



# America Bewitched: Witchcraft After Salem

*Owen Davies*

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The infamous Salem witch trials of 1692 are etched into the consciousness of America. Nineteen people executed, one tortured to death, four others perished in jail--the tragic toll of Salem remains a powerful symbol of the dangers of intolerance and persecution. As time passed, the trials were seen as a milestone measuring the distance America had progressed from its benighted past. Yet the story of witchcraft did not end in Salem. As Owen Davies shows in *America Bewitched*, a new, long, and chilling chapter was about to begin.

Davies, an authority on witches and the supernatural, reveals how witchcraft in post-Salem America was not just a matter of scary fire-side tales, Halloween legends, and superstitions: it continued to be a matter of life and death. If anything, witchcraft disputes multiplied as hundreds of thousands of immigrants poured into North America, people for whom witchcraft was still a heinous crime. Davies tells the story of countless murders and many other personal tragedies that resulted from accusations of witchcraft among European Americans--as well as in Native American and African American communities. He describes, for instance, the impact of this belief on Native Americans, as colonists--from Anglo-American settlers to Spanish missionaries--saw Indian medicine men as the Devil's agents, potent workers of malign magic. But Davies also reveals that seventeenth-century Iroquois--faced with decimating, mysterious diseases--accused Jesuits of being plague-spreading witches. Indeed, the book shows how different American groups shaped each other's languages and beliefs, sharing not only our positive cultural traits, but our fears and weaknesses as well.

*America Bewitched* is the first book to open a window on this fascinating topic, conjuring up new insights into popular American beliefs, the immigrant experience, racial attitudes, and the development of modern society.

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