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Tituba, “Dark Eve” in the Origins of the American Myth: The Subject of History and Writing about Salem

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Abstract: Recasting the Salem witchcraft trials in light of Walter Benjamin's theses on historiography, this paper revisits the question of history by examining ways in which Tituba is dis/con-figured as the subject of American history in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*. Both stories of persecution revolve around the figure of Tituba, a slave from the Caribbean to whom the beginning of the witch trials is attributed, as the nodal point of different modes of representing the Salem history. The telos in Miller's drama coincides with the subject-formation of Proctor as the legitimate inheritor of American history from the Puritan civilizing mission to the Cold War Manichean worldview. Miller's reaffirmation of the American myth is problematic because it ends up reproducing the same oppressive ideology it proposes to criticize by displacing its contradictions onto peripheral figures. Condé begins from this periphery, collecting pieces from disparate historical and cultural records into a collage of Tituba's story, which does not reproduce, but instead ruptures, the narrative of progress. Condé captures history not as linear but sedimented, and Tituba does not progress to identify with the American telos but re-articulates the sum total of its ideology.

Junghyun HWANG

"Tituba, 'Dark Eve' in the Origins of the American Myth: The Subject of History and Writing about Salem"

Introduction

The Salem witch trials began in January 1692 in Salem Village, Massachusetts. By the time the case was dismissed the following year, at least 156 people had been accused of witchcraft, of whom nineteen were hanged, one was pressed to death by heavy stones, and four died in prison. As the iconic story of persecution, the specter of 1692 Salem returns time and time again, haunting American society at most critical junctures of historical conflicts from the Civil War to the Cold War, while inspiring myriads of historical, literary, and popular cultural representations.[1] Arthur Miller's 1953 *The Crucible* and Maryse Condé's 1986 *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* are arguably the two most noteworthy literary renditions produced in the twentieth century. Miller famously seizes upon the trials as a parallel to the McCarthyite hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee during the 1950s, solidifying the Salem witch-hunt into *the* allegory of political persecution. Condé, a French Guadeloupean novelist, gives the infamous history a postmodern/postcolonial twist, rendering it into a fictional rewriting with race as the focal point. These stories of persecution, be it for ideology or race, seem to converge on the figure of Tituba, an enslaved woman from the Caribbean to whom the beginning of the witch trials is attributed, as the nodal point of different modes of representing the Salem history. Recasting one of the originary sites of American history in light of Walter Benjamin's theses on historiography, this paper revisits the question of history, particularly, by examining different ways in which Tituba is disfigured and/or configured as the subject of American history by Miller and Condé.

In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin famously posits "historicism" and "historical materialism" as two discrete modes of approaching the question of history, which Miller's writing and Condé's rewriting of the Salem incident seem to exemplify respectively—in particular, the former in the mode reminiscent of the American frontier narrative and the latter in that of postcolonial revisionist historiography. Benjamin characterizes historicism as teleological in that historical events supposedly evolve in order to fulfill a certain purpose within a definite totality whereas historical materialism, for him, regards history as contingent and pays attention to the very process through which past events are excavated and interpreted under particular present circumstances. He rejects historicism because he sees it as an ideological apparatus that naturalizes arbitrarily chosen events and perspectives according to the dictates of those in power. For an alternative historiography, Benjamin proposes historical materialism where like a montage, particular events from the past are pulled out of context and juxtaposed with present ones. In his famous words, the element "quoted" or "ripped" from its original context is pasted onto a new setting, and in a dialectical process, the juxtaposed fragments are "sublated" to offer a fresh set of significance and insight into a particular current situation (265).

The telos of American identity, which Miller's protagonist John Proctor is deemed to inherit, can be encapsulated as "the frontier myth," a historicist writing of American history as progress. The significance of the frontier, expounded as a scholarly "thesis" by Frederick Jackson Turner, was forged by equating the nation's spatial expansion with "social evolution" from "savagery" to "civilization" (198). That was further mythologized as Perry Miller brought the American frontier to the Congo along with his "errand into the wilderness" (viii-ix). Historicism imbues "historical memory" with a teleology, assigning "ideological meanings" to a collective history and turning it into myth or a set of "structural metaphors," as Richard Slotkin has amply illustrated (70). In this vein, the history of U.S. expansionism becomes the myth of "anthropomorphic nationalism" as Sacvan Bercovitch argued in his seminal work (108)—that is, "the American self" identifying his personal fulfillment with the national telos to build "a city upon a hill" and realize its foundational ideal of individual autonomy.

In contrast, Benjamin's questioning of the historicist truth claims seems to resonate with Condé's complaints about the ways in which the story of Salem, especially that of Tituba, is consolidated as facts in U.S. official historiography. Also, the montage principle of Benjamin's historical materialism informs Condé's deconstruction of the existing historical texts, urging us to probe into the ways in which past events are selectively inscribed in the process of narrativization and produced as historical facts. In

[1] For a political-economic approach to the conflict, see Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum. To situate the incident in the context of contemporary "Indian wars" and frontier conflicts, see Mary Beth Norton. For an overview of literary portrayals of Salem in novels and plays, see Bernard Rosenthal. For a gendered nature of witchcraft accusations, see Elizabeth Reis. And for an investigation into race questions, especially surrounding Tituba, the only non-white "witch" of the trials, see Elaine Breslaw.

short, Benjamin's primary concern is to alert us that historiography is a human construct, that what we know as historical facts are arbitrarily selected and positioned as true, and that we should examine the traces of the past in the present signifying systems. As Hayden White puts it, the question of history is not so much about the factual status of the past—which is to foreground that events *did* occur as empirical facts—as it concerns more with the narrative mode of representing and signifying the past:

> [A] specifically *historical* inquiry is born less of the necessity to establish *that* certain events occurred than of the desire to determine what certain events might *mean* for a given group, society, or culture's conception of its present tasks and future prospects. (487, emphasis in original)

It means to put into question, as Linda Hutcheon has extensively argued, "the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real" and to unravel how historical facts are constituted by "narrative emplotments." (92)

The relevance today of Benjamin's philosophical vision lies precisely in the continuing collision between the opposing historical viewpoints in our contemporary world, as exemplified by "Black Lives Matter" protests in violent clashes against a series of President Donald Trump's policy under the slogan "Make America Great Again." Benjamin's call to "blast open the continuum" of historicist "homogeneous, empty time" and instead to fill the time of history with "the presence of the now" (263-65) is an urgent plea for us to remember that the past history resonates in a present moment of danger. It is imperative now, as always, to question the discursive violence implicit in the normative historical narrative because "there is no document of civilization," as captured in his famous dictum, "which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (258). Historical materialism prompts us to search for the meaning of a present in a past ripped out of the context—that is, in a concentrated "monad" of an earlier experience in relation to a present danger (265). Thus, in probing into the archives of both "civilization" and "barbarism," Condé à la the historical materialist takes it up as her task "to brush history against the grain" (259).

In literature, historicism and historical materialism find their respective modes of expression in the Bildungsroman and historiographic metafiction. The Bildungsroman, like historicist writing, is implicated in notions of a linear development and identity. Typically, the hero undergoes a developmental process towards maturity, at which point he finds his identity within a larger social, intellectual or spiritual environment; and the destination of the hero's linear journey is to find and identify himself with his spiritual mentor, father, or logos.[2] In contrast, the historical materialist narrative, or what Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction" (xii), problematizes the notion of identity—that is, the historicist claim of faithful reproduction of the original—by employing subversive strategies to re-think such notions as representation and subject-formation. It entails what Jacques Derrida calls "a double reading: that of the fragment perceived in relation to its text of origin; that of the fragment as incorporated into a new whole, a different totality" (qtd. in Harvey 51). Put otherwise, it purports to position a particular text in a conscious and critical relation to the original so as to question and redefine the sum total of knowledge.

Thus, this paper proposes that the history of Salem finds its antithetical modes of historiography in Miller's play and Condé's fiction. Miller writes the Salem story as a Bildungsroman of Proctor the hero, who undergoes a process of spiritual growth toward affirmation of his human dignity, becoming "the man made in the image of God" (Feng 3). The telos in Miller's drama, in particular, coincides with the subject-formation of Proctor as the legitimate inheritor of American history from the Puritan civilizing mission to the Cold War Manichean worldview. Miller's reaffirmation of the American myth is problematic because it ends up reproducing the same ideology it proposes to criticize by displacing its inherent contradictions onto peripheral figures like Tituba. Condé begins precisely from this periphery, collecting bits and pieces from historical data and disparate cultural records into a collage of Tituba's story, which does not add up to but ruptures the narrative of American progress with the time of the now filled by present dangers. Condé captures history not as linear but sedimented, and Tituba as the subject of history does not progress to identify with the American telos but re-articulates the sum total of its ideology.

Miller's Tituba in the Periphery of the Bildungsheld

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[2] Franco Moretti insists that in the Bildungsroman, "socialization" consists in the "interiorization of contradiction" and that "normality" celebrated in the bourgeois novel amounts to the so-called "meaning of life" (3-13). Also, for further discussion on minority literature as a disruptive and alternative site of the traditional literature of the Bildung, see Feng (1-49).

In *The Crucible*, Miller turns the history of Salem into a Bildungsroman of one man's progress toward the goal of attaining spiritual redemption, and as D. Quentin Miller (438-54), Suzanne Roszak (113-26), and Wendy Schissel (461-73), among others, have argued, his making of the Bildungsheld is problematically based on the displacement of gendered and racialized others. Miller chooses John Proctor, one of those executed during the trials, as the protagonist, who is to proceed on the linear journey toward self-fulfillment, struggling along the way to prove his goodness and integrity, and ultimately, his worthiness as the legitimate subject of Salem history. Struggling with guilt and conscience for the extramarital affair he had with Abigail Williams, Proctor refuses to "mount the gibbet like a saint" because it is "pretense" for a "fraud" like him (126). Yet in the end, he dies as a martyr claiming human dignity, or in the play's famous line, beseeching to save his "name": "I have given you my soul; leave me my name!" (133). Proctor's eventual failure at "social acceptance," as Roszak has argued (115), marks the completion rather than inadequacy of his Bildung because it proves his righteousness against the oppressive social system, thus consecrating his death as Christ-like crucifixion in the symbolically reenacted execution scene.

As Miller professes, he conceived the play as an allegory of his time, seeing in the Salem trials of 1692 "some astonishing correspondences with that calamity in the America of the late forties and early fifties" ("*The Crucible* in History" 83). And by making Proctor a martyr to the tyranny of the Cold War, he posits his protagonist as the subject "on the text that is history" (Adler 99), whose mission is to save the American origins myth from falling prey to the tyranny of religious/political absolutism. As a result, Miller's proclaimed critique on the McCarthyite hysteria turns out to be a project of validating Proctor as the rightful heir to American history—more specifically, I would argue, a Cold War liberal son coming from a long line of frontier fathers.

Miller molds his protagonist into the colonial forefather and simultaneously his modern-day descendant—both the John Wayne-like rugged frontiersman and the Gregory Peck-type sensitive liberal son (Moeller 315), embodying the polarized ideal of American manhood in the 1950s. The play introduces Proctor as one of the original New England settlers, who literally "seeds" and builds his farm as large as "a continent when you go foot by foot droppin' seeds in it" (48). A man of masculine vigor, reason and self-determination—"powerful of body, even-tempered, and not easily led," he is "respected and even feared in Salem," and endowed "with a quiet confidence and an unexpressed, hidden force" (19-20), he epitomizes an American frontier warrior fighting against the tyranny of not only Puritan theocratic but also Cold War political irrationality.

Nevertheless, Proctor's masculine virility is expressed as a series of his "inner" struggles—as a crisis of conscience and integrity, which he supposedly upholds by "choosing" to prove with his life. In other words, Proctor's choice is premised on the logic of Cold War liberalism, which according to Thomas Hill Schaub, can be characterized as the "inversion of reality": The Manichean Cold War reality was regarded too overwhelming to be real and thus dismissed as "irreal," while the psychic realm was elevated instead as the site of truly "real" (3-49). Whereas Proctor's manliness is vouchsafed by his outspoken dissent from the irrational social reality, yet his resistance is presented primarily as a question of individual "choice"—his "inner" freedom to choose whether to confess/conform or not. As a result, his rebellion, signified by his willful choice of death, seems tantamount to an act of "self-conscious submission," which is ultimately sublimated into "higher conformity" (Ehrenreich 40). Thus his wife Elizabeth speaks for him upon his execution, "He have his goodness now" (134). Consecrated, as it were, as a martyr to the tyrannical system, Proctor completes his Bildung, and as the legitimate American subject, he is to rescue the myth of exceptionalism, restoring the national history from its brief aberration back into its allegedly "normative" course of democracy. For the McCarthyite red-hunt cannot be quintessentially of America, so goes the logic, just as the Salem witch-hunt was only a minor exception to exceptional American identity.[3]

In *The Crucible*, Miller unequivocally taps into the fundamental rationale of the pseudo-religious Cold War "cosmology" as a rigid dichotomy "between two-diametrically opposed absolutes," as a clash between "capitalist succubi" and the communist "Red Hell," where politics is equated with morality and the role of the government is reduced to that of "the scourge of God" (31-32). He is even aware of an alternative worldview beyond binary oppositions: "The concept of unity, in which positive and negative are attributes of the same force, in which good and evil are relative, ever-changing, and always joined to the same phenomenon—such a concept is still reserved to the physical sciences and to the few who have grasped the history of ideas" (31). Notwithstanding his own understanding, he seems to stop

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[3] Salem is a prototypical example of American exceptionalism in that it is incorporated only as an exception into otherwise "exceptional" American history. According to Donald E. Pease, Salem is the foundational other that facilitates this national fantasy with ontological consistency (12).

short of dramatizing this alternative concept in his play because in sublimating Proctor, he resorts to the displacement of gendered and racialized others, thereby reproducing the same exclusionary binarism. Proctor's impassioned plea to Danforth, the presiding judge of the trials, succinctly sums up the author's twisted equation: "You are pulling *Heaven* down and raising up a *whore*!" (111, emphasis added). The opposite of Heaven is not so much Earth or even Hell, but the "whore," the male-biased version of femininity, thereby spilling the Puritan theological dichotomy into the gendered realm.

In this vein, it may be helpful to revisit some previous scholarship about the ways in which the process of Proctor's maturation is configured against gendered/racialized others: Abigail, Elizabeth, and above all, Tituba. As Schissel has argued, Miller blames Abigail and Elizabeth, representing the two androcentric female stereotypes of femme fatales and cold wives, for manipulating and stunting his supposedly "natural" male sexuality, leading to "the Fall of a good man" (465). Abigail is depicted as the core evil, whom both Proctor and Elizabeth unanimously condemn as a "whore" set to destroy their marriage (102); and Elizabeth, although portrayed as honest and virtuous, is a frigid wife, who readily blames herself for her husband's sexual misadventure: "It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery" (126). In this way, Miller displaces Proctor's guilt onto Abigail, granting him the voice to speak up against the collective madness around him, while shoring up his manliness by means of Elizabeth, the hearth angel.

The inscription of Proctor's historical subjectivity, premised on the androcentric reduction of his women, is ultimately facilitated by displacing Puritan/McCarthy dichotomy onto black-white racial ideologies. Tituba, positioned as a diametrical opposite of Proctor, embodies the racialized characteristics of alien otherness. As Roszak has aptly illustrated, Miller draws Tituba's characterization from the stereotype of the African American "mammy," and out of the accompanying attributes such as one-dimensionality and bestial instinctiveness. Tituba's notable lack of sexuality functions to highlight Proctor's prominent sexuality and implicitly, his inner complexity (115-17). Miller's Tituba, in a word, is a desexualized and essentialized character, serving as a convenient prop to dramatize the interior depth and spiritual Bildung of the hero.

More problematically, Miller's color-coded language effectively confuses Cold War political conflicts with America's race questions. It is impossible not to notice the extended wordplay on black/white binaries throughout the play. For example, Abigail claims that Elizabeth is "blackening [her] name in the village" (22) and that she will not be "a slave" or "black [her] face" (11); Proctor also talks of "a black mischief" (50) and chooses to die in order to keep his name "white" (133). As D. Quentin Miller explains in great detail, by displacing the proposed analogy between Salem and McCarthyism onto the black/white racial opposition, the play ultimately points the finger at Tituba's foreignness as the root cause of America's collective fear and fanaticism. As Abigail speaks for the playwright, Tituba, "singing her Barbados songs," is to blame for "bewitching" the "proper" girl like herself (40-41).[4] In this way, *The Crucible* did play a decisive role to consolidate Tituba's place in American imagination as the Vodou-practicing Afro-Caribbean other,[5] which the contemporary American audience associated with subversive foreign threats such as "irrationality, poverty and revenge against the powerful" (D. Miller 445).[6]

Tituba thus enters the mythology of the national foundation as the original Other—as "dark Eve" precipitating the "fall" of America by allegedly beginning the witchcraft accusations. As Bernard Rosenthal argues, Salem signifies "a national fall," "disruptive to the idyllic myth of America," and "dark Tituba," both as "Indian" and "Negro," recapitulates the myth of original sin with "an American tint," providing a convenient alibi to the problem of "synthesizing a myth of national harmony with Indian wars and with slavery" (13). However, just as Salem is dismissed as "a blip," an event of little

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[4] According to D. Quentin Miller, Americans in the 1950s were likely to associate Mary Warren's pin-stuck "poppets" with Vodou dolls rather than witchcraft practices of English origin, which included the baking of a witch-cake and the reading of an egg white dropped into a glass of water. Contemporary Americans regarded "voodoo" as a Caribbean brand of "superstitious" and "occultist kitsch," thus a suspicious and subversive foreign culture (D. Miller 446).

[5] Tituba's ethnic identity had been rather ambiguous, wavering between Carib-Indian and Afro-Caribbean, until Charles W. Upham's representation of her as "black" in *Lectures on Witchcraft, Comprising a History of the Delusion in Salem in 1692* (1831) and *Salem Witchcraft* (1867). And Miller's play was decisive in creating the powerful image of Tituba as a "dark" Vodou-practicing shaman for the twentieth-century audience (Rosenthal 13).

[6] D. Quentin Miller argues that Miller's Tituba is thrice displaced: "Proctor's confession overshadows Tituba's, Abigail's account of what happened in the woods displaces Tituba's, and witchcraft appropriates voodoo." With witchcraft appropriating Vodou, in particular, he says that McCarthyism obscures "another historical force at work in 1953: the struggle of African Americans to gain visibility" (439). The result is the disappearance of Tituba, or the Africanist presence "demonised, unseen and co-opted" in American literary scene (451).

significance in the general history of national development,[7] Tituba is configured as the national Other only to be disfigured as unfit for American subjectivity—the dark Other pushed to the periphery in the developmental journey of Proctor the American hero. Maryse Condé begins in this periphery and recuperates Tituba as the subject of history, whose failed attempt at social acceptance problematizes rather than redeems the historicist narrative of progress.

Condé's Tituba and Her-story of Salem

As such, in constructing his dramatic hero as the sacrificial martyr to the ideological tyranny of the Cold War world, Miller consecrates Proctor as the legitimate subject of American history. The claim of his integrated subjectivity is problematic because it is premised on the violent absorption of the gendered and racial others into the universalizing narrative of American (white male) progress. The violence in this historical vision, which Benjamin calls historicism, lies in the subject-centered worldview that objectifies, appropriates, and obliterates the other. What Benjamin expostulates as historical materialism is an alternative to this problematic system that totalizes history and corroborates the status quo. Condé's *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* is a literary rendition of Benjamin's philosophical vision—a postmodern work of historiographic metafiction, whose primary concern is to problematize that which constitutes historical knowledge about Salem. In this literary rewriting of Salem history, Condé makes an extensive use of parodies, among which this study will focus on three aspects: realist historiography, the American origins myth, and historicist/historical subjectivity.

The narrative of *I, Tituba* follows the trajectory of Tituba's imagined life from birth to death, but the plot does not add up to a progressive journey of her eventual self-realization. Rather, the stories of her life are made of fragments ripped from historical events of the past and composited in connection with the particular signifying mechanics of the present. Born to an African mother who was raped by an English sailor onboard a slave ship to the New World, Tituba incarnates within her racially marked body the sedimented history from the 17th-century Caribbean and Puritan New England to 20th-century Americas. Native to Barbados, she is brought to Boston as a slave, and survives the tumultuous time of the Salem witchcraft trials. She then returns home to join the maroons, and as a result of a failed slave revolt she helps organize, she is killed by hanging. But her spirit lives on in the present "deserts of America," where racial violence continues in such forms as lynching and residential segregation by people "covering their faces with hoods" and "[locking] up our children behind the heavy gates of the ghettos" (Condé 177-78).

First of all, *I, Tituba* as a whole is an extended parody of traditional historiography and its realist assumptions about time as linear, narrative as developmental, and events as factual. Condé's Tituba proposes instead history as simultaneity, or a monad where past events converge with present contingencies resulting in a specific signification. For example, the trajectory of her life straddles not only history and fiction but also space and time. The migration of historical Tituba from the Caribbean to Puritan New England stretches into her fictional repatriation back to Barbados, and after her death, her ghost strides across time from the 17th to the 20th century. Her life-story is told, in other words, as a montage of discrete actual and imagined events, showcasing the central problematic of historiographic metafiction: "fiction to be historically conditioned and history to be discursively structured" (Hutcheon 120). Condé's Tituba, to put in terms borrowed from N. Katherine Hayles, is "a congealed metaphor" whose meaning is "made possible (but not inevitable) by the blind force of evolution finding workable solutions within given parameters" (284-85).[8] Unlike historicist writing where meaning follows a progress from a coherent origin to a known end, Tituba, like historical materialist narrative, represents a contingent outcome of sedimented history where signification is made only as a result.

Also, Condé playfully deploys the narrative apparatus of conventional historiography only to deconstruct the taken-for-granted fact/fiction boundary and thereby to inscribe Tituba's silenced voice into history. As a historiographic metafiction, *I, Tituba* is, first and foremost, a rewriting of history: "a literal writing-into-being of an historically effaced woman" (Dukats 52). But this fictional inscription of her story does not add up to the sum total of history as in Proctor's version of official history, which

[7] According to Rosenthal, Perry Miller called the Salem witchcraft trials "a blip," an event of no importance in the context of the "political and religious agendas" of the Massachusetts Bay colony (212).

[8] According to Hayles, the approach to history as sedimented rather than linear can be understood from an evolutionary biologist's point of view: "modern humans, for all their technological prowess, represent an eye blink in the history of life, a species far too recent to have significant evolutionary impact on human biological behaviors and structures. […] The body is the net result of thousands of years of sedimented evolutionary history, and it is naive to think that this history does not affect human behaviors at every level of thought and action" (284).

subsumes Tituba's Salem into the telos of national coherence. Rather, it aims to rupture such a totalizing vision, and in order to do so, Condé deliberately parodies paratextual conventions of historiography not to corroborate her stories as "facts" but to problematize and undermine the authority of such historicist claims.

For instance, as Mara L. Dukats and Kaiama L. Glover have also pointed out, Condé begins the text with a playful epigraph, positioning Tituba as the first-person narrator and the author herself only a scribe. She then bookends it with a clear authorial voice in a brief "historical note," verifying the authenticity of Tituba's life-story while simultaneously highlighting its fictionality by claiming herself as the ultimate mastermind. Most notably, she inserts Tituba's deposition—practically the only surviving "factual" record of the accused woman—verbatim in the middle of the novel, in striking contrast to the "fictionality" of the rest of her story. Playing thus on the truth-lie dynamic of historical writing, Condé foregrounds the potential for mismemories and errors in written records while the three-page briefness of the actual court record throws into stark relief the effacement of Tituba's place in history.

In fact, *I, Tituba* is filled from cover to cover with Condé's imaginative "abuses" of historical records, showcasing discursive matrices through which events become constituted into facts. To take one notable example, the author deliberately misuses the 1688 Goody Glover case and makes Tituba witness her execution, a separate incident prior to the 1692 outbreak of the Salem trials:[9]

> When we got closer we saw an old woman with a rope around her neck. Suddenly one of the men removed the plank on which she was standing and her body snapped stiff as a bow. There was a terrible cry and her head fell to one side. I screamed and fell to my knees in the middle of this restless, inquisitive, almost joyful crowd. It was as if I had been sentenced to relive my mother's execution. (49)

Tituba continues to relay "eyewitness" accounts of the execution from "those who had witnessed it" to "those who hadn't" that Goody Glover had screamed "like a dog howling at the moon" and her soul was "in the shape of a bat" (49). Then she literally contradicts those accounts with her own statement: "I hadn't seen anything of the sort. I had witnessed a sight of total barbarity" (49). In this way, Condé "abuses" history in order to illuminate the arbitrary process through which history is produced as a "plot," so to speak, and more importantly, to remind us that history becomes significant only when personally experienced as lived reality—as a monad of the past alive in the present moment of danger. Tituba "relives" her mother's execution in Glover's public hanging, and in "my suffering, my revolt, and my powerless rage," she "screams" from the abyss of her being against the formidable burden of modern history that had turned her into "a slave, an orphan, and an outcast" (49).

Moreover, in having fictional Tituba witness and personally experience the actual execution, Condé strives to make not just an "artistic" but also "political choice" (Jalalzai 413). Put differently, Condé's novelistic ambition is nothing less than disclosing "truths" about Puritanism in 17th-century New England and thus rewriting American origins narratives. This project is quite ambitiously launched with one of the most interesting parodies in the novel. Hester Prynne, the famous heroine of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, is summoned into the fictional space and deployed as a sounding board for the author's biting mockeries of not only Puritan exceptionalism but also Anglo-American feminism. Hester, accused of adultery and pregnant with Pearl, befriends Tituba in prison. A wry critic of Puritan ancestors, Hester tells her cellmate that her grandfathers were the Pilgrims who had come aboard *The Mayflower* "to build the kingdom of the true God"—a project, which she declares flat out "dangerous" because it breeds "fanaticism" (97). She is also a protofeminist, dreaming of "a model society governed and run by women" (101), and the reason why she would not denounce Dimmesdale in public is not so much for "love" but for "revenge" by making him suffer from a guilty conscience (97).

Hester, in short, is Condé's double-edged weapon: she makes a proxy attack on patriarchal Puritanism on the one hand, and on the other hand, she herself is a mock-epic Anglo-American feminist, whose simplistic reproduction of patriarchal binarism is then ridiculed.[10] And in making a mockery of both, Condé reveals the shared assumptions of American master narratives that gloss over, subsume, and totalize markers of difference. In other words, Tituba represents what Toni Morrison calls the Africanist other, the unacknowledged presence "playing in the dark" of American imagination as the shaping force behind such "canonical" works as Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (4-11). For the author

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[9] Goody Glover was a woman executed for bewitching the four Goodwin children in 1688—an incident Cotton Mather had made famous through his account in "Memorable Providences" (Rosenthal 2).

[10] In her diehard feminist dismissal of patriarchy, Hester even assumes condescendingly that Tituba's culture might be matriarchal—implicitly, pre-Western and pre-historic. See Lillian Manzor-Coats's discussion of Hester as a parody of Anglo-American feminism, whose particular positionality betrays that of the white educated middle-class woman (742-43).

herself saw a link between the two heroines on her research trip to Salem, "the place where Tituba used to live," and now, only her absent presence makes a stark contrast to Hawthorne's prominence in public memorials and museums.[11] Thus, by bringing Hester in the intertextual juxtaposition with Tituba, Condé positions the American origins myth literally face to face with its original Other.

Condé then carries the parody further to illustrate that the Janus-faced myth with its other is indivisible, and that its constitution is made possible only in relation to the other. Hester and Tituba are characterized as simultaneously similar yet different. They are sympathetic to each other as fellow-travelers and willful outsiders of Puritan bigotry and exclusion, symbolically bound in their common blackness—Hester's black hair and Tituba's skin color—"the color of sin for some people," but "the benevolent shadow of night" for the two (95). However, their shared attributes throw their difference into sharper relief. As Dukats has pointed out, the two heroines differ in their respective possession and dispossession of agency. Whereas Hester chooses not to speak about Dimmesdale, Tituba's testimony is silenced/replaced by official directives. Whereas Hester decides to hang herself, Tituba is violently hanged by a mob of white plantation owners. In other words, Hester's choice could be made visible in the American literary scene at the expense of the historical eclipse of Tituba's non-choice. Again as Dukats succinctly puts, "when we paint Hester black, then *The Scarlet Letter*, as we know it, becomes inconceivable" (58).

Thus appropriating the metafictional device of parodic intertextuality, Condé strives to "close the gap between past and present for the reader" and to "rewrite the past in a new context," for her agenda is not to "void or avoid history" but to "confront the past of literature and of historiography" (Hutcheon 118). As she professes to have written the novel "to express [her] feelings about present-day America," where in terms of "narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy, and racism, little has changed since the days of the Puritans" (Scarboro 203), *I, Tituba* is the very outcome of her struggle with the question of history. She uses and abuses the intertextual traces of history and literature in order to illuminate the discursive mechanics that produce universality through the violent erasure of particularities in the other.

Lastly, Tituba, the mock-epic protagonist and probably the primary parody in the entire novel, is Condé's tongue-in-cheek critique of historicist/historical subjectivity. *I, Tituba*, as discussed by previous scholarship,[12] is a parody of the Bildungsroman, whose hero typically progresses, like Miller's Proctor, from spiritual enslavement to emancipation, eventually becoming the "knowing" Cartesian subject. Condé reverses precisely this conventional journey and makes Tituba choose to give up her freedom as "a squatter on the plantation" (10) and enter into slavery in order to marry John Indian, an enslaved man. With Tituba's reverse journey and her conscious choice of self-enslavement, Condé is proposing an alternative possibility of subjectivity where self is other-oriented and defined in relation to the world.

At this point, Immanuel Levinas's "ethics of the other" may help us better grasp this alternative meaning of freedom and subjectivity Tituba's choice illustrates. For Levinas, subjectivity begins not with Cartesian self-consciousness but with a recognition of the other's radical foreignness: that is, the constitution of subjectivity takes the reverse course of the egocentric Cartesian self-making in that it rather originates not from recognition of the self but from that of the other. Likewise, freedom is not the subject's absolute autonomy from the exteriority but inverted into obligation to others, putting otherness prior to egocentric subjectivism.[13] Levinas's other-oriented subjectivity, in fact, shares what Benjamin posited as the task of storytelling and translation, which purports to (re)write history not as a "reproduction" of the original, but as a "supplement" to and a re-articulation of the sum total of knowledge (79).

In this vein, Tituba's choice of self-enslavement for the sake of love comes from her recognition of the radical otherness in her lovers, including first, John Indian, Tituba's real-life husband, later Benjamin, a Jewish merchant from Boston and finally, Iphigene, a maroon and revolutionary from Barbados. She inverts her freedom and transcends her-self to experience their "weaknesses"—John's slavishness and betrayal of her faith, Benjamin's persecution due to his Jewishness, and Iphigene's fatal failure to organize a slave insurrection—confiding us, "some men who have the virtue of being weak

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[11] Condé's interview is included as part of Ann Armstrong Scarboro's Afterword to *I, Tituba* (198-213).
[12] Glover argues that Tituba's inverted choice of emancipation-as-enslavement is a parody of female slave narratives, which trace a trajectory from slavery to freedom, from "their fall from the innocence of childhood to their sexual victimization as enslaved persons" to their eventual emancipation as a reward of their virtue and "Christian faithfulness" (103). Glover also explores in depth Tituba's prominent sexuality as the primary marker of her subjectivity. As Tituba becomes the subject of desire through her exaggerated sexual agency, and particularly with her voluntary enslavement in order to marry a man, Tituba chooses "an existential liberation" over institutional enslavement (103).
[13] See Levinas. For an additional explication of Levinas's ethics of the other, see Large (1-47).

instill in us the desire to be a slave!" (Condé 140). What she sees in their weaknesses is the violence of institutional slavery and racism, just as Levinas's ethical recognition of otherness is in effect a call to pay our attention to the violence of history that subsumes irreducible singularities into the universal narrative of progress and civilization. In this sense, Tituba is also a Benjaminian storyteller/translator, and as a mock-Bildungsheld, she attempts to reverse the progressive journey toward identity and puncture the totalizing vision of historicist writing.

In Conclusion

Whereas Miller's Proctor chooses to die in order to keep his name "white," Tituba's name was "invented" by her stepfather Yao to prove that she was "the daughter of his will and imagination" as well as "his love" (6). Proctor dies to prove the integrity of the unified self, independent of the tyrannical world while Tituba's naming illustrates "the transformative power of historical and self invention," "the possibility of identitary re-creation" (Bécel 609). Proctor as the Bildungsheld represents the humanist telos of coherent subjectivity on the progressive journey to the final identification with the name of the father. In contrast, Tituba is aware of the ideological construction of identity and refuses to copy the patrilineal name, probing instead alternative possibilities of identity creation. Proctor's autonomous self begins with Cartesian self-consciousness and identifies the other either as an extension of the self to be appropriated or as a threat to be suppressed and expunged. On the contrary, Tituba's alternative subjectivity is derived from the human interrelationship and constituted by the recognition of the other's radical independence from subjective projection.

In fact, Tituba as "the witch" is a poignant illustration of this other-directed subjectivity. Early in the novel, Tituba wonders, having realized that she is identified as a "witch" by society, and comes up with her own working definition of "What is a witch?": "I noticed that when he said the word, it was marked with disapproval. Why should that be? Why? Isn't the ability to communicate with the invisible world, to keep constant links with the dead, to care for others and heal, a superior gift of nature that inspires respect, admiration, and gratitude?" (17). For her, the witch is fundamentally other-directed—bringing the past in the present moment and representing the ethical subject who reaches out with "the desire to transcend the self and experience the absolute other" (Hwang 56).[14] Thus deliberately constructing Tituba as the witch figure, Condé not only illustrates that identity is historically constructed rather than "fixed and unitary," but also points out the violence inherent in the process—"racism and sexism in western ideologies" (Bernstein 81). More significantly, in having Tituba "the witch" tell her-story of Salem, Condé postulates an ethical subject that watches the victims with a vigilant eye and rewrites history with their silenced stories. Tituba's spirit alive in the infinity of time ever returns to us here and now—the specter of history whispering to us that we need "an ethics of recognition" to remember *their* humanity as well as *our* inhumanity (Nguyen 19).

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[14] For more detailed discussion of Tituba as "the witch" in the sense of Levinas's concept of "infinity" and the ethics of the other, see Hwang (43-59).

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