as they persist in hidden forms within Puritan life.¹⁹ When Tituba confronts her, Betsey perceives Tituba's acts of care as acts of evil: "No, no, they only said that what you were doing to me was evil" (75). Embedding Betsey's speech within Tituba's account shows the construction of the figure of the witch through repetition rather than observation. Just like Samuel Parris and Susanna Endicott, Betsey reproduces the racialized logic of Puritan fear: "You're a Negress, Tituba! You can

¹⁹ Given that non-Christian practices like obeah were criminalized and that "practitioners were also flogged" (Boaz 428), Betsey's fear might have been intensified by the knowledge that any association with Tituba's healing practices could invite punishment.

only do evil. You are evil itself” (75).²⁰ The rituals that once comforted Betsey are thus reinterpreted through a Puritan framework as evidence of a satanic pact. Her speech reproduces a prior discursive structure and establishes the predetermination of Tituba’s identity through language before any action occurs.

The exchange between Tituba and Betsey demonstrates the harnessing of Betsey’s fear of guilt and punishment to reinforce Puritan authority and preserve Parris’s “image.” Betsey’s voice operates as a relay for communal anxieties and carries them through repeated phrases and accusations. The irony is that Tituba’s care becomes proof of her guilt while Betsey’s guilt becomes absolved by projecting it outward. The scene frames Tituba as a scapegoat by aligning the girls’ speech with an established pattern of accusation. Tituba’s position takes shape through descriptive and accusatory language that aligns her with communal anxieties. Yet Breslaw also reminds us that fortune-telling “was part of a folklore deeply embedded in English life” and carried over into New England (90). After all, in the novel, Betsey and the other girls’ religious deviance remains unacknowledged within the Puritan community yet becomes reported to the readers.

In reading the history in New England with Tituba’s view of the Puritans, the novel stages a scene where Abigail has a set of tarot cards, asking whether they could use them to read the future: “One day, Abigail showed me a set of tarot cards that she had found somewhere and asked: ‘Do you think we can read the future with these?’” (67). Since practices such as tarot reading and questioning God’s will or omnipotence

²⁰ Puritan children internalized their parents’ fears and sermons until guilt manifested as accusation: “Betty, the youngest of the group of curious girls...possibly subject to a steadier diet of fearful jeremiads...exhibited the earliest and most worrisome symptoms” (Breslaw 94).

are regarded as “blasphemy” (Breslaw 94), Tituba is compelled to report the behavior of the Puritan girls as well. The curiosity and initiative come from the Puritan girls, whose own engagement with divination reflects the very folklore Breslaw describes. Yet when the weight of guilt and suspicion mounts, it is Tituba who bears the blame. The girls who dabbled in these practices later return to gloat over Tituba’s downfall: “They had come to wallow in the sight of my ruin...And with this happy thought, their eyes gleamed with cruelty” (76). This transformation unfolds as expressions of fear move directly into acts of accusation within the dialogue. The novel juxtaposes tolerated practices with later condemnation and thus marks authority’s shifting linguistic framing of actions.

The result of their fear is devastating for Tituba. She says, “But I never imagined they would come from the lips of someone so dear to me. I remained speechless. Betsey hissed like a green mamba from the islands...I started to cry” (75). Tituba’s reflection frames this moment as betrayal by aligning intimate speech with a broader language of accusation. Tituba expects cruelty from Parris, but to hear it echoed in the voice of a child she cared for, someone so “dear,” cuts deeper. The metaphor of the “green mamba” casts Betsey’s words as venomous and turns intimacy into a sign of danger. Tituba’s tears mark the recognition that her care has been twisted into evidence against her.

This betrayal also reflects the shaping of historical production through Puritan fear. The child’s voice, weaponized against Tituba, mirrors the way court records captured her words through the filter of colonial suspicion. The repetition in Betsey’s

speech echoes the archive's reliance on reiteration, preserving the Puritan language rather than Tituba's experience. Condé dramatizes this process through the transfiguration of affection into accusation and demonstrates the corrosive effects of fear on trust, intimacy, and the historical record. In organizing scenes around these shifts in speech, the text traces the structuring of personal relations and historical representation through patterns of betrayal and projection.

Just like Parris, Betsey ironically reports herself as fear ceases to appear as spontaneous emotion and instead as something learned, rehearsed, or transmitted through everyday speech. The appearance of belief is shown to depend on reiteration: phrases circulated, harden, and return as accusation. By staging these exchanges within Tituba's (re)report, the novel reworks the very language that upholds it while depicting the spread of suspicion. Tituba's (re)reporting rearranges discursive utterance and allows the readers to perceive the gap between utterance and experience. Intimacy and accusation are recast as sites of the production and dissolution of meaning.

Fear IV: Loss of Puritan Power

The movement from inward fear to outward domination becomes most visible in the encounter with Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo, a wealthy Jewish merchant who purchases Tituba after the trials out of distrust toward Puritan accusations. As a widower and father of nine children, d'Azevedo is a religious outsider shaped by his own experience of marginalization. Through his household, the narrative introduces a space that initially resists Puritan judgment, with Tituba's spiritual practices enabling

d'Azevedo to commune with his deceased wife. Yet this fragile distance from Puritan authority shatters in the violent attack on his home, where a crowd gathers to stone and destroy the Jewish property. By staging the destruction of d'Azevedo's family, the novel (re)reports the extension of religious fear across bodies. Racial and religious differences are reportable only as a threat. As Jane Moss notes, Condé introduces the Jewish character in part to "link anti-Semitism and racism" (14), situating d'Azevedo's persecution alongside Tituba's within a shared structure of fear and exclusion. This section shows that Puritan fear operates as a transferable logic that converts social differences from others into threat, redefining it as an anxiety over the erosion of Puritan power and legitimizes violence as purification across racial and religious lines.

To theorize this expansion of religious fear, Achille Mbembe contends that Christianity was founded on an ambition for universal control over "time" and "space," with conversion functioning as a central instrument of conquest (226).²¹ Mbembe's interpretation redefines conversion as a political and epistemic practice that reorganizes subjecthood and its conditions of reportability. This expansionist drive was fueled by fear as the presence of other religions threatened Christianity's claim to exclusive truth. Conversion became a way to neutralize difference by assimilating others into its system that drives prior identities to be unreportable within Christian authority. Yet, as Mbembe notes, conversion entails destruction, requiring the convert to abandon cultural and symbolic landmarks, a process he describes as

²¹ *On the Postcolony* (2021)

“stripping down to the skin” (228). The erasure of identity and the possibility of alternative reportability is at stake. The repetition of “stripping down” across contexts demonstrates the discursive reduction of subjects to controlled visibility and confines their reportability to a framework that simultaneously erases the excess that exceeds containment.

d’Azevedo’s experience of Puritan persecution is (re)reported through Tituba’s perspective, underscoring that reportability in the novel is structured by her narrative voice. On the Sabbath, as d’Azevedo and other Jews gather in his house for prayer, Tituba observes a Puritan crowd, “dressed in the sinister Puritan fashion,” pelting the home with stones. When Tituba storms outside in rage, she hears the Puritans’ remarks and realizes that both Jews and enslaved people are targeted by the Puritans’ racial and religious hatred: ““What are those who govern us thinking of?... Did we leave England for this? To see Jews and niggers multiply in our midst?”” (130). The verb “multiply,” placed within direct speech, becomes a linguistic site where fear is articulated and intensified. This phrasing structures the production of instability through the naming of “others” and the framing of presence as threat. By echoing the biblical command “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:27-28), the narrative recontextualizes “multiply” as a term that marks the gap between scriptural language and Puritan fear. The visible “multiplying” of Jews and accused witches reverses the biblical promise and serves as a sign of decline rather than blessing.²²

²² As she connects Puritan fear to women, Karlsen also points out the emergence of “female independence” during the 1640s (191).

Within the narrative, conversion is (re)reported through commands and imperatives that reorganize the discursive unreporting of prior identities and enforcement of legible forms of submission. In this way, the Puritans project their insecurity onto outsiders while turning a growing population of religious others into evidence of satanic proliferation and legitimizing persecution as a means of shoring up their own righteousness. When the Jewish community is on fire, the reader learns from Tituba that their ships also have been burned (131). The destruction of the ships signals a dread of Jewish “multiplication” in commerce. By eliminating economic rivals, the Puritans aim to eliminate economic competition.²³ The focus on individual responsibility for salvation and self-examination for sin began to shift to externalizing blame for hardships and suffering: “the growing affluence of the expanding merchant communities, and the socioeconomic and geographic mobility of late seventeenth-century Massachusetts had shifted the focus of communal norms” (Breslaw 123). The scene of fire condenses these anxieties into visual and narrative climax. Destruction is publicly reported as if it were divinely sanctioned.

Condé’s Tituba recounts a superintendent of the Salem prison’s “offensive remarks” on the Jew: ““He’s a Jew, a merchant. They say he’s very rich. He could afford a whole cargo of slaves and here he is haggling over a jailbird!”” (118). The superintendent’s language stages this convergence—the articulation of economic and religious anxieties through a shared discourse of suspicion. d’Azevedo’s identity as both Jewish and wealthy positions him as doubly threatening. Religiously, he

²³ Breslaw notes that Puritan communities experienced a shift from a spiritual mission to a focus on individual success and “material prosperity” (123).

embodies a non-Christian “other.” Economically, he represents the commercial success the Puritans both desire and resent. The sneer that a Jewish man capable of buying “a whole cargo of slaves” would stoop to bargaining for Tituba signals both disdain for his Jewish identity and anxiety about his economic influence. In the Puritan community, when such prosperity appears in the hands of outsiders, it destabilizes their sense of order. These entanglements become clear as patterns of speech and perception that frame differences reportable as threat and authority as necessary response.

The fire reworks the biblical promise “be fruitful and multiply” into an image of destruction—the narrative inversion of scriptural language within the scene. Instead of multiplication, the flames reduce Jewish life to ashes as the fire erases d’Azevedo’s children and livelihood alike. Tituba witnesses this tragic moment: “They removed nine little bodies from the ruins” (131). This marks multiplication as loss, the children’s growth cut short and converted into evidence of Puritan “purity” restored. This massacre, as Tituba narrates, leads to the creation of “the first Jewish cemetery in the American colonies” (131). Ironically, Jewish continuity enters the colonial record only through the violence of expulsion—death. The scene constructs the fire as a theological spectacle that stages the reversal of “multiply” through destruction rather than growth. Jewish presence is defined as reportable only as absence with growth interpreted as erasure and blessing as curse.

This persecution, mirrored by the Puritans’ treatment of the Jewish community, constructs Jewish life as unreportable as human life. Yet Tituba laments

this ceaseless drive for forced removal in her reflection on humanity's cycles of violence: "How many more stonings? Holocausts? How much blood had yet to be shed? How much submission?" (134). The anachronistic term "Holocausts" (re)reports Puritan violence across temporal frames, making traceable a transhistorical pattern of persecution that exceeds the archive's limits. Invoking "Holocausts" situates Puritan violence within a wider, transhistorical pattern of persecution. Tituba's voice constructs this continuity by weaving together scenes, terms, and images that repeat across temporal frames. This obsession structures a system of reportability in which those they fear are cast as recognizable only as threats. When faced with d'Azevedo, whose wealth is seen as a threat, or Tituba, whose spiritual knowledge defies Puritan teachings, both of them become the target of both religious panic and racial control.

Across these scenes, repeated verbs of expulsion and purification construct a regime of reportability in which fear governs who can be recognized and who must be excluded. The ensuing attack on his household, like the condemnation of Tituba, marks the operation of Puritan righteousness through violence disguised as purification. In dialogue with Breslaw's account of Jewish-Puritan tension and Mbembe's critique of conversion, the novel advances (re)report by showing how historical analysis can be reassembled through narrative, allowing fear to be followed, compared, and made legible across otherwise disconnected scenes of religious and racial violence. Rather than treating these moments as isolated, the narrative (re)reports them as interconnected, reshaping them to sites that can be read alongside

one another. This process reflects the novel's speculative mode, in which narration becomes an act of returning, tracing, and reconfiguring the partitions of official history. Persecution is thus deemed as (re)reportable through a recurring structure that reads difference into danger and authorizes violence in shifting forms.

Section 3: Rework the Archive: Refusal of Puritan Authority

(Re)Reporting Herself, Tituba

Whereas Cotton Mather treats Puritan faith and voice as authorized truth, *I, Tituba* stages a refusal of that truth by (re)reporting non-Christian spiritual practices through compassion, care, and relational ethics. Colonial discourses, as Danielle Boaz shows, constructs a hierarchy in which African-derived practices are reduced to “magic” in order to justify domination.²⁴ In this view, Tituba's power appears as a threat that must be contained. Yet Condé reworks this logic: spiritual authority shifts away from Puritan doctrine toward an ethic grounded in care, refusal of vengeance, and continuity with the living and the dead. By tracing how Tituba inhabits and transforms the language that condemns her, this section demonstrates that the novel recasts Puritan authority as dependent on violence while reimagining Tituba's spiritual practice as a practice of healing that reworks the theological and Puritan structure of the archive.

A group of slaves cautions Tituba that the planters see her as dangerous: “The planters got together yesterday evening and they are after your skin...you’ve been carrying messages between the field hands, helping them to plan revolts, and so

²⁴ In *On Witchcraft*, Mather's description of witchcraft as a “terrible Plague” that “hath made its Progress” until “An Army of Devils is horribly broke in upon the place” (15) casts Puritan perception as universally valid. Spiritual difference can only appear as invasion and corruption.

they're going to set a trap for you'" (148). The warning reframes her spiritual practices, forms of relational knowledge and care, are recast within colonial language as signs of rebellion. What the planters fear is not simply Tituba's knowledge of herbs or the "invisible world." It is her capacity to inspire unity among the enslaved. Tituba's caregiving practices are recognized only as a threat, leaving them unreportable as care. Elsa Dorlin explains that Tituba's healing knowledge was "both feared and coveted by the colonial power that criminalized it in order to better pillage it" (78). The fear of Tituba's influence reflects a broader colonial anxiety that such "vital knowledge" could unsettle the foundations of authority and the control of reportability as a condition of power.

Though her essay looks primarily at obeah, Boaz's analysis of racial and theological hierarchies within colonial and postcolonial law provides a better understanding of the Puritans' perception of Tituba as a threat. Boaz writes, "It was common for colonial regimes in the Western Hemisphere to enact laws against African diaspora religions because priests of these faiths purportedly used their herbal knowledge to poison plantation owners and develop ritual protections for insurgents, as well as exploited their own prestige to organize rebellions" (430). This equation between spiritual knowledge and rebellion mirrors the novel's own linguistic pattern, with acts of healing repeatedly reported through a discourse of fear. The novel formalizes this logic by embedding Tituba's practices within Puritan vocabulary; the readers see the discursive construction of difference as danger. The Puritan project of

purity is linked to the racial and theological hierarchies that would later define colonial law.

Boaz explains that opponents of African political participation and advocates of European colonization manipulated “a supposed hierarchy of religions” to justify subjugation (443). They relegated African spiritual systems to “the most debased end of the evolutionary scale,” claiming that Africans “had no concept of god” and instead worshipped “fetishes” and practiced “magic” (430). However, such hierarchies mask deep insecurity. In the novel’s case, to secure their own sense of divine order, the Puritans’ need to relegate Tituba’s power to the realm of the diabolical reflects the anxiety about its fragility. In the (re)reporting narrative, the colonial relegation of other religions to “magic,” as identified by Boaz, becomes their desperate effort to contain the incomprehensible and uncontrollable.

Condé’s use of the fantastical makes Tituba’s voice and magic a speculative challenge to the Puritans’ reports, bringing into view forms of knowledge that colonial theology erases. Winsome Pinnock’s essay on Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* observes the paradox in colonial discourse. Obeah and related African-derived practices were simultaneously dismissed as the superstitions of “ignorant savages” and feared as sources of revolutionary power capable of inspiring revolt and destroying white property (111). This paradox structures the text’s treatment of spiritual practice; dismissal and fear coexist within the same descriptive language. The “terrible plague,” as Mather would call, becomes a source of strength and survival, derived from spiritual continuity and healing. Acts of healing are framed

through a vocabulary that confers moral authority, unsettling the Puritan order that seeks to define them as deviant. This threat is articulated through repeated warnings that circulate suspicion and amplify fear through familiar phrasing. A sailor warns others, ““Be careful, she’s one of the witches of Salem!”” (133). Such repetition reinforces the persistent casting of her spiritual authority as destabilizing within colonial hierarchies. Tituba’s speech repositions the terms of Puritan demonology, surfacing the elements its language attempts to suppress.

Tituba’s self-description disrupts the racialized associations imposed upon her identity. The term “Satan” appears within her speech only after exposure to Puritan discourse, marking it as an introduced category rather than an inherent belief: “Before setting foot inside this house I didn’t know who Satan was!” (26).²⁵ Mama Yaya, Tituba’s spiritual mentor, taught her the traditions of herbal medicine and spiritual healing in Barbados (9-10).²⁶ Tituba states, ““The witch, if we must use this word, rights wrongs, helps consoles, heals”” (94). The qualifying phrase marks “witch” as a term imposed by Puritan discourse which Tituba does not fully inhabit. Instead of stabilizing the term, Tituba’s phrasing disrupts the Puritans’ notion of witch by redirecting how the term operates.

²⁵ Tituba’s healing gifts become a liability, something the Puritans misinterpret as demonic or dangerous. Mama Yaya teaches Tituba that “everything lives, has a soul, and breathes” (9).

²⁶ Breslaw shows that the seventeenth-century Barbados was a site of cultural and spiritual exchange, where African, “Amerindian,” and European practices merged freely. In this syncretic world, obeah was not confined to one group. Africans, Amerindians, and even white planters shared and adapted its healing and magical techniques: “Tituba...could have been introduced to the healing practices and occult techniques of the obeah by either her white mistress or her slave family or even another Indian” in Barbados (49). This could mean that Tituba’s familiarity with ritual and magic reflects this mixed spiritual environment. She inherited a creolized body of wisdom shaped by both enslavement and cultural exchange rather than by any single tradition.

By retaining the word while redefining its function—“rights wrongs, helps, consoles, heals”—Tituba shifts its associations from destruction toward care. This moment constructs Tituba as a speaking subject who reshapes the language by which she is defined. This reworking of “witch” anticipates the novel’s larger project: to (re)report the archive’s production of meaning through acts of naming and the contestability of such meanings from within. The assertion that Tituba has “no evil intent” highlights the gap between her actions and the definitions imposed upon her.²⁷ This gap underlines the erasure of nuance in non-European spiritual practices by colonial authority while, for Tituba, they belonged to the domain of healing and protection. Moral authority is reassigned through the contrast between Tituba’s actions and the language used to condemn them.

The refusal within the Puritan archive appears in Tituba’s interiority, which reveals the compassion that the Puritans refuse to see. Her desire for belonging is tragically met with fear and suspicion, a contrast that underscores the misreading of her healing gifts as threats rather than sources of care. Tituba reflects on the gaze of others upon her:

What stories had they woven about me? Why did they seem to be afraid of me? [...] I realized that they were mainly thinking about my connection with Mama Yaya, whom they had feared. But hadn’t Mama Yaya used her powers to do good? Again and again? The terror of these people seemed like an injustice to me. They should have greeted me with shouts of joy and welcome and presented me with a list of illnesses that I should have tried my utmost to cure. I was born to heal, not to frighten. (11)

²⁷ Breslaw also discusses a fundamental difference in how the historical Tituba understood magic compared to the Puritan worldview: “Tituba, drawing on folklore, made a distinction between protective and healing powers and evil intent” (109).

Tituba reframes the fear of witches as a misinterpretation produced by the terms used to describe her practices because she “only [knows] how to offer consolation” and “visit[s] the cabins and comfort[s] the sick and dying” (12). Acts of comforting the sick are described in terms that articulate a spiritual ethic filled with care and relation—the qualities the Puritans claim to uphold yet fail to practice given their violence against her and other non-Christians like the Jews. What is holy in Tituba’s world is sinful in theirs. Her connection to the invisible world signifies an inheritance of spiritual knowledge that defies colonial and Christian hierarchies.

The contrast between Puritan violence and Tituba’s care clarifies the construction of reportability in the novel through scenes of punishment and healing that assign different meanings to the same body. When Betsey Parris suffers a beating from her father, Tituba turns instead to ritual: “I decided to give her a magic bath...Plunging Betsey into this scalding hot bath, it seemed to me that these same hands, that not long ago had dealt death, were now giving life” (61). Such practices would leave Tituba’s care unreportable in Puritan discourse. However, the scene (re)reports these actions by naming them as renewal and protection. The language of “plunging” and transformation frames the ritual through imagery of rebirth, positioning it against Parris’s violence, and offers an alternative account of the body’s capacities. This scene recasts witchcraft as an expression of compassion rather than deviance. Her power rests in a commitment to nurture, protect, and give life, and her reflections mark the gap between the terms of acknowledgment and exclusion within the Puritan language. In taking on a parental role that Parris fails to fulfill, Tituba

(re)reports a different structure of care and authority, refusing the terms through which Puritan discourse defines her.

The novel (re)reports the meaning of power by showing the unreportability of Tituba's refusal of violence within dominant expectations that equate power with punishment. Tituba contrasts her compassion with the destructive impulses around her as her exchanges with Sarah and Rebecca clarify the purpose of her power:

[Sarah's] eyes flickered. "Everyone knows you have magical skills. Help me to get rid of her." I remained silent for a moment, and then shook my head. "I cannot do what your heart dares not disclose. The woman revealed to me her science taught me to heal and console rather than to do evil. Once, when, like yourself, I dreamed of doing my worst, [Mama Yaya] warned: 'Don't become like them, knowing only how to do evil.'" (66)
...Once again I was deep in thought about my terrible dilemma when I heard Rebecca Nurse murmur: "Tituba, can't you punish them? It's those Houltons again who forgot to tie up their hogs and they've ruined our vegetable garden once more..." (67)

Requests for vengeance are met with refusal, shaped through her measured and deliberate responses. Within the logic of those around her, power is expected to punish and to retaliate. Tituba's hesitation registers this expectation while her response unsettles it: "'I cannot do what your heart dares not disclose'" (66). Her words return the desire for violence to its source, refusing to make it actionable. Because Tituba refuses the prevailing understanding of power, her own form of power remains unreportable within that framework. Instead, her practice, grounded in Mama Yaya's teaching, affirms healing and restraint: "Oh no, they won't get me to be the same as they are! I will not give in. I will not do evil!" (67). By narrating these refusals, Tituba (re)reports power itself, separating it from domination and redefining

it as care, discipline, and ethical resistance. Her withdrawal from these exchanges does not signal absence but marks a refusal to align her power with the destructive terms that others seek to impose.

Her commitment to healing is further developed through her interaction with Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo, where the novel (re)reports grief in terms that exceed Puritan theological categories. Living with the Jewish merchant, Tituba senses d'Azevedo's longing for his wife Abigail: "On the first anniversary of his wife's death he looked so desperate that I couldn't help saying softly: 'You know that death is merely a passageway and the door always remains open?'" (122). Her response is shaped by an attentiveness to the unspeakable within Puritan discourse established earlier. Death is recognized primarily as judgment and damnation, dismissing alternative understandings of continuity. Tituba's language unsettles this limit by naming death as passage rather than end, presenting Abigail as existing in another state of being, still accessible through spiritual relation. In doing so, she redefines death itself, separating it from the rigid binary that structures Puritan belief. Death is described as part of an ongoing cycle, articulated through her redefinition of its meaning. In offering this vision, she demonstrates the functioning of her spirituality beyond the binaries of Puritan thought and reimagines time as continuous.²⁸ This rigid dichotomy contrasts with Tituba's insistence that she was "born to heal, not to frighten." Her language reframes grief as connection, converting loss into continuity.

²⁸ Increase Mather in *A Call from Heaven to the Rising Generation* (1679) warns young people: "You have immortal souls that must either be saved or damned, that when once you are dead, your souls must go to be either in Heaven or Hell to all eternity" (157-158).

Tituba's effort to comfort d'Azevedo also extends to her role as a companion: "A few prayers and a ritual sacrifice would make [Abigail] appear. And poor Benjamin's heart would be filled with joy...I allowed Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo to see his lost, beloved wife every week" (123). Such rituals would be recognized only as blasphemous as Breslaw outlines in her account of Puritan discourse: "Any attempt to divine the will of God through magical means...to question God's omnipotence, was a blasphemy" (94). In Tituba's narration, in contrast, absence gives way to presence and grief finds relief. Her role takes shape through practices that sustain connection between the living and the dead, offering a form of spiritual relation that Puritan language cannot acknowledge. By describing these rituals in her own terms, Tituba (re)reports the potential of power, separating it from destruction and aligning it with compassion, care, and restoration. When the Puritans use religion to condemn and isolate, Tituba's practice affirms continuity and healing, presenting a form of knowledge.

Tituba's practices are positioned in contrast to Mather's language, which associates spiritual power with "wicked spirits" and desires of the flesh. *On Witchcraft* delineates Mather's guidance on detecting witches and recognizing the signs of the devil: "because by him, the Temptation of the Flesh and the World are managed...Now, the devil, whose Malice and Envy, prompts him to do what he can, that we may be as unhappy as himself" (140). Yet Tituba's actions are redescribed through terms that diverge from Mather's framework. It is a deeper sense of empathy for his grief and longing for her wife that motivates Tituba to perform her magic.

Tituba wants from d'Azevedo to be "filled with joy" (Condé 123), not the fulfillment of her own desires. Tituba's supernatural power demonstrates that true power transcends fear in healing and empathy.

Tituba's narration reorganizes the conditions under which it can be read. Critic Junghyun Hwang's reading develops this contrast by redefining the figure of the witch through relational and expansive terms. Hwang argues that Condé redefines the witch as "the very epitome of infinity, incarnating the desire to transcend the self and experience the absolute other" (56). Tituba's "gift of nature" is to maintain bonds with the dead, care for the living, and honor a world in which "everything lives, has a soul, and breathes" (57). This framework positions Tituba as an ethical subject whose orientation is defined by openness to others. The label "witch," once used to confine her, is rethought as a condition that enables movement beyond the limits imposed by Puritan perception. Acts of healing, accusation, and violence are presented as elements reassembled through her voice, allowing "absolute truth" to be reopened to interpretation. In this sense, (re)reporting operates as a narrative practice that rearranges its language and discloses the dependence of authority on repetition and coercion. Fear, language, and memory are no longer confined to the logic that produced them but are rearticulated in ways that make visible the structures they once concealed.

Persistent Presence: The Accused Accusing the Accusers

After returning to Barbados, Tituba becomes involved, though ambivalently, in a planned slave revolt led by Iphigene, an enslaved man she heals and befriends.

She resists the revolt's turn toward indiscriminate violence. Before the uprising can take place, however, it is betrayed and suppressed by colonial authorities, who arrest those involved. Iphigene is executed first, and Tituba is subsequently hanged after being accused not only of rebellion but also of witchcraft and prior acts of destruction. Her death thus results from the convergence of colonial repression, racialized fear, and the persistent attribution of spiritual deviance, which allows authorities to justify her execution.

However, after being accused of instigating a slave revolt and hanged by the colonial authorities, Tituba's presence is reconstituted through a transhistorical voice that continues to speak. Although this speculation does not undo the violence of her execution, it marks the unreported and unreportable. From this position, Tituba names history as "bigotry" because she has already inhabited its terms, witnessing the conversion of Puritan fear into violence and the concealment of racial terror through religious language. Her authority rests in what was done to her and what was said about her. The novel, instead of reproducing the written tradition Tituba rejects, uses writing to stage an alternative relation to it and gestures toward its excess.

Through Tituba's persistence beyond the narrative frame, the text extends its refusal of archival authority and (re)reports the conditions that organize historical knowability. No longer bound by the terms that once defined Tituba, the novel shifts the terms of reportability, moving from documentation toward forms of transmission embedded in speech and memory. As her voice persists even after persecution, the archive's unreportable dimensions—presence after death, continuity, collective

remembrance—is named and remained within the narrative. Tituba’s persistent presence becomes a mode of intervention that enables the transformation of access to and interpretation of the past. As the past is approached through ongoing relationships, her afterlife reconfigures the conditions of knowing, (re)reporting history as an open, continuing field shaped by survival, transmission, and the persistence of voice once deemed unreportable.

Tituba’s statement rejects externally imposed definitions as the sole ground of historical truth, shifting authority to self-articulation: “I do not belong to the civilization of the Bible and Bigotry. My people will keep my memory in their hearts and have no need for the written word” (172). In doing so, she names other forms of transmission as equally authoritative. This rejection remains mediated through the novel’s written form, which carries and stages her voice. The unrecordable within official records persists elsewhere. Once feared and confined to accusation, Tituba becomes remembered and revered by insisting on being sung into history: “[T]here is a song about Tituba” (171). In this shift, the novel (re)reports the ongoing circulation of voices beyond the archive’s terms of reportability.

Within the archive, her death or “disappearance” would mark the end of her reportability as it fixed her as a completed figure of accusation and punishment.²⁹ To the stakes of this shift, it is useful to recall the doctrinal framing of resurrection within Christian theology that Achille Mbembe demonstrates. His account of resurrection is not invoked to suggest that Tituba undergoes a Christological return, but to establish

²⁹ See Breslaw’s analysis on the historical Tituba on page 175.

the theological model of continuity and sovereignty that her posthumous presence unsettles. The resurrection of Christ resolves death through absorption: the divine body enters the world and, in turn, takes the world into itself, securing a form of sovereignty that extends across space and time. This model establishes a system in which power is made legible through continuity of authority, grounding a theological and political claim that binds land and people to “right of property” (227).³⁰ Resurrection affirms a form of reportability tied to sovereignty as power persists by consolidating control.

Condé’s own reflections on Tituba clarify her distance from such traditions. She describes Tituba as a “sort of female hero” and ultimately as a “mock-epic character” (“Afterward” 192). Tituba’s presence after execution reworks this model rather than reproducing it. By casting Tituba as a “female hero” or “mock-epic” figure, Condé recasts the logic of Christian heroism and displaces models of redemption grounded in sovereignty, sacrifice, and final judgment. Tituba’s persistence is articulated without recourse to bodily return or sovereign claim. Her presence marks a different relation to history, stemming from continuity rather than domination as Gema Ortega puts it: “Tituba surmounts the monologic and barren ideologies presented in the novel by by creating her own voice and identity through the appropriation and adaptation of those narratives into her own story of self” (125). If Christian resurrection consolidates power through absorption, Tituba’s persistence

³⁰ Mbembe provides a framework for understanding how Christian theology underwrites colonial forms of sovereignty and domination. His work helps situate Tituba’s afterlife as a refusal of that structure rather than an analogue to it.

after physical death disperses it.³¹ Her relation to the land is expressed through merging and continuity, yet without ownership: “And then there is my land. We have become one and the same” (173). This formulation frames belonging as relational rather than possessive. Her persistence names a form of life that remains unreportable within systems that equate presence with control.

Tituba continues to bear witness to suffering while sustaining forms of care that extend across generations, most notably through Samantha, who inherits her knowledge and spiritual practice after Tituba’s execution. Transmission takes the form of relational continuity rather than sovereign control. This mode resists the Puritans’ claim to universal truth by grounding authority in lived experience, embodiment, and continuity: “I feel like changing into mortal form...Oh how I love to give the slave the excitement of winning” (174). From this perspective, Tituba’s death does not redeem the violence done to her; rather, it reconfigures the conditions under which she can speak and act. Her voice transforms the site of death into a space of ongoing resistance as memory becomes the basis of survival.

Fear, once attached to Tituba through Puritan discourse and preserved in the archive, is reworked through the text’s reordering of perspective and emphasis. Her continuing presence is framed as a vantage point from which the unraveling of colonial and religious authority becomes visible. Tituba “ha[s] not crossed the sea to persecute Samuel Parris, the judges, and the preachers. I know that others have done

³¹ Following this reasoning, the Puritans justified their colonizing mission as a continuation of Christ’s dominion, treating New England as sacred territory reclaimed for God. Condé’s Tituba, however, turns this theology inside out: her ongoing presence after physical death is not a sign of divine ownership but of subversive persistence, reclaiming the spiritual and material realms from those who claimed them in Christ’s name.

it for me...Cotton Mather was to be dishonored and unmasked by a little vixen. All the judges were to lose their pride” (172). Her statement is structured as a refusal of the role of executioner, articulated through negation and distance. Her power lies in deconstructing the structures of Puritan authority under their own corruption. This declaration reframes punishment as unnecessary and shifts attention to the self-destructive logic embedded in Puritan authority. Through contrastive framing, Tituba’s survival and compassion are set against the Puritans’ gradual unraveling. Resistance can take the form of refusal—a refusal to replicate the violence of her oppressors even as their authority disintegrates.

The novel’s anachronistic reference—Tituba’s ability to see the future of America— becomes a means of speaking back to the broader structures of colonial domination that moves beyond the Puritan moment. Speaking from a position that exceeds the archive’s temporal limits, Tituba names forms of violence: “A vast, cruel land where the spirits only beget evil! Soon they will be covering their faces with hoods, the better to torture us. They will lock up our children behind the heavy gates of the ghettos. They will deny us our rights and blood will beget blood” (173). Her reporting here warns her audience to fear the colonists, not witchcraft imagined in the bible. The future she describes is structured through images of racial terror, confinement, and dispossession, extending colonial logic across time. Fear shifts from a theological instrument of accusation to a lens for recognizing historical patterns. Tituba’s voice continues while the archive falls silent, identifying the operations of colonial power.

Analyzing Condé's *I, Tituba* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Allison Guess and Sarah Ohmer frame inheritance through the phrase "the land within," a formulation that shifts attention from property to interior and embodied forms of memory.³² Their reading emphasizes the narrative function of ghosts and ancestral presences in transmitting memory, trauma, and resistance across generations. Guess and Ohmer extend this framework by positioning Tituba's death as a structural shift that redefines the conditions under which freedom becomes imaginable: "In and through 'death,' Tituba becomes free to take up space in ways unfathomed as a living human being. Through death, Tituba inherits life. She also inherits the ability to speculate on the possibility of moving through and with trauma" (41). This perspective reframes Tituba's afterlife as an emancipatory mode of being. Unreportability, rather than silencing Tituba, liberates her voice and expands her presence. Tituba's liberation exemplifies the transformation of unreportability into a generative force: a threshold that enables healing, resistance, and speculation on new forms of survival. Placed alongside Mbembe's critique about Christian tradition, Tituba's persistence, rather than about claiming property, is about claiming space—a space of memory, resistance, and futurity that refuses erasure.

Tituba's voice reorganizes the terms with which history can be apprehended. Her narration gathers fragments and arranges them into a form that disrupts linear documentation. (Re)reporting operates as a practice of reassembling the dispersive fragments of official records and allows disparate temporal and experiential registers

³² "Reappraising Land And Inheritance, Revisiting Ghosts: A Black Feminist And Decolonial Land-informed Reading Of *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison And *I, Tituba, Black Witch Of Salem* by Maryse Condé" (2024)

to be read in relation. The speculative elements grant Tituba a vantage that moves across life and afterlife, past and future, producing visible patterns of domination that remain obscured within conventional historiography. Fear, memory, and resistance are no longer confined to the moment of persecution but circulate as forces that connect histories, making them newly intelligible without resolving their fractures.

Re(report) and Refusal Beyond the Present

Rather than reconstructing Tituba's life through empirical evidence alone, *I, Tituba* creates a voice that transcends the limits of the historical record: "I can understand the past, read the present, and look into the future" (174). This narrative reanimation recalls Saidiya Hartman's concept of "critical fabulation," which writes alongside archival silence, yet Condé's intervention develops its own logic. Tituba's voice draws connections across scenes of persecution, linking Puritan violence to recurring structures of racial domination. In doing so, the novel enacts the shift in the reportability of history toward a form of narration drawn from lived experience and memory. The voice of the condemned is not recovered but repositioned, gaining the capacity to name and interpret the forces that once defined it. Allowing the condemned to speak back—to condemn their accusers and expose the fears that underwrite them—becomes a form of (re)report that unsettles the authority of the Puritan archive.³³

A similar problem of mediated voice and archival constraint appears in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, where the limits of historical representation also demand a

³³ There are various ways that writers such as Wynter and Morrison demonstrate the relationship between (re)report and forms of refusal in other literary texts which I will discuss in the next section.

different narrative approach. In her reading of *Beloved*, Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters* demonstrates the influence of white abolitionist patrons in shaping and constraining slave narratives. As Gordon argues, "the slave narrative, whatever else it attempted to do and accomplish, was greatly constrained by the demands placed on it by the abolition movement, its primary sponsor, and its largest consumer" (144). The case of Margaret Garner, whose true story led Morrison to write the novel, circulates through legal records, journalistic accounts, and abolitionist discourse that distorts her experience into a moral emblem, effacing her interiority and leaving behind a haunted archive. From this view, the inherited structure is a series of mediations in which white abolitionists speak for Garner and claim narrative authority over her life. Morrison interrupts this process by staging history as a haunting rather than a resolved archive, showing that Black memory exists as fragments, silences, ghosts, and refusals. Morrison performs (re)reporting by reassembling archival fragments into a narrative that articulates the limits of historical representation.

While the haunting in *Beloved*, where the past returns as a disruptive and unresolved presence that unsettles the coherence of the present, *I, Tituba* reworks the remnants of the archive to create a speculative voice for those deemed unknowable. Tituba laments for the absence of herself in history: "'And what about me, is there a song for me? A song for Tituba?'" (151).³⁴ Rather than troubling the archive through fragmentation alone, Condé's novel resists the dominant narrative from within and

³⁴ In "Venus in Two Acts," Hartman echoes this, "I wanted to write a romance that exceeded the fictions of history—the rumors, scandals, lies, invented evidence, fabricated confessions, volatile facts, impossible metaphors, chance events, and fantasies that constitute the archive and determine what can be said about the past" (9).

beyond it. Through this reimagining, Condé envisions a world in which Tituba is finally recognized: “there *is* a song about Tituba” (171, Condé’s italics). Tituba’s “new” story extends without closure: “My real story starts where this one leaves off and it has no end” (171). In claiming an endless story, Tituba rejects the limits imposed by the historical record and asserts survival that persists beyond it. Her “no end” names not a return of unresolved trauma, but a continuing presence that carries memory forward through collective resistance.

Tituba’s “no end” story also demonstrates a reparative power: “For now that I have gone over to the invisible world I continue to heal and cure...I am hardening men’s hearts to fight. I am nourishing them with dreams of liberty. Of victory. I have been behind every revolt. Every insurrection. Every act of disobedience” (171). Rather than remaining confined to a single moment or place, Tituba traverses geographies and generations, offering the oppressed not only solace but visions of freedom and defiance. Her return in speculative form grants her a spiritual form of authority; she is an ancestral presence that speaks collectively rather than individually. In this apparition, freed from the constraints of physical existence and historical documentation, Tituba becomes woven into an ongoing lineage of revolt that persists beyond the reach of the Puritan record.

Section 4: (Re)report with Fiction and History: A Conclusion

Can fiction writers (re)report history? Bringing Sylvia Wynter, Toni Morrison, Maryse Condé, and Saidiya Hartman, all of whom are Black women writers working with narrative as a method within the limits of reportability, this question approaches

the boundary between history and fiction as inherently unstable. Rather than treating fiction as a supplement to historical fact, these writers mobilize it as a method for engaging interiority and suppressed forms of life. Drawing on Hayden White's claim that events acquire meaning through narrative form, I argue that fiction takes shape as a mode of historical rethinking and (re)reporting.³⁵ The four writers' works reorganize the conditions under which the past becomes articulated as reportable. Fiction and history do not appear as opposing genres. They work as interdependent practices, each necessary for reporting lives and experiences. By situating *I, Tituba* within this shared practice, the discussion clarifies Condé's intervention in a broader (re)reporting of historical knowledge, in which narrative invention becomes a way of confronting the domain of archival unreportability rather than departing from history.

Wynter's *Maskerade* (1973) can be read as an earlier formal answer to silenced knowledge. Wynter stages a nineteenth-century Kingston shaped by colonial law, racial hierarchy, and African-derived ritual performance. The play presents the banning of Jonkunnu, suggesting colonial authority's anxiety toward collective Black cultural life: "...Jonkunnu maskerade ban by law. / In Kingston town / They have to come all that way / To dance Jonkunnu!" (26). The ban is an attempt to determine which forms of sound, movement, and collective presence are allowed to signify as culture, and which must be labeled criminal or sinful, producing a condition in which Black collective expression becomes unreportable within the colonial archive.

Lambros Fatsis calls the operation of policing as "a cultural ensemble of state

³⁵ In *The Content of the Form* (1987), White argues, "The events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, that they do not possess as mere sequence" (5).

institutions that orchestrate social, cultural and political life through regulation and social control” (53). Wynter’s *Kingston* functions as a historical argument about power, causality, and suppression precisely by working in forms that recast the archive, legal discourse, colonial administration, or anthropology.

Maskerade centers on the Jonkunnu masquerade, a popular Black festive tradition involving music, dance, masking, and ritualized roles such as King, Prince, Queen, and Executioner. The narrative follows Driver, a coachman to the colonial Mayor and leader of the Jonkunnu band in Kingston. Driver attempts to secure his desire by replacing the long-standing Jonkunnu Queen, Miss Gatha, with Quasheba, a young Maroon woman already in love with Cuffie. As rivalries intensify during the Christmas festival, ritual violence erupts on the streets, providing Mayor Mitchell with the justification to ban Jonkunnu in Kingston. The play ends with the tradition driven underground, surviving beyond colonial repression through storytelling and continued performance.

Crucially, Jonkunnu becomes a repository of historical knowledge that preserves collective memory, alternative conceptions of justice, and non-Western modes of social organization.³⁶ Both Lovey and Boy, the storytellers who frame the play, maintain that the tale being told is a lineage of storytelling that predates written history itself:

³⁶ In the introduction to the play, the editor Yvonne Brewster demonstrates that Jonkunnu is a deeply linked African-derived ritual that continues to shape Jamaican identity. Wynter’s play, Brewster writes, is therefore a “call to cultural arms” (13), a demand that Jamaicans recognize and defend their own traditions against both colonial and postcolonial forgetting.

Now some people might think, say
That the tale I going to tell
Just a nice little piece of ‘ethnic’ business!
So let me warn you from the beginning
I’m no folklore Uncle Remus
With a fake lore masquerade
For some of you to come and get
Your doctorate on! (28)

The play rejects a colonial genre of ethnographic folklore that reduces Black culture to a stereotyped “ethnic business.” Further, “folklore” here names a disciplinary logic that depoliticizes ritual, expressing it safe for consumption while disavowing its historical force. Calling this process “fake lore,” Lovey’s refusal is epistemological: she resists being converted into a scholarly object. The voices of the storytellers situate the tale as one that begins “long before Babylon, before Genesis, before Greece” (29), prior to written history itself. By foregrounding this claim, Wynter challenges the assumption that history must be validated by legal documentation. She positions embodied practices—dance, music, masquerade—as forms of historical transmission capable of carrying truth across generations.

Wynter mobilizes fiction as a historical method by giving form to “banned” figures that are unable to report their interior perspectives. Two moments in particular, both Gatha’s role as Executioner and ritual authority and Brainsy’s role as a Fool, demonstrate the rearticulation of history as a field of ethical, social, and ontological struggle by othered voices. Gatha is less a fictional invention than the “wild card” history has kept back, a woman who has “dance[d] it all these years for nothing” (102), and who, at the moment of rupture, “write[s] a different end / To a

different play” (117).³⁷ She is a woman who in history danced, organized, transmitted, and embodied Jonkunnu without recognition, compensation, or legal standing.³⁸

Lovey describes Gatha’s dance as the enactment of an older, living law rooted in the Earth itself rather than in colonial statute:

The fact that Life keep back
Was that when Gatha step her step
One step forward, two steps back
It’s the Earth herself that dance that step.
The Living Law that make man man
That embody in her flesh! Rhythm
It’s commandment
In the pattern of her step! (102)

When ritual containment shatters and symbolic violence becomes real, it is Gatha who intervenes as the agent through whom balance is restored. Her act as Executioner is ethical as she says, “I write a different end / To a different play” (117). Gatha stands in for a history that could never be reported because it was lived through practice and repetition.³⁹

In the end, Brainsy’s survival rewrites historical causality itself. In the logic of both colonial history, the future belongs to figures like the King or the Prince who claim authority through lineage, possession, or heroic struggle. Wynter rejects those narratives. As the King and the Prince die together, their competing claims to power are revealed as equally destructive. The only character that remains is the Fool:

³⁷ The first speech is Lovey and the second is Gatha.

³⁸ Similarly, Tituba and Margaret Garner reimagined as Sethe are thought to be sinful or guilty in historiographies without literary texts. Gordon demonstrates Garner’s story reaches us only through white men who “author” it on her behalf: “The authoritative account of Margaret Garner’s actions and trial has been passed on to us by the famous Ohio abolitionist Levi Coffin” (*Ghostly Matters* 152).

³⁹ This scene resonates with the epilogue of *I, Tituba*, where Tituba underlines the alternate history.

marginal, improvisational, and unarmed. Brainsy's survival is a speculative proposition about the forms of subjectivity capable of sustaining life beyond domination. Yet he is able to (re)report the experience of Jonkunnu. This operates as a mode of (re)report, recasting the terms of historical narration by projecting a future oriented toward laughter and relational survival. Fiction becomes the medium where suppressed historical realities are rethought while new criteria for survival, authority, and futurity are imagined. *Maskarade* anticipates Wynter's later theoretical critiques of Western knowledge systems, particularly the claim that dominant histories are bound to a specific genre of the human, "the overrepresentation of Man."⁴⁰

If Wynter stages the problem of writing history beyond the archive through ritual and performance, Morrison approaches it through the distinction between fact and truth to illustrate memory and interiority. In "The Site of Memory" (1987), Morrison writes, "Therefore the crucial distinction for me is not the difference between fact and fiction, but the distinction between fact and truth. Because facts can exist without human intelligence, but truth cannot" (193). Facts, she argues, can exist independently of human intelligence or human consciousness. Truth, by contrast, requires interpretations, meanings, and feelings. Whereas facts are inscribed as knowledge in the archive, truth resists such inscription because it depends on interior life—dimensions that remain unreportable. Fiction may dispense with "what really happened" in a narrow empirical sense, but this very departure from fact becomes the means by which truth is made legible. The archival perception of invention or

⁴⁰ "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument" (2003)

distortion is, in fact, the method that makes lived reality, its affective force, ethical weight, and interior meaning, knowable. In such contexts, fiction does not supplement historical inquiry; it grants access to dimensions of experience that remain structurally unreportable within the archive's established forms.

For example, historical records include the facts of Margaret Garner and other slaves. However, Garner, Sethe, and the "ghost"—the characters in *Beloved*—elude the archive's terms of reportability. Their lives unfold through memory, haunting, and narrative invention. Although the events of slavery remain as recorded events, the novel explains that they acquire meaning only when remembered, encountered, and interpreted through consciousness. For Morrison, truth cannot exist without human intelligence, most explicitly through the concept of "rememory." Sethe tells Denver, "'Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world'" (43). The past persists as fact, but truth becomes reportable only when it is felt, interpreted, and inhabited. In staging history as something that persists independently yet requires human attachment to become meaningful, *Beloved* supplies a form of (re)report that allows truth to be reported.

In Morrison's "Unspeakable Things Unspoken" (1989), Morrison critiques the reduction of Black figures to scenery, metaphor, or atmosphere by dominant traditions, thereby relegating Black interiority to a condition of unreportability. Against this, she suggests: "it is no longer acceptable merely to imagine us and imagine for us. We have always been imagining ourselves" (170). The issue is the

condition of possibility for truth production. Like the archival “facts” Morrison emphasizes, such figures may exist within representation, yet they are stripped of memory, voice, and interpretive authority. Morrison therefore reframes Black self-representation as an epistemological necessity: Black subjects must be understood as “witness to and participants in [their] own experience” (170). To read literature “by and about us” is to encounter multiple “centers of the self” and to recognize that the presumed universality of knowledge rests on a partial and racialized mode of perception. Accordingly, Morrison’s intervention restores reportability to Black life by insisting on interiority as a condition of knowledge.

Morrison urges a rereading of the American canon that searches for what she famously names the “unspeakable things unspoken.”⁴¹ Her metaphor of “the ghost in the machine”—a presence that secretly structures meaning—finds its most literal and sustained realization in *Beloved*. In the novel, historical experience appears as a ghostly “remainder”: the “disremembered and unaccounted for” (323) present only through footprints that appear and vanish, through stories that “cannot be passed on” (324), and through a figure who exists precisely. The silenced figure returns instead through imagination and haunting, not as recovered fact but as a form of (re)report that reconfigures the limits of knowability. *Beloved* herself embodies a mode of historical knowledge that can only be articulated through speculative narration with the transformation of archival exclusions into alternative forms of reportability.

⁴¹ The suppressed yet structuring presence of Blackness that shapes language, imagery, and narrative form even when Black characters are absent.

While Morrison calls attention to the “unspeakable things unspoken,” this project extends her insight by framing these moments as instances of the unreportable becoming (re)reportable. When Black subjects appear as participants in and witnesses to their own histories, they become subjects who tell their own stories, reworking and reinterpreting the conditions under which they have been known. In turn, both Morrison and Wynter stage a shift in narrative authority: the silenced do not simply appear; they speak, and in speaking, they redefine and rethink the terms of history itself.

Like the unnamed Black girl, the banned Jonhunnu ritual, and Margaret Garner, the historical Tituba occupies the space of unreportable subjects. In the paratext, Condé explicitly figures her relationship to Tituba as imaginative intimacy: “Tituba and I lived for a year on the closest of terms. During our endless conversations she told me things she had confided to nobody else” (v). This framing suspends the conventions of historical authorship. Condé and Tituba’s “conversations” signal that the novel arises from a dialogic relation across historical absence. Condé’s invention is a mode of access to interiority, Tituba’s vision and voice despite their absence from Puritan historiographies.

For Black subjects, history is already a problem because “[w]e,” Condé explains, “hardly know what happened to our people before the time when they met the Europeans who decided to give them what they call civilization” (“Afterward” 194) and that writing becomes a form of searching for origins rather than recovering stable facts. Condé occupies both positions at once: she acknowledges the historical

void produced by slavery and colonialism while refusing to treat that void as silence. Like *Sethe* and *Beloved*, *Tituba* embodies historical knowledge that reworks through documentation.

If fictional writers' works do what the archive cannot, their works also clear the ground for a reciprocal move: the recognition that scholarly writers, too, may be persuaded to cross into the terrain of fiction in order to think historically otherwise. If history is understood as a system that authorizes certain forms of knowledge, then the boundary between critical analysis and imaginative reconstruction does not loom as large. For thinkers working in the wake of slavery, diaspora, and colonialism, the problem is how to report back constitutively violent, fragmented, or silent archives. The four writers exemplify different versions of this inversion. While Condé and Morrison turn fiction into a form of historiography, Hartman and Wynter transform theory, criticism, and philosophical reflection into narrative acts that risk speculation, voice, and figuration to confront the otherwise unknowable.⁴² Across these texts, history appears as a field of remains: ghosts, silences, fragments, and absences that demand speculative engagement. Wynter's ritual figures, Morrison's haunting, Condé's imagined conversations, and Hartman's impossible subjects all formalize the same methodological insight.

I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem (re)reports the unreported, underreported, and the unreportable, showing that this silencing extends beyond enslaved women to

⁴² It is undertaken precisely because certain histories, enslaved women, colonized subjects, lives rendered fungible, cannot be known through evidence alone. As Hartman writes, the task is not to recover what "really happened" but to remain with the impossibility of recovery itself without turning absence into closure.

implicate the Puritans themselves. According to Guess and Ohmer, Tituba's story "has no end," keeping "an open door between the living and the dead" so that the dead remain present in the lives of the living (43). By refusing closure, Condé rearticulates Tituba as an ongoing presence who must be "re-membered in the flesh and in contemporary history" (Guess and Ohmer 43). Seen in this light, Hartman's question concerning the possibility of reconstructing lives from archival remains finds its answer in Condé's method.⁴³ Yet (re)reporting transcends narration alone. It requires that the novel not only tell Tituba's story but also interrogate the systems that treated her life as both insatiable and illegible, focusing on the regulation of reportability for history. (Re)reporting history through the perspective of Tituba demonstrates that colonial discourse constructs moral order as fear masquerading as truth.

If the fragility of the Puritans remains unreported, it is the so-called unreportable figures, reanimated in Tituba, who makes that opacity visible. The unreportable names marginalized irreducible to subjects to the archive's terms while the unreported names silenced lives, missing records, and suppressed accounts. What remains unreported often includes forms of experience—memory, pain, interior reflection—that persist yet resist full articulation within the archive, occupying the threshold between partial record and structural unreportability. From this distinction, a broader question follows: how do other texts engage the limits of reportability? This thesis points toward an expanded study of how diasporic and hemispheric American

⁴³ Hartman asks, "Is it possible to construct a story from 'the locus of impossible speech' or resurrect lives from the ruins?" ("Venus in Two Acts" 3).

literatures take up these conditions, (re)reporting dominant narratives in ways that refuse erasure and turn authority into something that can be read and questioned. *I, Tituba* engages and reworks the Puritan narrative from within rather than discarding it. Condé challenges the assumptions that fiction simply recovers the enslaved or that history transparently represents those in power. Instead, fiction (re)reports history by showing the production of both marginalized subjects and authoritative voices through the same structures of narration and control.

This thesis lays the groundwork for examining figures and histories that are unreportable and, precisely for that reason, open to (re)report. Archives hold many records that remain (re)reportable, inviting scholars of diasporic and hemispheric literatures working with colonial archives to read them in ways that attend to both their silences and their conditions of production. Rather than resolving absence, this framework makes present the silence, opacity, and contradiction that generates alternative forms of knowledge. Figures deemed unreportable come into view as sites from which new modes of reading, narration, and historical understanding can take shape.

Bibliography

- Boaz, Danielle N. "Obeah, Vagrancy, and the Boundaries of Religious Freedom: Analyzing the Proscription of 'Pretending to Possess Supernatural Powers' in the Anglophone Caribbean." *Journal of Law and Religion*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2017, pp. 423–48. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26855622>.
- Breslaw, Elaine G. *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem*. New York University Press, 1996.
- Condé, Maryse. *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*. Translated by Richard Philcox, University of Virginia Press, 2009.
- "Deposition of Elizabeth Hubbard v. Tituba." *Salem Witch Trials: Documentary Archive and Transcription Project*, University of Virginia, <https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/n125.html>.
- Dorlin, Elsa, and André Pettman. "Me, You, Us: 'I, Tituba' and the Ontology of the Trace." *Yale French Studies*, no. 140, 2021, pp. 74–86. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45456290>.
- Fatsis, Lambros. "From Overseer to Officer: A Brief History of British Policing through Afro-Diasporic Music Culture." *Southern and Postcolonial Perspectives on Policing, Security and Social Order*, Bristol University Press, 2023, doi:10.56687/9781529223699-006
- Glover, Kaiama L. "Tituba's Fall: Maryse Condé's Counter-Narrative of the Female Slave Self." *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2011, pp. 99–106, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17409292.2011.541609>.

- Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 2nd University of Minnesota Press ed., University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Guess, Allison M. and Sarah Soanirina Ohmer. "Reappraising Land And Inheritance, Revisiting Ghosts: A Black Feminist And Decolonial Land-informed Reading Of *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison And *I, Tituba, Black Witch Of Salem* by Maryse Condé." *Feminist Formations*, vol. 36 no. 1, 2024, p. 27-56. *Project MUSE*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ff.2024.a928329>.
- Hall, David D. *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Hansen, Chadwick. "The Metamorphosis of Tituba, or Why American Intellectuals Can't Tell an Indian Witch from a Negro." *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1974, pp. 3–12. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/364324>.
- Hartman, Saidiya. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2008, pp. 1-14. *ProQuest*, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/venus-two-acts/docview/195789319/se-2>.
- Hwang, Junghyun. "Rupturing Salem, Reconsidering Subjectivity: Tituba, the Witch of Infinity in Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*." *American Studies in Scandinavia*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2019, pp. 43–59, <https://doi.org/10.22439/asca.v51i1.5790>.
- . "Tituba, "Dark Eve" in the Origins of the American Myth: The Subject of History and Writing about Salem." *CLCWeb*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021. *ProQuest*,

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/tituba-dark-eve-origins-american-myth-subject/docview/2627998295/se-2>.

The Holy Bible, New International Version. Biblica, 2011, www.biblegateway.com.

Jalalzai, Zubeda. "Historical Fiction and Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*." *African American Review*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2009, pp. 413-425, 544.

ProQuest,

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/historical-fiction-maryse-condes-i-tituba-black/docview/860144353/se-2>.

Karlsen, Carol F. *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998. First published 1987.

Mather, Increase. *A call from Heaven to the Present and Succeeding Generations*.

1685. *ProQuest*,

<https://www.proquest.com/books/call-heaven-present-succeeding-generations/docview/2240915690/se-2>.

Mather, Cotton. *On Witchcraft*. Dover Publications, 2005.

Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. Translated by Steven Rendall, University of California Press, 2001.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage Books, 2004.

—. "The Site of Memory." *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft Of Memoir*, edited by William Zinsser, Mariner, 1998, pp. 183-200.

—. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken." *The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations*. Vintage Books, 2020, . pp. 161-197.

- Moss, Jane. "Postmodernizing the Salem Witchcraze: Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*." *Colby Library Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1999, pp. 5–17. *Colby*, <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cq/vol35/iss1/3>.
- Mudimbé-Boyi, Elisabeth. "Giving a Voice to Tituba: The Death of the Author?" *World Literature Today*, vol. 67, no. 4, 1993, pp. 751–56. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40149574>.
- Nagl, Dominik. "The Governmentality of Slavery in Colonial Boston, 1690-1760." *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, vol. 58, no. 1, 2013, pp. 5–26. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43485857>.
- Ortega, Gema. "The Art of Hybridity: Maryse Condé's *Tituba*." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2014, pp. 113–36. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44066192>.
- Pinnock, Winsome. "Reclaiming Tituba: What *The Crucible* left out." *The Yale Review*, vol. 110 no. 4, 2022, p. 104-118. *Project MUSE*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/tyr.2022.0077>.
- Simmons, K. Merinda. *Changing the Subject: Writing Women across the African Diaspora*. The Ohio State University Press, 2014. *Project MUSE*, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/33591>.
- Tucker, Veta Smith. "Purloined Identity: The Racial Metamorphosis of Tituba of Salem Village." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2000, pp. 624–34. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645907>.