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Elaine G. Breslaw. *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies.* New York: New York University Press, 1996. xxv + 243 pp. $24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8147-1227-6.

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The Witches of Salem–Race and Gender/Puritan Era

Elaine G. Breslaw's *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem* is an important contribution to the literature of the Salem witchhunt. By foregrounding Tituba and her role in the familiar events of 1692, however, Breslaw distinguishes her account from those of other scholars in the field and raises intriguing questions about the interpretation of the culture and heritage of early New England. Most historians have ignored Tituba, thereby perpetuating misinformation about her life and her role in the Salem tragedy. Through careful, meticulously documented research, Breslaw has convincingly reconstructed the life of this woman, so crucial to American history and yet about whom so little is known.

Much of the book relies upon Breslaw's first and perhaps most important point that Tituba was not, as most scholars have asserted, an African woman. Although Tituba did indeed come to Massachusetts with Samuel Parris from Barbados, she was an Arawak Indian, kidnapped from the northeast coast of South America and brought to Barbados as a young girl. This point is carefully supported by archival documents from Barbados, analysis of naming patterns on Barbados plantations, as well as the fact that Massachusetts references to Tituba specify that she was an American Indian, not a Negro.

After piecing together her early life and arrival in Massachusetts, Breslaw analyzes Tituba's role in the events of 1692, continually exposing the mythology surrounding her in scholarship and popular culture. Breslaw shows how Tituba's confession was influenced heavily by her ethnic heritage, her life as a slave in Barbados, and her social position in Salem. Tituba's testimony, which was adapted by both the accused and the accusers later in the trials, is shown to be at least partially influenced by her Creole worlds in Barbados, although Breslaw denies that Tituba had more than a cursory knowledge of witchcraft either in Barbados or the colonies. Most important, however, Breslaw examines the testimony as a careful manipulation by Tituba of Puritan beliefs and fears, in an effort to satisfy the magistrates and save her own life. Tituba's confession reveals an intimate knowledge of Puritan society and religion, an awareness of print culture, and a facility with the English language, all of which allowed her to construct a believable narrative that would change the shape of the Salem trials.

Breslaw's reconstruction of Tituba's life and influence on the events of 1692 is equally important for the way in which it reveals the rich multicultural, international texture of the seventeenth-century world. Often viewed as simply a Puritan phenomenon, the Salem witchhunt is an excellent example of the interaction and exchange of various international cultures in early New England.

Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem is a provocative and necessary addition to the history of New England. Dealing with difficult and often scant materials, Breslaw constructs an effective argument for the impact that Tituba, as an Indian slave familiar with the Puritan culture in which she lived, had on the events of the Salem witchhunt. The contribution is particularly timely today, in an era concerned with the issues of race and gender in areas of study often dismissive of such topics.

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