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## **“The Unwelcome Truth” : Arthur Miller’s The Crucible as Satirical Political Allegory**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that while Arthur Miller's 1952 play *The Crucible* is often cited as a political allegory of the McCarthy era, analyzing various instances of irony and how language itself becomes almost criminal shows the play can also be interpreted as satire. This thesis begins with a detailed analysis of Puritan life and religion to show how Spectral Evidence and an inherent fear of the Devil become the driving forces of the Salem Trials. From there, an examination of the political climate that inspires Miller to do a close-reading of human behavior shows how officials in both eras are able to easily manipulate language to perpetuate fear. A study of conflicting power dynamics encourages a separation between church and state, and further establishes a correlation between 1692 Salem and 1950s America. Ultimately, this thesis utilizes a Historicist approach to argue that *The Crucible* can be understood as a satirical allegory because although the judges in both eras claim they want to expose the truth, they instead manipulate facts and place blame in order to hide their personal agendas for political power. This thesis concludes in agreement with Miller that "The Crucible was an attempt to make life real again, palpable and structured. One hoped that a work of art might illuminate the tragic absurdities of an anterior work of art that was called reality, but was not. It was the very swiftness of change that lent it this surreality" ("Are You Now" n.p.).

Keywords: Allegory, Communism, HUAC, Red Scare, Satire, Spectral Evidence

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

“The Unwelcome Truth”: Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* as Satirical Political Allegory

by

Deanna Marie Mattia

A Master’s Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

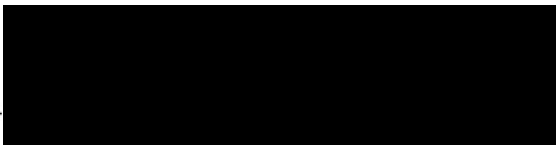
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“THE UNWELCOME TRUTH”:  
ARTHUR MILLER’S *THE CRUCIBLE* AS SATIRICAL  
POLITICAL ALLEGORY

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Montclair, NJ

2018

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The truth is an unwelcome entity in the 1692 Salem Witch Trials and the 1950's Hollywood Red Scare. As the number of men and women arrested and forced to testify in court that they are not witches or Communists drastically increases, it becomes evident that an even greater enemy is attacking society. In the face of unexplainable circumstances and suspicious behavior, society's leaders are responsible for staying in control and guiding the population towards an appropriate solution. Therefore, this thesis will explore what happens when those who are supposed to maintain order become the source of society's greatest fears and perpetuate chaos instead. This premise acts as the foundation for American playwright Arthur Miller's 1952 play *The Crucible* in which he uses Salem to satirize the political climate surrounding the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) as officials attempt to combat Communism. Though much has been explored about the correlation between these historical events, this study seeks to examine how Miller's use of dialogue and sarcasm reveals hypocrisy and closed-mindedness in ways that support reading the play as satire rather than its traditional form as tragic drama.

*The Crucible* was first performed in 1953, as American society reels from Senator Joseph McCarthy's Communist party fears and his blacklisting of those in the theater industry, who are accused of demonstrating un-American behaviors. According to Thomas P. Adler, "although it initially ran for only 197 performances when it opened on Broadway, *The Crucible* has become Miller's most frequently produced play" (73). *The Crucible* is about one of the most infamous moments in American history, the Salem Witch Trials, which led to the deaths of 20 individuals who were falsely accused of witchcraft. Though the play features many of the trial's historic figures, it focuses

predominantly on the Puritan farmer John Proctor as the protagonist, his affair with his young housemaid Abigail Williams, and his moral crisis as he struggles to make sense of the hysteria around him. Not only does Miller do an expert job of reviving history, but he also recreates it in a way that is entertaining to modern audiences; by manipulating historical facts like raising and lowering Williams' and Proctor's respective ages, Miller more plausibly conveys the implied relationship he sensed between the two in his research. Thus, he establishes revenge as motivation for some of the hysteria. Of the many thematic concepts studied, those concerning speech - honesty versus dishonesty, religious morals versus damnation, and the notion of one's good name - prove to be the most interesting; the language Miller uses includes many satiric elements, and emphasizes that words can indeed cause unnecessary chaos and destruction.

In an essay titled "Are You Now or Were You Ever," Miller claims, "I am glad that I managed to write *The Crucible*, but looking back I wish I'd had the temperament to do an absurd comedy, which is what the situation deserved" (n.p.). While *The Crucible* has often been cited as a political allegory for McCarthyism, analyzing the various instances of irony and how language itself becomes criminal demonstrates that Miller indeed wrote the absurd comedy he desired. Ultimately, *The Crucible* can be understood as a satirical allegory because although the judges in both eras claim they want to expose the truth, they instead manipulate facts and place blame in order to hide their personal agendas for political power. Miller uses *The Crucible* as a political platform to satirically mock the HUAC officials by comparing them to the Puritan reverends and judges. He comments against the hypocritical teachings of Puritanism and Christianity, the scare tactics perpetuated by officials in both eras, and the foolishness of ignoring the significant

relationship between private and public space to expose corrupt behavior and show society that mistakes made in history continue to occur.

### **Understanding Satire and Political Allegory**

To understand how Miller uses *The Crucible* as a political platform, one must first become familiar with the nature of satire and its relation to politics. As a literary genre, satire often focuses on the politics of society to reveal inconsistencies and/or unfair treatment; humor is also used to create a caricature of historic figures and to emphasize the satirist's agenda. Gilbert Highet states, "the typical weapons of satire [are] irony, paradox, antithesis, parody, colloquialism . . . violence, vividness, exaggeration" (18); each appears throughout *The Crucible* in various ways; for instance, Miller addresses colloquialism through the creation of dialogue that mimics Puritan speech patterns. He also positions the authoritative figures, the accusers, and the victims in contradicting and paradoxical situations. He engages with irony and exaggeration through sarcasm and his portrayal of the Puritan courtroom, which reveals that the judges accept false testimonies, and ultimately mocks the HUAC's interrogation strategies.

Miller employs these tactics to express his public dislike of HUAC officials and his refusal to allow the hindrance of his work. According to Aamir Aziz, "Arthur Miller was subpoenaed by the HUAC on 21 June 1956, three years after the Broadway premiere of *The Crucible* . . . The charges against him were: 'Signing CRC statements against anti-Communist legislation and against HUAC itself' (170). The charges were later dropped. Thus, Miller manipulates language used by authoritative figures around him and language recorded in the historical archives from 1692 to emphasize how easily the border between



the logical and the illogical can be blurred; this margin renders society susceptible to social hysteria, resistant to logic, and creates the basis and need for a satire.

In his research on modernism and satire, Jonathan Greenberg explains the multifaceted role of a satirist. He states, “on the one hand, the satirist speaks for a community, exaggerating and ridiculing his target in order to urge reform; on the other, he is a renegade who enjoys the subversion of traditional values, delights in his own aesthetic powers, even savors the cruelty he inflicts” (7). As Miller watches 1950s Hollywood descend into chaos from the media and Senator McCarthy’s perpetuation of paranoid messages regarding Communism, he sees many individuals and even friends disclosing information about others to remove the attention from themselves. Miller later remarks that “films of Senator Joseph McCarthy are rather unsettling -- if you remember the fear he once spread. Buzzing his truculent sidewalk brawler's snarl through the hairs in his nose, squinting through his cat's eyes and sneering like a villain, he comes across now as nearly comical, a self-aware performer keeping a straight face as he does his juicy threat-shtick” (“Why I Wrote the Crucible” n.p.). Miller’s dislike of the political climate inspires him to become the voice for artists like himself and to write a play that encourages society to question their leaders when certain political decisions appear to lack common sense.

According to Joshua E. Polster, Miller considered himself a Marxist, which implies he sees society as destined to experience strife with those in power; “Marxism, therefore, provided a theoretical context and means for Miller, along with the American Public and leftist movements in particular, to disclose, critique, and attempt to overthrow the capitalist system” (43). The notion of individuals plotting to destroy leadership

positions appears in several instances throughout *The Crucible*; for example, Proctor is frequently accused of planning to attack the court simply because he dares to advocate for the people he swears are innocent. This concept establishes a connection between the play's allegorical function of depicting Salem's politics and modeling characters based on actual people, and satire in the sense that Miller uses the Puritans to mock HUAC officials. Miller does this to draw attention to HUAC and simultaneously revive the violence of the Salem Witch Trials in a way that establishes a new understanding of the play, which is the idea that the behavior of society's trusted leaders creates more hysteria than the entity that people are told to fear.

### **A Religion Rooted in Fear of the Devil:**

Fear plays an important role in understanding 1692 Salem society. *The Crucible* begins with several young girls in the village experiencing unexplained fits of rage, seizures, and hallucinations of the Devil. Feeling unequipped to address the suspicious behavior, Reverend Parris seeks guidance from an expert who specializes in the Devil's mysteries, Reverend Hale. In Act 1 as he examines Betty Parris, the first victim, Hale claims, "we cannot look to superstition in this. The Devil is precise; the marks of his presence are definite as stone" (Miller 35). The image of Reverend Hale surrounded by books in which he proposes to find the solution for the alleged Devil's presence in Salem is satiric because it never occurs to Hale that the girls may be pretending simply to avoid being punished for dancing in the woods with Reverend Parris' slave, Tituba. Instead, Hale insists he possesses the knowledge necessary to single-handedly destroy the Devil, which is impossible and reveals a great deal of overzealous pride. Additionally, in a note introducing Reverend Hale, Miller mentions audiences have failed to find the humor of

this line in every performance; he supposes that “we are not quite certain even now whether diabolism is holy and not to be scoffed at. And it is no accident that we should be bemused” (Miller 31). Here, Miller acknowledges the complexity of writing a political allegory that also creates a satiric caricaturization of boastful elites. Audiences’ receptions are also interesting to note because part of satire’s function is to make people feel unsettled, and one way to achieve that is to establish religion as a controversial subject and the source of many people’s inherent fears.

The Puritans’ greatest fear is the Devil. According to Emory Elliot, Puritan theology is founded on the ancient binary premise of good versus evil; any gray area is intolerable. They treat religious worship as an intimate gathering amongst trusted individuals; therefore, making their churches exclusive implies everyone in the congregation is well-known and has a quality reputation, so it is easier for people to distinguish outsiders as untrustworthy; this distinction generates a heightened degree of suspicion and hysteria (159). The reason the Devil conjures so much fear in the Puritan era is because as Increase Mather preaches, the Devil himself was once an angel and delights in his ability to entice good people with sin; therefore, it makes perfect sense for him to appear on earth within the bodies of the most pure and compassionate neighbors because no one would ever suspect such people of committing sin. Thus, once accusations fly throughout the village, the people experience an even greater dilemma because they must come to terms with their opinions of others and struggle to find who they can truly trust (3).

According to Marion Lena Starkey, the trouble in Salem results from “semantic accident” as the Puritans misinterpret the phrase: “thou shalt not permit a witch to live.”

The Bible does not discuss witchcraft explicitly; it only states the word. Prior to the King James version, the very term was nearly nonexistent (37). It never seems to occur to the Puritans that they do not have a clear image of what a witch looks like; they simply equate witchcraft and the Devil, and vow to rid the village of the evil entity. Of course, without a clear definition to ameliorate their fears, they become susceptible to social hysteria rather than successful in their crusade. Additionally, Christopher Trigg claims the Puritans were overtly concerned with books and signatures, despite their penchant for misrepresentations (49); therefore, Miller as a political renegade uses this penchant to his advantage since the fear that individuals were disclosing others' names and signing documents that rallied against Congress was a popular trope in the McCarthy era. This reveals that regardless of the knowledge Reverend Hale has in his books, he and the other officials lack common sense; their fear generates hysteria and subsequently creates a vulnerability to accepting Spectral Evidence, which is the Puritans' belief that the Devil can manipulate his spirit to torture others in multiple places at once.

More dangerous than Spectral Evidence is the notion that words and actions are interchangeable. Jane Kamensky states, "in seventeenth-century parlance, the word "conversation" referred both to verbal exchange in particular and to human conduct in general...for them, speech was conduct and conduct was speech" (5). Prior to 1830, conversation is interpreted via its noun form meaning "one's behavior or an intimate gathering amongst people;" not intimate in the sexual sense, but a trusting group of social members. Over the years, society grows more familiar with conversation in its verb form meaning, "to converse, talk, engage in conversation."<sup>1</sup> Thus, Kamensky implies the Puritans' interchangeability between words and actions is significant because it shows

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<sup>1</sup> OED, conversation

their belief that if one says something in confidence, then it must automatically be true; this is a dangerous concept that 1950's American society is familiar with because there is no such confidence allowed once the HUAC begins their examinations. Thus, Miller positions Salem as a society that is too trusting; he shows how the Puritans lack the common sense that is necessary to foresee the consequences of their hasty actions. Miller exposes these behaviors to establish a correlation between the dangers in Salem and the dangers he sees around him in Hollywood. Additionally, Kamensky goes on to say:

early New Englanders were not simply people of words but, more pointedly, people of the Word. The reformed Protestant emphasis on Scripture, sermons, and free-form prayer held out new possibilities for speech to ministers and also to layfolk, who were urged to address God directly. (5)

Puritans were more often judged by their language, which is not as tangible as physical actions; therefore; their words are easily manipulated and used against them, especially once society begins pointing fingers at everyone.

Jefferey Andrew Weinstock argues there are two sides to the situation when considering Spectral Evidence: the physical person who can be seen, and the person's emotional or mental persona which cannot be seen. Thus, when people in the village begin claiming witchcraft and seeing apparitions of the Devil, it establishes a difficult relationship between the accuser and the accused, the victim and the witch, because it becomes nearly impossible in the minds of the Puritans to distinguish who is telling the truth (30). This inability to separate the physical from the mystical, and the truth from the lies makes them vulnerable to belief in the Devil's power.

A major theme in *The Crucible* that allows Miller to comment against the hypocritical teachings of Puritanism and Christianity is honesty versus dishonesty. In Act 2, John Proctor and his wife, Elizabeth discuss the recent chaos as numerous people are added to the court's list. Eventually, their discussion lapses into yet another argument about Proctor's affair with their former housemaid, Abigail Williams, which takes place prior to the plot. Proctor says, "I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion. But I wilted, and, like a Christian, I confessed. Confessed!" (Miller 52). The irony that Proctor wishes he had lied about his affair rather than having been honest with Elizabeth indicates a satiric function in the play; it suggests corrupt behavior on the part of Christians who are forced to confess their sins regardless of true remorse. This concept mirrors the same logic used in the Salem Trials and the HUAC examinations because people are either forced to confess to what the judges want them to say, or they are forced to stand at the gallows, which acts as a metaphor for those involved in the HUAC interrogations who experience the death of their careers if they are found guilty.

Religious morals versus damnation is another crucial theme that allows Miller to further convey his skepticism of Christian duty. As Reverend Hale arrives at the Proctor house to question the accused Elizabeth, he says to Proctor, "I have a rumor that troubles me. It's said you hold no belief that there may even be witches in the world. Is that true, sir?" (Miller 66). Proctor is the first character in the play to criticize society's absurd behavior; however, he recognizes that his response may cause powerful destruction. Believing in witches means admitting that Abigail and the rest of the girls are not pretending, that the world has indeed been poisoned by a force, spectral or political, that is beyond society's control. Hale then says he must ask the Proctors "some questions as

to the Christian character of this house” (Miller 61). The questions are designed to search for incriminating evidence such as poppets,<sup>2</sup> one of which is later found and used to make Elizabeth’s arrest.

Reverend Hale first questions Proctor about his meagre church attendance, to which Proctor reveals he recognizes a certain degree of corruption in Reverend Parris’s behavior. He states:

since we built the church there were pewter candlesticks upon the altar; Francis Nurse made them, y’know, and a sweeter hand never touched the metal. But Parris came, and for twenty week he preach nothin’ but golden candlesticks until he had them. I labor the earth from dawn of day to blink of night, and I tell you true, when I look to heaven and see my money glaring at his elbows - it hurt my prayer, sir (Miller 62).

The pewter candlesticks represent the plain values of the Puritans, while the gold candlesticks are an expensive, ostentatious, and materialistic symbol that often conjures negative associations of Christianity. Proctor’s statement of the candlesticks being handmade and his working the fields to pay for them speaks to his character as the ideal Puritan man; he represents the people who do honest work but are taken advantage of by their leaders. By depicting the contrast between the two metals, Miller exposes selfish behavior and vices that contradict Reverend Parris’ role as a religious official. In this instance, *The Crucible* becomes a political allegory about the dangers of rigid belief systems because the juxtaposition of labor and morality reveals a troubling disconnect; the implication that Christianity is a religion founded upon greed is especially controversial.

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<sup>2</sup> Forbidden dolls.

Since the Puritans adhere so strictly to their religion, acts of piety such as reciting The Ten Commandments also counts as evidence of a person's good nature; this is an example of the church's flawed mentality because the reverends fail to realize that such public displays do not consist of any tangible evidence or fact with which to make a solid case. As Proctor recites The Commandments for Reverend Hale's examination, he omits adultery, which is ironic because he is guilty of the offense. Elizabeth attempts to assist him, but this does not go unnoticed by Hale who says, "Theology, sir, is a fortress; no crack in a fortress may be accounted small" (Miller 64). Ironically, Reverend Hale does not realize how many cracks are in his own thought process and that of the church's which he works to support. Hale implies the church can do no wrong, that every decision made is founded on a deep understanding of God and his divine message; he fails to realize the degree to which greed, as demonstrated via the ornate candlesticks, and personal vendetta have corrupted officials like Reverend Parris. Thus, Hight states, "the satirical writer believes that most people are purblind, insensitive, perhaps anesthetized by custom and dullness and resignation. He wishes to make them see the truth" (19). Miller seems to embody this mindset, especially regarding the Puritans, whom he felt "had no ritual for the washing away of sins. It is another trait we inherited from them, and it has helped to breed hypocrisy among us" (19). By showing how their intense adherence to the Covenant forces Salem to become blind to the true danger, which is not the Devil, but society's trusted leaders.

According to Kamensky, Miller's focus on the Puritan's devotion to religious language reveals that the way the Puritans incriminate others is similar to the way language creates chaos during The Red Scare. She states:



if understanding the meaning of speech teaches us something essential about early New England, it should also teach us something about ourselves...we are engaged in wars over words: struggles to understand the relationships between language and experience, and between speech and power. Can words harm, and even kill?

(9)

In Act 4, Miller returns to satirizing boastful elites and shows words can indeed create destruction as Reverend Hale finally realizes his so-called knowledge has failed him. Hale explains, “I came into this village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died” (Miller 122). Again, Reverend Hale arriving allegedly omnipotent and planning to solve Salem’s fears of the Devil with books and other accounts that describe demonic possession is ironic because the Devil is not present in Salem, nor are witches. Believing so strongly in what the Bible supposedly says about witchcraft, as Starkey notes, is what creates the hysteria. Thus, Miller writes *The Crucible* as a political allegory to show that not every problem can be solved with prayer.

### **Suspect Language and Scare Tactics**

Playwrights like Miller make a living through words; therefore, when HUAC threatens death to their careers, dramatists’ abilities to sustain livelihoods presents Miller with the premise for a satirical, political allegory. The correlation between the historical witch hunts in Salem and the figurative witch hunts in Hollywood is no secret; both involve a search for truth where concrete evidence is elusive, perpetuate gossip and scandal, and reach a destructive end. In “Are You Now or Were You Ever,” Miller describes how “a new cautionary diction, an uncustomary prudence inflicted our way of

talking to one another. The word socialism was all but taboo. Words had gotten fearsome” (n.p). People are afraid to speak, and a certain degree of selfishness permeates society as friends and coworkers grow to distrust each other’s words.

Miller’s experience with what people are saying around him about Communism inspires him to do a close-reading of the political climate of McCarthyism. He claims:

we rapidly passed over anything like a discussion or debate, and into something quite different, a hunt not just for subversive people, but for ideas and even a suspect language. The object was to destroy the least credibility of any and all ideas associated with socialism. (“Are You Now” n.p.)

The notion of suspect language, searching for patterns in one’s speech or ideas that could be manipulated and used to incriminate someone, is interesting because it implies a person is guilty until proven innocent, rather than innocent until proven guilty. Both eras demonstrate a complete disregard of common sense and facts. Thus, Miller recognizes a parallel in which an individual’s status is crucial to each situation.

In examining how the language of the Puritans lends itself to manipulation by authorities, Miller explains, “the trial record in Salem courthouse had been written by ministers in primitive shorthand. This condensation gave emphasis to a gnarled, densely packed language which suggested the country accents of hard people” (“Are You Now” n.p.). The fact that the Puritan judges must hand-write documents that accurately describe every second of a verbal testimony given amidst screaming and violent hallucinations of the Devil becomes extremely difficult; it also creates room for error and interpretation. Additionally, underlying motives for personal and/or political agendas suggests the judges may have purposely abbreviated certain details to disguise evidence.

A similar focus on the danger of words during The Red Scare also establishes the basis for a satirical, political allegory as the HUAC officials tend to manipulate testimonies. Words such as “the formulation ‘un-American’ suggests not what people *do* but who they *are*, the essentialist tendency implying the impossibility of change or reform of an immutable, determined self” (Aziz 10). The more society is told to believe people are different, the more they begin to believe it and perpetuate fears of the outcast; this is satiric because officials like reverends and judges are supposed to protect the people rather than become the source of their fears.

The credibility not only of people’s words, but also of people themselves presents Miller with a complex relationship to explore further parallels. In Salem, the accused are two kinds of people: neighbors who own a lot of land, have the more desirable properties and more profitable crops, or neighbors of a lower standing who dare to argue with those of a higher standing. Often, people like Rebecca Nurse are accused for having been midwife to a stillborn baby, or Martha Corey for having insulted a neighbor’s pig prior to the animal’s death. According to Charles Wentworth Upham, “[supernaturalism and demonology] afforded leading characters to the drama in the miracle plays and the moral plays, as they were called, at successive periods. It offered a ready weapon to satire, and also to defamation” (339). Traditionally interpreted as a moral play for its religious themes, *The Crucible* also demonstrates how supernaturalism strangely becomes the answer people give to explain anything they do not immediately understand. Both circumstances of the accused women are absurd and establish the basis for a satirical allegory because there is no possibility that either has control over the misfortunes that

occur; therefore, they are accused simply because their accusers want to place blame rather than accept responsibility for their own actions.

Similarly, in *The Hollywood Red Scare*, the accused are primarily “academics, some prominent in their fields, were especially targeted, many forced to retire or fired for disloyalty. Some were Communists, some were fellow travelers . . . a certain number were unaffiliated liberals” (“Are You Now” n.p.). The most common group of liberals were actors and playwrights who appeared to condone liberalist themes; for example, Charlie Chaplin, Clifford Odets, Lena Horne, Lillian Hellman, and Miller’s close friend, Elia Kazan are several of the names mentioned. As Miller watches the political climate escalate, he fears that critical reception of *The Crucible* will be less than stellar. He states, “on opening night, January 22, 1953, I knew that the atmosphere would be pretty hostile. The coldness of the crowd was not a surprise; Broadway audiences were not famous for loving history lessons, which is what they made of the play.”<sup>3</sup> A second tour of performances, however, with a new cast who understood the importance of Miller’s language and delivered that language with powerful emotion disguised the overly political tone; the play then became a great success for its emotional relevance.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, patterns in language that emphasize words, status, and emotion serve as fodder for Miller to create a satirical allegory. In his essay “Again They Drank From the Cup of Suspicion,” Miller explains how in the McCarthy era “certain words vibrated perilously, words like organize, social, militant, movement, capitalism - it didn’t do to be on too familiar terms with language” (n.p.). Miller recognizes the extent to which language often equals power and demonstrates this concept throughout his play.

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<sup>3</sup> “Arthur Miller, Elia Kazan and the Blacklist: None Without Sin McCarthyism.” *pbs.org*, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> “Arthur Miller, Elia Kazan and the Blacklist: None Without Sin McCarthyism.” *pbs.org*, 2006.

According to Stephen A. Marino, “Miller intimately connects the word 'weight' to the theme of the play by employing it ten times throughout the four acts” (77). Weight is significant because it symbolizes how the credibility of certain testimonies is often based on the individual’s position in society; if a person owned multiple acres of land and had a reputable business, then they were likely more trusted by the government. Weight also symbolizes the death of Giles Corey who is literally crushed by stones as torture for refusing to name more people in addition to his wife, Martha. Thus, the weight of going against the government and the weight of society’s fears proves to be intense.

### **The Separation Between Church and State**

In addition to focusing on the hypocritical tendencies of religion and the Puritans’ fear of the Devil, analyzing the conflicting power dynamics presented in the courtroom is equally important for understanding the play as a satirical allegory. Prior to the third act, as the arrest of Elizabeth Proctor and Rebecca Nurse occurs, John Proctor asks Reverend Hale, “why do you never wonder if Parris be innocent, or Abigail? Is the accuser always holy now? . . . Vengeance is walking in Salem . . . the little, crazy children are jangling the keys. Common vengeance writes the law!” (Miller 73). Reverend Parris’ power in the community prevents him from being accused. Likewise, Abigail Williams establishes herself as one of the original victims, so she has the power to set the standards by which all other cases are measured. Ironically, the two who are most protected are the two who are most guilty, which demonstrates the basis for a satirical, political allegory because each has a personal vendetta that dictates their actions: Reverend Parris wants to assure more land and rent money as markers of his elevated status and reputation in the clergy, while Abigail wants to be John Proctor’s wife. Proctor’s statement is also satiric because

it reveals the irony that prior to the trials, Puritan children are taught to be silent and obey the laws, until the judges' corrupt behavior creates an opportunity for the girls to gain power and act as the voice of God. Ultimately, society's failure to recognize that power can easily fall into the wrong hands is satiric, and their failure to distinguish the voice of God from the voice of liars shows the need for separate spheres between Religion and Law.

In her historical analysis of Salem, Mary Beth Norton examines the notion of private and public space, and argues that the Judges' failure to conduct interviews with the accused out of the public eye perpetuates social hysteria. In Christianity, confession is understood to take place privately between God and the individual who seeks to purify his or her soul. Thus, confession is intended to be a personal endeavor; however, in the 1692 Salem Witch Trials, confession adopts a much darker meaning. Hearsay and pretense are public spectacles, making it easy for the accusers to change their stories based on what they hear a witness say in front of them (148). Ironically, the judges lack the common sense necessary to realize that conducting public interviews raises the likelihood of false testimonies because the judges create the opportunity for the accused and the accusers to manipulate evidence to make themselves look better. By exposing this error in judgement, Miller shows how foolish authoritative figures can be.

Mary Warren's case shows how easily individuals can switch tactics during a confession based on their surrounding environment. Originally, Mary is a member of Abigail's group of pretending girls; she then becomes an honorary court official; finally, in Act 3, she becomes a victim herself. In a desperate attempt to save his wife, Proctor arrives to the court with Mary, his current housemaid, to present information that

discredits the children's role as the voice of God. Proctor convinces Mary to put her testimony in writing, which is one of the first pieces of tangible evidence the court has to consider that is not a needle or a tool wielded by an accuser to incriminate his or her victim.

Analyzing the language of the confessions is crucial, but Peter J. Grund asserts the atmosphere or environment is equally important because he also recognizes the relationship between private and public space. He states:

to fully understand the Salem depositions, we need to pay attention to the way the deponents' information is presented, not only to what information is provided. In turn, in order to fully understand the language, we need to contextualize it within the particular socio-cultural and legal setting that was the Salem witch trials. (40)

This is significant because the cultural and legal setting in Salem is plagued by the effects of the recent Indian War. After having watched or heard stories of relatives being slaughtered, society knows the quickest way to gain sympathy for their testimonies is to appeal to people's emotions and fears (Norton 42). For Proctor to arrive with Mary Warren claiming that the girls have lied and that people have been hanged for nothing brings a whole new sense of fear into the courtroom, a fear of the government rather than a blind respect for it.

As Judge Danforth examines Mary, Miller clearly shows that Danforth has a personal vendetta as well. He asks Proctor, "there lurks nowhere in your heart, nor hidden in your spirit, any desire to undermine this court?" (Miller 83). The way his question is phrased shows Danforth is not asking if Mary Warren believes she is innocent; instead, he questions her and Proctor's loyalty to the court. This establishes the foundation for a

satirical allegory because Danforth proves to be more concerned with maintaining his reputation, rather than his proclaimed quest to search for the truth to rid Salem of its dark epidemic.

As Mary Warren struggles to respond in a way that satisfies her loyalty to Abigail and her friends, to her fellow court officials, and to John Proctor as her employer, Danforth makes a lengthy speech to the children in which he ironically warns them about bearing false witness. He states:

this is a court of law. The Law, based upon the Bible, and the Bible, writ by Almighty God, forbid the practice of witchcraft and describe death as the penalty thereof. But likewise, children, the law and Bible damn all bearers of false witness . . . Now then. It does not escape me that this deposition may be devised to blind us; it may well be that Mary Warren has been conquered by Satan, who sends her here to distract our sacred purpose. If so, her neck will break for it. But if she speak true, I bid you now drop your guile and confess your pretense, for a quick confession will go easier with you. (Miller 95)

The court's first mistake is the lack of separation between church and state. Of course, the Puritans were not yet equipped to understand the necessity of such a concept due to their intense adherence to their scripture; they failed to see that God is not tangible evidence and church is meant to be a sanctuary, so anything confessed in confidence to the reverends ought to not be viable in the courtroom.

There is no such confidence during the McCarthy era; many of the accused confess simply from the fear of being blacklisted. The fact that a quick confession will go easier with the girls shows the hastiness of the Salem and the HUAC trials as each event



pushed for hasty confessions. The court's second mistake is, again, ironically regarding the children as the voice of God because the judges become blind to concrete facts and common sense. A third mistake is that Danforth willingly considers Mary Warren may be possessed, but ignores the possibility of mob mentality engendered by social hysteria; he fails to see that people are blindly following their neighbors' paranoia despite having a lack of concrete evidence to support their fears. Danforth also interestingly accuses Mary Warren of trying to distract the court from its sacred purpose, but what that purpose is has become questionable by this point in the play.

As seen in *The Crucible*, Judge Danforth is adamant against accepting any appeal that dares to deviate from the court's righteous purpose. He says:

I will not receive a single plea for pardon or postponement. Them that will not confess will hang. Twelve are already executed; the names of these seven are given out, and the village expects to see them die this morning. Postponement now speaks a floundering on my part; reprieve or pardon must cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now. While I speak God's law, I will not crack its voice with whimpering. If retaliation is your fear, know this -- I shall hang ten thousand that dared to rise against the law. (Miller 119-20)

Here, Miller continues to show that the court is not concerned with truth or common sense. Danforth's main focus is his reputation in the eyes of the public. The village demands a hanging, and a hanging they will see. This is similar to Senator McCarthy's fear of Communism; he is so petrified by the perceived threat of military action that he fails to realize the lack of concrete evidence to support his claims.

Throughout Mary's Warren's case, the concept of questioning authority becomes an increasingly prominent political theme. Reverend Parris accuses Proctor at least three times of plotting to overthrow the court. Eventually, Reverend Hale responds, "is every defense an attack upon the court? Can no one - ?" (Miller 87). One can supplement a variety of predicates in place of Hale's interrupted question: can no one state an opinion? Can no one clarify their understanding of the court's rules? Most dangerously, can no one dare to question the minds in authority? Parris' fear of anyone having personal thoughts or opinions that differ from the court suggests he is aware the government is failing. Many people like Proctor, Giles Corey, and even Reverend Hale realize that the hysteria is not a warning against any real threat; instead, Salem's officials utilize hysteria as a scare tactic to keep themselves in power.

Another important case is Giles Corey, a historic figure who is arrested for refusing to add more names in addition to a document signed by 91 individuals who claim Rebecca Nurse, Elizabeth Proctor and his wife, Martha, are innocent. Danforth makes another lengthy speech in which he explains:

You have not hurt these people if they are of good conscience. But you must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court, or he must be counted against it, there be no road between. This is a sharp time, now, a precise time -- we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up, and them that fear not light will surely praise it. (Miller 87)

Again, Miller points to the lack of good conscience and repeated fears of Communist attacks against the American government demonstrated by the HUAC. Society is either

good or evil, as Emory previously noted, with no in between. The juxtaposition between darkness and light in these lines shows how deeply ingrained religion is in Puritan minds. Here, Miller uses Danforth's dialogue to reveal the closed-mindedness of Puritanism.

As Proctor struggles to free Corey and begs the judges not to violate the trust of people who gave information in confidence, the court's blindness continues to create more problems than it solves. Parris states, "without confidences, there could be no conspiracy" (Miller 90). No confidences means no trust; and when people cannot trust each other's words, as Miller identified in his description of suspect language, it creates anarchy in society. Thus, Miller portrays characters like Reverend Parris and Judge Danforth as greedy, power-hungry officials to satirize the government and to expose how it seems far more credible for public gossip to be regarded as testimony than facts the officials appear to ignore. Even Judge Danforth states at least twice during Act 3, "I do not judge," which is absurd because his job is literally to judge; such an admission signifies that perhaps Miller's satirical message to audiences is for people to be aware of instances when society's leaders begin to behave in ways that perpetuate chaos and begin to mirror past historical oppressions.

The notion of officials being closed-minded and creating chaos continues to establish a satirical function within the play. Francis Nurse, also desperate to save his wife, tells Judge Danforth, "Excellency, we have proof for your eyes; God forbid you shut them to it. The girls, sir, the girls are frauds" (Miller 80). Nurse is one of the few characters, like Proctor, who recognizes that the court has another agenda besides discovering the truth. Danforth responds, "near to four hundred are in the jails from Marblehead to Lynn, and upon my signature . . . and seventy-two condemned to hang by

that signature” (Miller 81). In addition to blindness and truth, the act of signing names further demonstrates that Danforth is more concerned with his reputation than the lives he has a chance to save. He believes not condemning the remaining prisoners does a disservice to those who have already died, which is satiric because it goes against his oath to protect society, and shows his thought process is completely flawed. Thus, Nurse replies, “Excellency, I never thought to say it to such a weighty judge, but you are deceived” (Miller 81). Nurse’s confession that until this moment he never thought to question the mind of an authoritative figure shows how desperately in need the Puritans were for the ability to become independent thinkers; here, it becomes evident that blind faith leads to destruction.

Again, questioning the behavior of authority serves as a prominent theme as Reverend Hale urges Judge Danforth to reconsider his tactics. Hale mentions people are beginning to fear the court rather than trust it. Danforth responds, “there is fear in this country because there is a plot to topple Christ in this country” (Miller 91), which further emphasizes the need for social reform in Puritan society because as Hale previously questioned Reverend Parris, not every idea that conflicts with the court is a desire for social destruction. As Hale and Danforth continue to argue, Danforth again accuses Hale of questioning his justice, to which Hale responds, “I have signed seventy-two death warrants; I am a minister of the Lord, and I dare not take a life without there be a proof so immaculate . . . I’ll not conceal it, my hand shakes as yet with a wound” (Miller 91). Hale is indeed wounded because he confesses to having signed multiple death warrants - including that of Rebecca Nurse, whom he did not fully believe was guilty; he signed

because the court forced him to, and he is just beginning to recognize the gravity of his actions.

After quitting the court for a few weeks, Reverend Hale returns to check on the prisoners and beg them to confess even if it is a lie so they can avoid hanging. When Judge Danforth demands to know why he has returned, Hale responds, “I come to do the Devil’s work. I come to counsel Christians they should belie themselves . . . There is blood on my head!” (Miller 121). Hale uses sarcasm, which is satiric because he attempts to show Danforth the intensity of the mistakes they have made by mocking him. Unfortunately, he fails to change the judge’s mind.

In examining some of the remaining letters and case studies from the Salem Witch Trials, it further becomes apparent that the judges are willing to resort to gruesome methods to obtain confessions. In George Lincoln Burr’s translation of the LETTER OF THOMAS BRATTLE, F. R. S., 1692 he quotes:

these confessours, (as they are called,) do very often contradict themselves, as inconsistently as is usual for any crazed, distempered person to do. This the S. G. do see and take notice of; and even the Judges themselves have, at some times, taken these confessours in flat lyes, or contradictions, even in the Courts. (20)

Burr’s translation of Brattle’s letter admits judges often suspected people were lying, but allowed them to continue testifying in court. Once the court accepts false testimonies, society officially decomposes beyond repair. The judges find themselves as hysterical as the people and face a dilemma between the truth and lies.

Burr continues to explain Brattle’s belief in the absurdity of the court’s decision to accept testimonies from individuals whom they know are not in their right frame of

mind. He argues the court should find other methods to verify stories that cite the Devil as their main source of evidence. The letter states:

these confessours then, at least some of them, even in the Judges' own account, are under the influence of the Devill; and the brain of these Confessours is imposed upon by the Devill, even in the Judges' account. But now, if, in the Judges' account, these confessours are under the influence of the Devill, and their brains are affected and imposed upon by the Devill, so that they are not their own men, why then should these Judges, or any other men, make such account of, and set so much by, the words of these Confessours, as they do? (20)

Note how many times the Devil is referenced in this excerpt, and how the language twists in riddles in an absurd fashion. By consistently reminding people the Devil is present, the judges appear to be purposely emphasizing society's fear to lure more citizens into hysteria. This may have been used as a method strategically designed to confuse people until they reached the point when they no longer knew to what exactly they were confessing.

Burr also notes how the judges were forced to make decisions as a result of mentality. He states:

the great cry of many of our neighbours now is, What, will you not believe the confessours? Will you not believe men and women who confesse that they have signed to the Devill's book? that they were baptized by the Devill; and that they were at the mock sacrament once and again? What! will you not believe that this is witchcraft, and that such and such men are witches, altho' the confessours do own and assert it? (20).

Again, the inability to trust each other's words and an element of sarcasm in exclamations such as the ones Burr has recorded presents Miller with the necessary fuel to create a satirical allegory. The language of confession proves to be conflicting because the judges recognize that many of the witnesses are not in their right frame of mind, but the fear that they may overlook the testimony of one who may actually be telling the truth about the Devil is a paranoia they cannot ignore. Thus, the judges go to great lengths to prove their suspicions are correct.

Another surviving document from the Salem Trials includes a letter from the historic John Proctor to officials in Boston that describes how the Salem court forces false confessions from prisoners via torture. Miller likely had access to this letter and others like it in his research for the play, and if so, such documents provide insight into the court's behavior and details with which to shape his characters. This shows that although Miller manipulates certain facts to create a play, not all of the corrupt behavior is imagined. Proctor writes to beg for the freedom of his young son, William, who is eventually accused. He asks for the trials to be moved from Salem to Boston because he believes Salem's system is biased. Proctor frequently acknowledges throughout the play that he does not believe in the Devil's work or Spectral Evidence, and his letter demonstrates these same beliefs. He says:

my son William Proctor, when he was examined, because he would not confess that he was guilty, when he was innocent, they tied him neck and heels till the blood gushed out at his nose, and would have kept him so twenty-four hours, if one, more merciful than the rest, had not taken pity on him, and caused him to be unbound. These actions are very like the popish cruelties. They have already

undone us in our estates, and that will not serve their turns without our innocent blood. (Burr 362)

Again, the court lends itself to a satiric interpretation because violence and other methods of torture are illegal in garnering confessions; however, Proctor's letter exposes the corruption that takes place throughout Salem and other neighboring villages.

Unfortunately, Proctor's letter is ignored by the Boston officials, and the hysteria continues.

One of the most significant moments of hysteria towards the end of the play is when Mary Warren accuses Proctor of witchcraft to divert the attention away from herself. She cries out to the court, "he want my name. 'I'll murder you,' he says, 'if my wife hangs! We must go and overthrow the court!'" (Miller 110). Mary realizes that the government fears having their authority rejected more than anything. By this point, Proctor has been frequently accused by Reverend Parris of planning attacks. Thus, such an accusation helps Mary reposition herself from accused to accuser, which keeps her safe for the most part. Other than Warren, Proctor is the only character in the play who is forced to put his confession in writing; however, Proctor's confession must be posted to the doors of the church to serve as a lesson for the village. The judges and reverends believe seeing Proctor's name signed to a public confession will encourage the rest of society to believe the hysteria is real because not even a man with a reputation as solid as John Proctor is safe; their goal is to force more citizens to confess their sins because "to the Puritans, a person by nature was inherently sinful and corrupt, and only by severe and unremitting discipline could they achieve good;" (Kang 149) however, Proctor cannot



allow himself to sign because it makes him a coward in the face of his loved ones who died defending their innocence.

Before giving his confession, Proctor meets with Elizabeth and asks for her advice on whether he should sign a false confession, and if doing so makes him a bad person. Despite having many struggles in their marriage, Elizabeth knows John will never truly be able to live with himself if he signs a false document because despite committing adultery against her, he is too good a person to corrupt himself. As Proctor hesitates to sign his confession, Danforth asks, “is that document a lie? If it is a lie I will not accept it! What say you? I will not deal in lies” (Miller 133). Of all the statements in the play, this particular one of Danforth’s establishes a permanent case for a satiric reading of *The Crucible* because he outright admits he will not accept a false confession when all the court has done throughout the entire play is accept false confessions. At this moment, having lost all faith in Salem’s corrupted system, Proctor tears his signed confession and chooses to hang with the rest of the innocent victims.

### **The McCarthy Correlation**

What Danforth says is ironic, especially when thinking of the play’s connections to McCarthyism because Miller’s accounts of the period show that the HUAC not only accepted false testimonies like Danforth, but they also willingly accepted bribery; by the time Miller was examined in 1956, the media had lost interest in Communist news. The fact that Chairman Walters offered to cancel Miller’s case if Miller would allow his wife, Marilyn Monroe, to take a photo is satiric because it reveals the same degree of selfishness and corruption that Miller sought to expose in the play (“Are You Now” n.p.).

Proctor's climactic decision is also similar to a personal experience Miller has during the HUAC interrogations. According to Mervyn Rothstein, "in 1952 Mr. Kazan angered many of his friends and colleagues when he . . . gave the committee the names of eight other party members" (n.p.). In this instance, Miller plays the role of Elizabeth in the discussion she has with Proctor because prior to disclosing, Kazan met with Miller to discuss his decision. This places Miller in a complex situation because he knows he cannot tell Kazan he must name names, especially because Miller suspects he is one of the individuals, yet he senses that destruction is inevitable; the intense boiling point of the political climate is ultimately how *The Crucible* earns its name.

In Miller's essay "Are You Now or Were You Ever," he further outlines some of the connections he sees between McCarthyism and the Salem Trials. He contends, "*The Crucible*, as it developed over more than a year became the awesome evidence of the power of human imagination inflamed, the poetry of suggestion, and the tragedy of heroic resistance to a society possessed to the point of ruin" (n.p.). Like Salem, 1950's America was plagued by Spectral Evidence in the form of Communists rather than the Devil; however, Salem did not have the media, which allowed Senator McCarthy to broadcast his fears on a regular basis and manipulate images to further convince audiences that his suspicions were correct. According to Aziz, "McCarthy's politics were certainly influenced by American foreign policy, the threat of Communism, and the Korean War" (171). This is similar to the way the Puritans in Salem are partly influenced by the effects of the Indian War, which accusers often use to prey on the fears of those around them; for instance, Abigail Williams uses those fears when threatening the girls to stay silent about their forbidden actions in the woods. She says, "I saw Indians smash my

dear parents' heads on the pillow next to mine, and I have seen some reddish work at night, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down!" (Miller 19). This shows the degree of violence and manipulation that runs rampant through Salem, dishonest behavior that is notably similar to the hysteria spread by McCarthy; Here, Miller draws a satiric connection between Abigail and McCarthy as the lead perpetrators.

As previously stated, another perpetrator of the hysteria is Reverend Parris. Parris' concerns with parties and factions in Salem is similar to the alleged Communist party and Un-American behaviors; Act 1 states:

PARRIS, now he's out with it: There is a party in this church. I am not blind; there is a faction and a party.

PROCTOR: Against you?

PUTNAM: Against him and all authority!

PROCTOR: Why, then I must find it and join it. (Miller 29)

This instance is satiric because of the way Proctor responds with sarcasm and humor, claiming he wants to join the association that openly criticizes the church and its connection to the court. Miller also never liked the aura of McCarthyism, which is why he encourages questioning authority in his play.

Moreover, Miller goes on to say in another essay "Again They Drank From the Cup of Suspicion" that "if the Communists were indeed hidden everywhere, it followed that they would certainly be found where common sense indicated they could not conceivably be" (n.p.). This relates to Increase Mather's preachings about how the Devil can supposedly adopt many forms, which Miller uses to depict how 1950's America became so distrusting of their friends and neighbors; too much communication with the

wrong person often lead to the death of one's career. Thus, Miller writes the play to satirically allegorize McCarthyism as he felt that "in the countries of the Communist ideology, all resistance at any import is linked to the totally malign Capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not a reactionary in his views is open to the charge" (Miller 32). Looking back at the political climate that inspired Miller to write shows the extent to which his play brings history to life. Audiences are able to better understand how *The Crucible* functions as a satirical, political allegory based on the similarities between the manipulation of language, the violation of people's rights, and the contradictory behavior of society's leaders; the people are vulnerable and cannot turn to those whom they should be able to trust because their leaders are the very people who refuse to learn from history's past mistakes.

Additionally, the way Spectral Evidence and gossip are used in Salem to manipulate testimonies mirrors the way authoritative figures in the Red Scare deliberately use unfair tactics to falsely incriminate their suspects. Aziz states, "During HUAC hearings, the defendants were denied the protection of the First and Fifth Amendments, which enshrine the right to free speech and protection against self-incrimination respectively" (173). With this function, Miller depicts what happens to a society when people blindly follow the so-called wisdom of authority and do not question logic that appears flawed. Norton also identifies a pattern between the questioning strategies of officials in both eras; she notes how the Puritans' phrasing, "did you see [insert name] with the Devil?" and HUAC officials' "are you now or have you ever been affiliated with a member of the Communist party?" are syntactically similar. Both dialogues show that

witnesses were limited in their rights to speak freely since the questions were deliberately structured in a biased manner.

One of the most notable cases in *The Crucible* that shows the similarities between the language of interrogation used by Salem and HUAC officials is Proctor's trial for adultery. In Act 3, Danforth makes Elizabeth testify on Proctor's behalf since Proctor claims she never lies; however, this instance is the first time Elizabeth does lie because she wants to save Proctor's reputation. In the following excerpt, the way Danforth phrases the questions is similar to the way the HUAC phrase their questions:

DANFORTH: To your own knowledge, has John Proctor ever committed the crime of lechery . . . Answer my question! Is your husband a lecher!

ELIZABETH, faintly: No, sir.

DANFORTH: Remove her!

PROCTOR: Elizabeth, tell the truth!

DANFORTH: She has spoken. Remove her! (Miller 105)

Danforth's phrasing as he asks whether Elizabeth believes Proctor committed the crime is similar to various interrogations in which the HUAC asks "has [insert name] been involved with Communist propaganda?" While many of the accused either confessed out of guilt or named names to divert the attention from themselves, Elizabeth is an example of those who lied to save themselves or others. Unfortunately, this act of kindness ultimately condemns Proctor.

A portion of Miller's interrogation by the HUAC further indicates how people's rights were similarly manipulated during the McCarthy era. Aziz cites "The following

excerpts from the questioning by Richard Arens, Donald L. Jackson, and Gordon H. Scherer of the Committee illustrate Miller's position:

Mr Arens: Can you tell us who was there when you walked into the room?

Mr Miller: Mr Chairman, I understand the philosophy behind this question and I want you to understand mine. When I say this, I want you to understand that I am not protecting the Communists or the Communist Party. I am trying to, and I will, protect my sense of myself. I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him. . . .

Mr Jackson: May I say that moral scruples, however laudable, do not constitute legal reason for refusing to answer the question. . . .

Mr Scherer: We do not accept the reason you gave for refusing to answer the question, and . . . if you do not answer . . . you are placing yourself in contempt.

Mr Miller: All I can say, sir, is that my conscience will not permit me to use the name of another person. (176)

This is one of Miller's most well-known responses against the HUAC, and it encompasses many of the themes present in *The Crucible*. Mr. Arens begins by asking who was with Miller, which is similar to numerous instances where witnesses are asked if they saw Tituba, Sarah Good, Martha Corey, etc. with the Devil. Miller then responds that he is merely protecting himself, which is the same goal that Proctor and Francis Nurse have of freeing their wives in Act 3. The fact that Miller insists he cannot taint the names of others is also similar to the response Proctor gives in Act 4 as he refuses Judge Danforth's command to sign his testimony, "I speak my own sins; I cannot judge another" (Miller 131). Such similarities show that the authority already suspects certain

individuals and seeks to corner them for an answer, which violates their rights and contradicts officials' oath of justice.

### **Conclusion**

Ultimately, Miller's desire to ridicule 1950's society's questionable behavior demonstrates that a satiric reading of *The Crucible* may influence modern society's understanding of social reform by cautioning people not to blindly follow the law. According to Aaron Matz, "Satire exists to isolate a condition or a sector of human life and hold it up for ridicule. Realism, in its nineteenth-century literary sense, is a method or an attitude seeking to represent experience, especially everyday experience, without implausibility" (ix). The Puritans and 1950's Americans were real people who lived ordinary lives until Spectral Evidence and slander pollutes their abilities to utilize logic and reasoning. Miller knew that prior to the Salem Trials, the region executed relatively few people. Thus, the deaths of 20 individuals in a 3 month span engendered twice the paranoia (Murrin 314). Miller saw this as an opportunity to create a parallel between the hysteria in Salem and the intense political climate of The Hollywood Red Scare.

Similarly, Jeffery D. Mason states, "politics refers to a way of understanding human interaction as expression and implementation of power relations. In that sense, both government and the relationship of the community to the state are the product of interpersonal dynamics" (2). In order to learn from the history of their mistakes, modern society must be able to recognize patterns of destructive behavior. Conflicts between individuals and the government, especially in a democracy, are inevitable. Thus, Miller uses *The Crucible* to explore the nature of fear. He appears to argue that when society allows certain officials to obtain too much power, something must be done to regulate the

system, otherwise it creates an opportunity for mass hysteria. If the Puritans had been able to realize the consequences of adhering so strictly to their scriptures and allowing religion to permeate into the courtroom, then perhaps they may have been able to avoid violence and reach a compromise. Additionally, Kamensky asserts:

We have begun, in short, to pay heightened attention to the interdependence of language and society...we now think in terms of the dialogue through which cultures create the languages that create cultures. In such a schema, speech emerges both as a mirror of existing social relations and as a force that continually shapes and reshapes a given society. (10)

Ultimately, this study encourages readers and audiences of *The Crucible* to pay heightened attention to how Miller's use of dialogue and historical facts reveals patterns of corruption in society. This study also concludes in agreement with Miller that "The Crucible was an attempt to make life real again, palpable and structured. One hoped that a work of art might illuminate the tragic absurdities of an anterior work of art that was called reality, but was not. It was the very swiftness of change that lent it this surreality" ("Are You Now" n.p.). The lesson Miller establishes that unites Salem, The Red Scare, and modern society is, "paranoia breeds paranoia, but below paranoia there lies a bristling, unwelcome truth, so repugnant as to produce fantasies of persecution to conceal its existence" ("Are You Now" n.p.). The truth Miller alludes to is society's desperate attempts to eradicate the sources of their fears, which renders people blind to dangers that are right in front of them. They fail to question authority when chaos is running rampant and when authoritative figures are, ironically, doing more to fuel it than quell it.



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