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Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*: A Connection between
Salem and McCarthyism

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ABSTRACT

The Crucible is the most appropriate representation of the two most relevant witch hunts that took place in the American soil: the Salem witch trials of 1692 in which nearly twenty people died in the gallows accused of witchcraft; and the events that took place during McCarthyism in the 1950s and that represent the persecution of people suspected of belonging to the Communist Party. Arthur Miller wrote a successful work criticizing the events of the 1950s while using the events of the seventeenth century in an admirable way. The aim of this undergraduate dissertation is to analyze both historical events and to try to find the links between Miller's work, *The Crucible*, and its Hollywood adaptation. Moreover, a comparative analysis of the work and the real history of witchcraft in Salem will be made.

KEY WORDS: witchcraft, Puritanism, McCarthyism, mass hysteria, afflicted, Communism.

RESUMEN

The Crucible es la mejor representación de las dos cazas de brujas más relevantes en territorio americano: los juicios de brujas de Salem de 1692 en los que cerca de una veintena de personas murieron en la horca acusadas de brujería, y los acontecimientos relacionados con el macartismo de los años 50 que representan la caza de ciudadanos sospechosos de pertenecer al Partido Comunista. Arthur Miller creó esta obra exitosa que critica los acontecimientos de los años 50 utilizando los sucesos del siglo diecisiete de una manera admirable. Este trabajo intenta analizar ambos acontecimientos históricos y además intenta encontrar el punto de unión para la creación de la obra de Miller, *The Crucible*, y su adaptación hollywoodiense. Además se mostrará un análisis comparativo de la obra y de la verdadera historia de la brujería en Salem.

PALABRAS CLAVE: brujería, puritanismo, macartismo, histeria colectica, afectado, comunismo.

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INTRODUCTION

The Salem witch hunt has been one of the most controversial topics surrounding supernatural events during the last three centuries in the study of American literature and culture. This undergraduate dissertation has the purpose of giving a different approach to the ones already given throughout history. To do so, this study compares the real history of the witchcraft trials in Salem, and their representations made in the play *The Crucible* written by Arthur Miller and his film adaptation released in 1996.

The play and the film are not completely faithful to the episodes occurred in Salem during the winter of 1692, but they are a summary of all the events that took place in that year. Arthur Miller introduced a love story between two of the main figures of the story in order to make it more attractive for the audience and readers. Here, we will see how the process of what would subsequently be known by many authors as mass hysteria started. Besides, what Miller actually tried to do was a representation of the events of the 1950s in America with suspected Communists.

Both the film and the play *The Crucible* deal with the starting point of the witch trials in Salem. The main characters of these stories are Abigail Williams and John Proctor, who have the leading role in the love story. John Proctor is a farmer married with Elizabeth Proctor with whom he had four children. Abigail Williams is Reverend Samuel Parris of Salem's niece. She came to live with her uncle after the raid in which her parents were killed by the Native Americans. Abigail, as many young girls in those places, worked as servant in some family houses, and before Abigail went to live with her uncle, she was working at Proctors' house. There, Abigail and John Proctor had a love affair, and when Elizabeth Proctor discovered it, she fired Abigail. As this episode infuriated Abigail enormously, she started the accusations of witchcraft against Elizabeth with the intention of ending Elizabeth and John Proctor's marriage. What she had never imagined was that her plan would go that far. The consequences of her vengeance would end up with about twenty executions, and at the end Abigail escaped unpunished.

Some important aspects merged in one of the characters are reflected in the film and in the play. Nevertheless, those aspects are historical indeed but have been adapted so as to give the audience a perfect Hollywood representation.

As can be seen in this essay, Salem was a conservative Puritan society which believed in the supernatural, and in the presence of Satan and the Devil. Even the most devoted could be caught by the hand of the Devil. For this reason, the society dedicated their lives to worshipping and working so as to reach Heaven and God's redemption. However, this society was very sensible to the supernatural elements that could not be explained by religion. In fact, they believed that witchcraft was the invisible crime that could only be proved by the testimony of the afflicted.

Witchcraft explained the unfathomable: prolonged drought, epidemics, deadly storms, earthquakes. Central Africans believed that witches (in the form of greedy and self-aggrandizing rulers) might even cause wars. (Games, 3).

This resulted in a huge amount of fraudulent accusations based on property disputes by the most powerful members of the town.

The common characteristics and facts between the real history and the adaptations will be contrasted with several historical sources that discuss the origins to these events. Furthermore, the anti-Communist investigations during the 1950s known as "witch hunts" carried out by Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy will be discussed in the last part of this paper so as to give a further view of the consequences of the Salem witch trials in the late seventeenth century. Those events took place during the Cold War in which many people were accused of disloyalty and they were supposed to belong to the Communist Party. Therefore, in February 1950, McCarthy shared a list with two hundred and five people accused of being members of the Communist Party. At this time, McCarthyism was starting as a way of making fraudulent accusations using unfair techniques of investigation.

This last episode reflects that the events that took place in 1692 at Salem were very traumatic to American society, as we can see that history keeps repeating over and over again.

This undergraduate dissertation examines the connections among the real history of Salem, how the events have been represented in theatre and in cinema, and the repetition of the mass hysteria during 1950s with McCarthyism.

WITCHCRAFT IN AMERICA

1. Introduction

Salem was a small settlement based in New England in the last decades on the seventeenth century. This settlement was formed by Puritans which had a very different conception of life and religion. They were English Reformed Protestants that started to rebel against the Catholic and the Anglican churches of England. With the reign of Elizabeth I, Puritanism developed in England as an extremely religious group of people which intended to purify the Anglican Church. This movement was notably controlled because they were supposed to revolutionize the country. As a consequence of the persecution, many Puritans decided to leave the country and go to the New World. They firstly arrived in New England, but after the 1630s, they decided to go to the Massachusetts Bay Colony and other close settlements. The Puritan emigration was supposed to be near 21,000 people crossing the Atlantic Ocean to the colonial America.

Puritanism originated in England, during the reign of Henry VIII. He established the Protestant Reform in order to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn. This was a scandal for the Catholic Church and as a result, the king was excommunicated. Therefore, he decided to create Anglicanism, his new Church in which he would be the supreme head. Anglicanism was too far from the Protestant conception of religion, and it completely changed the organization of the country because the king was the highest authority of the state and the church, similarly to the situation in Spain at those times with the Catholic Monarchs. So, this English reformation resulted in a rebellion against the new government and religion by the Church and a great part of the population led by Oliver Cromwell.

The Puritan doctrine was very strict and this did not fit much with the new liberal monarchy. However, with the ascent to the throne of Queen Elizabeth I, the situation radically changed. The Protestants were liberated from the strict persecution and Catholics started to suffer a huge oppression. Nevertheless, Queen Elizabeth I died without an heir, so her successor was James V, King of Scotland who became also the King of England as well with the title of James I of England. It was expected that the king would be in favor of a

Congregationalist Church, but instead the king reacted against the Puritans. He started a persecution in which a huge number of Puritans had to leave the country and find a new life in the “New World”.

The Puritan persecution coincided with the first flood of emigrants to America who took advantage of the circumstances in order to form new colonies in the New World where they could maintain their strict morality and practice their faith freely. The first group of Puritans who travelled to America went in the Mayflower in 1620 and created the Plymouth Colony of New England. Ten years later, a group headed by John Winthrop arrived to Massachusetts Bay and established there the new colony formed by Puritans. In 1691, the colonies of Massachusetts Bay and the one of Plymouth joint thus creating the Province of Massachusetts Bay.

2. Witchcraft in Salem: Origin and Historical Context

As Puritans were extremely conservative in their customs and morality, they were against the new conceptions of life that were taking place in the Continental Europe during those times. Puritans were against any scientific or technological advance, and when those people went to the New Land, they founded a colony in Massachusetts Bay in 1628 which was a very conservative settlement with no advances. It was thought that the Puritan settlement of Salem was wrestling its new life from a land that had formerly been the devil's domain. Witchcraft was not accepted in New England until this century, but when Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, two girls from the village, started to suffer strange conditions of unknown origin everything changed. Betty Parris was the daughter of Reverend Samuel Parris, and Abigail was his niece. Both girls were still children during the winter of 1692 when they started to suffer fits diagnosed by Dr. Griggs as supernatural. Ann Putnam, another young girl of the town, suffered similar episodes unknown for Dr. Griggs. As their conditions could not be identified, two magistrates, Jonathan Corwin and John Hathorne, succeeded in obtaining the accusation of three women in the town: Sarah Good, Sarah Osborn, and Tituba.

Tituba, as it will be seen later, is an important figure in this analysis. She was Reverend Samuel Parris' slave, brought to Massachusetts from Barbados. It is significant that she was the first to be accused of witchcraft. Her figure has been related to the book of the Devil as she confessed to have signed it though she already "enjoyed a reputation in the neighborhood for her skills in the magic arts." (Rosenthal, 12). Judges were looking for Tituba's confession which led to witchcraft conspiracy in Salem and gave the children credibility. Besides, some sources assure that Tituba showed some supernatural ideas to the afflicted girls. She confessed to fly in the air, seeing birds and dogs, and pinching some of the afflicted.

In relation to Sarah Good, we find that she was "the first of the three women to be interrogated in Salem Village on March 1, 1692" (Rosenthal, 14). Sarah Good had a bad reputation in the town which made her the perfect victim for the accusations of witchcraft. She was accused at first by Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, but as time went by, people started to accuse her of afflicting more girls. Even her husband and daughter testified against her, and

we can see in some records that she denied the accusation. During the trial, Hathorne asked her “Why do you hurt these children?” (Roach, 25), and she declared, “‘I do not hurt them’ she said, ‘I scorn it’” (Roach, 25). Nevertheless, she accused Sarah Osborne of witchcraft in the trial. This declaration shows that even though she denied the accusation, she was put in prison and she died in the gallows after replying to Mr. Noyes “you are a liar; I am no more a Witch than you are a Wizard, and if you take away my Life, God will give you Blood to drink.” (Hill, 74).

The figure of Sarah Osborne needs to be analyzed as well. Although she died in prison on May 10, before her trial took place, she accused no one and defended herself as an innocent Puritan woman. In the following quote, we can see how Rosenthal explained his reflection about the events that took place in the atmosphere surrounding Osborne:

The documentation on Sarah Osborne is slim, probably because she never came to trial, dying in prison on May 10. Acknowledging the concept of witchcraft, she denied that she herself was a witch; nor did she implicate any others. Osborne raised the theological point that the devil could take the shape of others, an argument that would persist in the debate against spectral evidence. She also suggested that she herself had been attacked by the devil, a claim that failed to impress the justices. (Rosenthal, 34).

With this panorama set in Salem in the first months of 1692, rumors about the existence of witchcraft in the town started to be disseminated. Some people of the town took advantage of this fact in order to increase their lands by accusing some neighbors of witchcraft. This was the case of the Putnam family, for example. As Weiser states in her work, the Putnam family took advantage of the hysteria in Salem in order to enlarge their territory and they had confrontations with several neighbors like John Proctor. Ann Putnam, Thomas Putnam’s daughter; Mary Walcott; and their servant, Mercy Lewis began to have fits as Berry Parris and Abigail Williams, and they accused other female neighbors of witchcraft. Thomas Putnam’s wife, Ann Carr Putnam Sr. “would accuse Martha Corey, Rebecca Towne Nurse, Bridget Playfer Bishop, and John Willard, who would all be executed for witchcraft. She would also testify against Sarah Towne Cloyce, William Hobbs, and Elizabeth Walker Cary.” (Weiser, 2).

As time went by, the hysteria that resulted from the witchcraft accusations made by the afflicted started to extend over the town, and residents accused of witchcraft all their neighbors who did not follow the Puritan doctrine strictly. False accusations started to appear and later studies argue that, in Salem, a case of mass hysteria was produced. Hysteria, as Frances Hill states in his work, is one of the current interpretations for the events that took place in Salem during this winter and one of the best to account for the origin of those events.

The term 'hysteria' has been used with varying degrees of license and the accounts of hysteria always begin in the kitchen with Tituba practicing magic. Starkey used the term in the loose sense: the girls were hysterical, that is overexcited, and committed sensational fraud in a community that subsequently fell ill to 'mass hysteria'. (Hill, 262).

There are also different theories from the one of mass hysteria about the origin of this event in Salem. In the work by Games, we can see two of the most accepted theories together with mass hysteria that have been developed after years of investigation. Each theory focuses on different areas of study. Mass hysteria could be considered a psychoanalytical approach to the events of Salem. However, if we focus our attention on the biological investigation, we find that Laurie Winn Carlson opted for a case of encephalitis lethargica epidemic. This is a disease that attacks the brain. The affected person enters a state of catatonia or even a comatose state. This theory could explain why some girls did not have a physical response in the first examination. The second proposed theory was related to ergot poisoning. This theory was developed by Linnda R. Caporael, who stated that "more severe cases produce acutely uncomfortable sensations: that ants are crawling underneath one's skin (a condition called formication), twitches, and spasms of the tongue and facial muscles." (Games, 66).

With respect to the judicial procedure, the case of Salem was different to any of the previous known cases of witchcraft. Rosenthal in his works explains the method judges followed in Salem for the cases of 1692.

[...]unlike all the other indictments, which based the only specific charges on the claims of the accusers being tormented during judicial proceedings by specters that no one else could see, this indictment is based on the traditional evidence of confession, historically regarded as the most dependable and most reliable of all legal methods of finding witches. That is why in the continental

witch trials of the Middle Ages people were systematically tortured, as advocated in Europe's infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*. When one confronted the invisible world, confession offered the most trusted evidence of witchcraft. (Rosenthal, 28).

As in Europe, in America the only way of identifying the invisible crime of witchcraft was by the confessions of the accusers. Specifically, in Salem, the trial decided to save from the gallows those people accused who confessed and who cooperated in the investigation of the witch trials. This can be seen also in this quotation from Rosenthal:

The Salem witch trials are unique in the annals of witchcraft trials in Western civilization for their response to the issue of confession. They simply reversed the traditional rules whereby confessing witches were executed: In Salem, only those who did not confess were executed. (Rosenthal, 28-29).

One of the conclusions that has been widely accepted was proposed by Chadwick Hansen. Hansen in his theory agreed with the argument put forth by Caulfield which states that the afflicted in Salem were not fraudulent. They suffered from hysteria in the clinical sense, in other words, they were mentally ill. This theory coincides with the one by Roach. She states in her work that some of the afflicted had pretended their symptoms and that is why they were subsequently considered as liars. The only aspect she does not clarify is if the afflicted faked their condition in a conscious way or, if on the contrary, their case of mass hysteria was product of their unconscious. This author also supports the fact that, as the town of Salem was a strict Puritan society, “witches were considered to be anti-Christian – against all good really – rather than simply non-Christian.” (Roach, XX). Witches, naturally, were a menace to the Puritan way of life, and also represent the unknown and the heathen.

Some of the records that have come to us show the different legal and social convictions that were imposed along the first years of history of Massachusetts. As Roach says in her work:

Based on British precedent and Biblical tradition, the 1641 Massachusetts Body of Liberties included witchcraft among its capital crimes (as did English law): ‘If any man or woman be a witch, (that is hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit) they shall be put to death.’ (Roach, XXIII).

Furthermore, this same author argues that people accused of witchcraft in this place were socially rejected for the rest of their life. Therefore, their entire family was prejudged and rejected by the rest of town. They will find it very difficult to be accepted unless they change their place of residence to another that was totally unaware of their family history.

As we will see later, it came to a point in which all women could be suspected of witchcraft. Some of the most important accused women in the town would be included in the analysis that comes in the next section of this essay. Those women were Elizabeth Proctor, Martha Corey, or Rebecca Nurse. Roach reflects in her work the dates of each accusation during the year of 1692. In March, “Martha Corey’s specter was the first to afflict Mary Warren, the twenty-year-old servant to John and Elizabeth Proctor.” (Roach, 38). A few days later, Abigail Williams, one of the first afflicted girls, also accused Martha Corey together with Elizabeth Proctor of sending her their specter forcing her to twist and convulse; and Rebecca Nurse, a well-respected Puritan member of the community, was also accused by Williams of being her tormentor. There was an endless list of witchcraft accusations during the month of March of 1692 and all of them followed the same pattern: the afflicted accused a woman of sending her spirit or specter to torment them. However, some people in Salem were not under swindle and tried to dissuade the court from those false accusations that were going to become widespread in the village of Salem, such as John Proctor. He tried to dissuade the judges, and we can see it in the following quotation: “If those girls were allowed to continue, warned proctor, ‘we should all be devils and witches quickly.’” (Roach, 57). Nonetheless, John Proctor’s life ended in a tragic way. Together with his wife, Proctor was tried on August 5, and both were sentenced to hang on August 19, the second day of executions in Salem. They did not save their lives because they rejected the option of absolution in exchange for a false confession. They, as good Puritans, saw lying as a sin and thought that people who were confessing under compulsion would not find God’s redemption once they died. Nevertheless, the case of their daughter, Sarah, is important because she “was able to ask for a temporary reprieve in view of the fact that she was pregnant, and a stay of execution was granted until the child was born.” (Gross, 100). The next section will dwell on the reason for the importance of this fact.

In September of 1692, the last episode of witch hunt in Salem took place. More people died on the gallows, but as more and more neighbors started to retract their false confessions, the trial was dissolved. People in jail waiting for their trial were judged by a different court, and one year later, Tituba, the first accused, was released from jail. Since 1703, specters were not admitted as evidence for the accusation. Then, in 1706, Ann Putman apologized to the Church and five years later, a monetary compensation was given to the families of the accused. After the Salem episode of witchcraft in 1692 no more witch trials occurred in America. The legal system decided to stand aside the popular beliefs in witchcraft.

3. Witch hunt in the 1950s: McCarthyism

The Second Witch Hunt of the history of the United States took place in the 1950s with Senator Joseph R. McCarthy. However, in order to understand the events that took place in that decade, we have to go back to the Second World War. This war is considered by many authors a continuation of the First World War due to the fact that many issues were not solved. At first, The United States was neutral in the war, but it provided armament to Great Britain in very favorable conditions. As many conflicts between Germany and the United States took place during the war, on December 11, 1941 Germany declared the war to the United States, four days after the Pearl Harbor attack by Japan. In the final stages of the Second World War, the Soviet Union defeated the Germans. However, the United States and its allies were first the winners of this war and so; they could manage to reinstall Capitalism. The main objective of the United States had always been to conquer the Soviet Union in order to impose the Capitalist system there. In the end, this was not achieved, and China, unexpectedly for the American Government, established the Communist system as the Soviets.

With this situation in the world during the first decades of the twentieth century, the political, economic, and social instability was something to be expected. Many radicals were continuously suspecting an invasion and they thought that many Soviet citizens had come to the States as spies. Then, a huge anticommunist network was created in 1933 by the House of Representatives of the United States. It was called the Special House Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities, later known as House Un-American Activities Committee. As “In the communist system, the state controls all land and business” (Fitzgerald, 9), the American Government tried to avoid the establishment of such kind of economic system. According to Fitzgerald, in the communist Government, “The government owned all the newspapers and radio and TV stations and also punished people for their religious beliefs. This went against the values of most Americans, who saw the freedoms to worship, own land, and voice their opinions as basic rights of all people.” (Fitzgerald, 9). Besides, Senator McCarthy considered that the suspicions were not unfounded as the spread of Communism could reach the United States if they did not create an anti-Communism campaign.

After a detailed investigation led by Senator McCarthy, he announced that he had compiled a list of two hundred and five names who were supposed members of the Communist Party working in the State Department, and also, he stated the fact that the Secretary of the State was aware of it. Those accused people were supposed to work as spies giving confidential information to the Soviet Union. “The fear of communist spies in the U.S. government was one of the main causes for the popularity of McCarthy’s ideas.” (Fitzgerald, 10).

After the Great Depression (1929-39) in the United States, as many people were unemployed, they started to think about changing the way of government and about turning into Communism as it seemed to guarantee a more stable way of living. Therefore, the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) was created. However, no American Government would allow capitalism to fall in favor of communism in the United States, and let alone that American citizens lose faith in the Capitalist system. So, as the American Government feared the beginning of a revolution, it started a huge persecution against Communists. Nonetheless, though there were affiliated people, many of the American citizens that sympathized with this party were not members of it, but the government was not much concerned about this distinction, so they persecuted all evidence of Communism.

In this period of American history, Joseph R. McCarthy was one of the most controversial figures that shadowed the glorious times of America. When in 1947 he became Senator of Wisconsin, the fear of a Communist invasion was widespread. China, one of the strongest global powers, became communist together with the Soviet Union. McCarthy was one of the most extreme anti-communist men in America, and once he became a Senator, he claimed that he had a list of people that worked in the State Department, and that were sympathizers of the Communist Party. This statement was very powerful and revolutionized the population. Later investigations had proven that not all the people on the list were communist. “He continued to investigate for over two years, relentlessly questioning numerous government departments and the panic arising from the witch-hunts and fear of communism became known as McCarthyism.” (Oh and Latham). The term McCarthyism is known as the persecution of mostly artists who were suspected of being communists. It is also known as the second Witch Hunt in the United States, and it is actually very close to the first one due to the fact that

accusation was proof enough to condemn anyone. Many of McCarthy's "critics say he has never produced real evidence to back up his claims and accuse him of 'witch hunts' which have often destroyed the careers of those accused." (BBC). Accused people were put into a black list that disabled them from the possibility to work again. One of the industries that was most affected was Hollywood. Writers, producers, and actors were blacklisted when they did not provide names of colleagues who belonged to the Communist Party. It was not important if accusations were true or false, the fact of not providing any name was reason enough to destroy one's reputation, and its recovery, if possible, took years. As can be expected, this fact caused panic and fear among the population because the Great Depression of 1929 had a huge impact on citizens.

Although many people sympathized with McCarthy, some other, like President Dwight Eisenhower, disapproved the way McCarthy was carrying out his investigation. In fact, "in December 1954 the Senate voted to censure Mr. McCarthy for abusing his power as a senator - only the fourth time in history a senator had received such a public mark of disapproval." (BBC). One of the most famous affected couple in America by McCarthyism were Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Julius was an electrical engineer and an employee for the American Army and was accused of passing secrets of atomic issues to the Soviets. The couple were members of the American Communist Party and were sentenced to death under the Espionage Act of 1917, and executed in the electric chair in 1953.

More extensive investigations were carried out in the first years of the 1950s, looking for communist infiltration in the federal government. McCarthy himself participated in some trials, but his methods were too aggressive and intimidating, and sometimes he violated the civil rights of citizens. His investigations ended with more than two thousand government workers unemployed. Nonetheless, the figure of McCarthy started to lose popularity once it was proved that he had tried to take benefit from his subordinates when he was in the army. The next event in which McCarthy lost his popularity was witnessed by many viewers when the hearings were broadcasted on the national television.

Hearings continued, but McCarthy was gradually losing popularity until the point where he had lost almost all his allies. Then, the Senate decided to condemn him for his non-ethical and non-professional conduct in his post as Senator. He did not lose his job but his power. He died in 1957, at the age of 48 as a result of liver cirrhosis caused by heavy drinking. The most surprising fact regarding McCarthy is that, although he lost all his power and popularity some time before his death, he received a lot of criticism, and his methods were classified as excessive. McCarthyism's effects lasted for decades and it required a great effort to change the mind of many Americans so as to admit and respect the existence of diversity of political beliefs.

In this period of the history of the United States, there was another example of mass hysteria, but in this case, against Communism. It was produced by the second Red Scare in the United States, which was the fear of American citizens to lose jobs and to not have a way of sustenance. As a consequence, the period of the 1950s is remembered as one of the most shadowed and shameful ones in the history of American politics.

THE CRUCIBLE: FILM AND PLAY

Arthur Miller became very famous with his play *The Crucible*, but the idea of making a film out of the same story came after, in 1996. Miller himself was a victim of the witch hunt of Communists led by McCarthy during the 1950s and the work *The Crucible* was the way he protested against it. Its success was immediate, but forty three years later, Twentieth Century Fox decided to adapt the play to the cinema. Nicholas Hynter was the director, but the most important aspect here is the fact that Miller was the scriptwriter of the film and decided to preserve the original script.

The film was starred by Daniel Day-Lewis as John Proctor, and Winona Ryder as Abigail Williams. The two main characters maintained a love affair in the original work, and it was maintained for the film, but the love affair in itself and not the hysteria became the central aspect in the film. However, Miller decided to increase Abigail's age in order to make it more verisimilar to the audience. The rest of the script was totally faithful to the play and it also maintains the original message of the author, the criticism of McCarthyism and the Communist witch hunt.

The Crucible represents, in a very faithful way, the real history of the afflicted people in Salem during the winter of 1692. In the following analysis, we will see how Arthur Miller portrayed the events of 1692 adjusting his work to reality. This study will carry out a comparative analysis of the play and the film written by Miller. It is relevant to point out that, due to space-time restrictions in theatre, Miller saw it necessary to introduce some changes in his play. Some characters or events are merged into one. Besides, some changes in the age of characters can be appreciated, and the number of afflicted girls was reduced in order to adapt it to the stage restrictions. Besides, it can be found that only the two most important judicial figures were included in both adaptations: Hathorne and Danforth. Moreover, we find that the fate of many characters was preserved in a very trustworthy way according to history.

Miller's play called *The Crucible* tells the story of a group of afflicted girls supposedly affected by witchcraft. The theatre story was divided into four acts, and in this study, the story

will be analyzed according to this division together with the story of the film by the same name.

ACT I

The play starts with Betty Parris in bed. She appears as inert since the previous night, when her father, Reverend Samuel Parris, discovered her, her cousin Abigail Williams, and some other girls of the town in the forest. As doctors do not know what was afflicting Betty, Parris questioned Abigail in order to obtain an answer. However, Abigail did not solve his doubt. She argued that they were just dancing and that they “never conjured spirits.” (Miller, 353). Contrarily, in the film, the girls were in the forest bewitching some men of the village with Tituba. However, the events surrounding the diagnosis of the afflicted remain the same in both stories.

The second afflicted girl, as history tells us, belongs to the Putnam’s family. Nevertheless, her fictional name is not Ann but Ruth. It is known from a later confession by Mrs. Putnam that Ruth went to the forest following the orders of her mother because “Tituba knows how to speak to the dead” (Miller, 357). Mrs. Putnam tries to use this to her own benefit because she had lost all of her children except for Ruth, and she wanted to contact her children. Besides, this could be interpreted as a way of getting closer to the witchcraft atmosphere so as to mitigate the pain of this mother.

Later on, the first accusation made by Abigail Williams comes. Abigail decided to confess what she witnessed to his uncle, Mr. Parris. “PARRIS, *to Abigail*: Then you were conjuring spirits last light. ABIGAIL, *whispering*: Not I, sir –Tituba and Ruth.” (Miller, 357). Then, in another scene, we have the first appearance of Mr. John Proctor. Here, Abigail and John are alone and together in Mr. Parris’s house talking about their love affair seven months ago. If we analyze this same scene in the film, we find that their meeting takes place in the outside and also Abigail kissed him, though he rejected her. The fact of having a kiss in the Hollywood adaptation is what reflects the mark of the filmic world. Moreover, the kiss can be interpreted as a sign of audaciousness of a girl who revolted a whole community just for spite.

Up to here, there have been some parallelisms between the real history of Salem and the story by Miller in theatre and cinema. There is a coincidence with the first afflicted girls, Betty Parris and Ruth Putnam. However, scenes have a different order in the play and in the film. This may be due to the fact that each adaptation adjusted to the requirements of the script by Miller. In the play, we find the mass hysteria as the central plot, whereas in the film we have the love affair between Proctor and Abigail due to the fact that it adjusted more to a Hollywood production.

With the arrival of Reverend Hale of Beverly, Mr. Parris expected all these strange events to come to an end. Nevertheless, none of this happened. It was well-known that Mr. Proctor did not share the way Mr. Parris disseminated Puritan religion in Salem, and in the play we have some explicit examples of this fact. Mr. Parris and Mr. Proctor, at some point of the play, argue about the fact that John Proctor did not come to church regularly. Proctor defended himself by saying that “I have trouble enough without I come five mile[s] to hear him preach only hellfire and bloody damnation. Take it to heart, Mr. Parris. There are many others who stay away from church these days because you hardly ever mention God any more.” (Miller, 367). It is said that Reverend Parris took advantage of the religiousness of people in Salem to obtain more money. That was the reason why John Proctor and some other people in Salem missed church regularly. They preferred to stay at home working on their harvest as they were having a harsh winter. This last mentioned scene of the play does not appear in the film, but the information about it is given throughout the film in different scenes. From the religious point of view, a Puritan who missed church regularly was a bad neighbor in Salem. The only allowed way of life there was the one established by the Bible in which people had to attend church sermons in order to achieve God’s redemption at the end of their lives.

Another event that is not in the film is the one in which Mrs. Putnam confesses. “MRS. PUTNAM, *frightened, very softly*: I know it, sir. I sent my child – she should learn from Tituba who murdered her sisters.” (Miller, 375). Nearly at the end of the first act of the play, Abigail made the first accusation of witchcraft against Tituba. In the same way, this event appears exactly replicated in the film (*The Crucible*, 28:42).

ABIGAIL: She sends her spirit on me in church she makes me laugh at Prayer!

PARRIS: she have [sic] often laughed at prayer!

ABIGAIL: She comes to me every night to go and drink blood! (Miller, 379).

TITUBA, *terrified, falls to her knees*: No, no, don't hang Tituba! I tell him I don't desire to work for him, sir. (Miller, 380).

The quote above shows the dialogue of the play in which Tituba confesses of having had contact with the devil. This same event takes place in the film (*The Crucible*, 30:04). Besides, accusations of witchcraft by Tituba started to arise, and the names of Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne were the first to be heard. (Miller, 381-2; *The Crucible*, 31:39). After Tituba's accusation against Sarah Osborne, Mrs. Putnam also charged Tituba of being the devil because all Putnam's babies had died at hands of Osborne. (*The Crucible*, 32:41). Those events have a great similarity to the historical ones and Tituba was the key person to the later events that spread hysteria in the town.

From the moment the first accusations of witchcraft started to be public, Abigail Williams and some of the later known as the afflicted girls began a long list of accusations against different women in Salem. This fact is visible in both works and it represents the starting point of all the witchcraft events that took place in Salem during the winter of 1692 according to history. Up to here, we can see that there is little of imaginary writing in the works by Miller and that he has been very faithful to the real history according to the records that have come down to us. However, we should bear in mind that Miller used the historical events of Salem to freely talk about the Communist Witch Hunt that was taking place in the 1950s.

ACT II

The second act is placed eight days after the first confession by Tituba, at Proctors' house. We have Mary Warren, one of the afflicted girls and servant of Mr. and Mrs. Proctor, telling Elizabeth Proctor that she is an important member in the proceedings. (Miller, 388) (*The Crucible*, 46:37). The afflicted had become the key element in the trials as confession was the only way of identifying this invisible crime called witchcraft. Furthermore, returning to the analysis of the story, in that scene Mary informs the Proctors about the jailing of many people in Salem, concretely, fourteen people. As a reaction to that impressive news, Elizabeth states to John:

ELIZABETH: The Deputy Governor promise hangin' if they'll not confess, John. The town's gone, I think. She speak of Abigail, and I thought she were a saint, to hear her. Abigail brings the other girls into the court, and where she walks the crowd will part like the sea for Israel. And folks are brought before them, and if they scream and howl and fall to the floor - the person's clapped in the jail for bewitchin' them. (Miller, 386).

As this quote illustrates, the punishment for the crime of witchcraft was completed in the gallows, but a new way of judgment was imposed in Salem for these events in 1692. Every accused who confessed being witch was saved from the gallows. This way, the accused were forgiven as God had helped them to confess such a crime. The counterpoint of this fact is that confessing of witchcraft was a sentence to social solitary confinement as Puritan morality was extremely severe.

Now, a relation with one statement from the first act and the next scene of the second act can be illustrative. In Act I, Mrs. Elizabeth Proctor is mentioned for the first time. Abigail talks about her with disdain with words like "It's a bitter woman, a lying, cold, sniveling woman" (Miller, 354). We can see this same scene in the film (*The Crucible*, 9:36). Therefore, the bad relationship between Abigail and Elizabeth can be appreciated, fully justified by John's adultery. At some point in the story, Elizabeth accuses Abigail of being a fraud, but John needs any evidence to accuse Abigail and appeal in court. Then, following this event, Mary arrives at Proctors' house. She gives a poppet to Elizabeth, which might be seen as an innocent present.

However, dolls in the context of witchcraft were considered as objects of bewitching and their possession was, in many cases, reason enough to accuse anyone.

The next relevant episode in the story is the one in which the first sentence, the one of Sarah Osborne, is made public. Conversely, as Sarah Good confessed, she was saved. (Miller, 391). In that episode, it is explained the reason why Sarah Osborne is condemned. During her trial, Hathorne asked her to recite her commandments as a good Puritan woman, but she could say none. (*The Crucible*, 41:17). Presumably, any good Puritan should be able to recite the commandments with no effort, so the court used this impossibility as the detonator for her condemnation. All the events commented so far are common for both works, the film and the play, though some differences can be appreciated. For example, in the case of the trial of Osborne, in the film she declares that she could only recite her commandments outdoors (*The Crucible*, 41:10), something that is not mentioned at all in the play.

Still on the analysis of the second act, we find a very important event: the one in which Mary Warren confesses having saved Elizabeth's life:

MARY WARREN, *pointing at Elizabeth*: I have saved her life today!

Silence. His whip comes down.

ELIZABETH, *softly*: I am accused?

MARY WARREN, *quaking*: somewhat mentioned. But I said I never see no sign you ever sent your spirit out to hurt no one, and seeing I do live so closely with you, they dismissed it. (Miller, 392).

With this strong accusation, Elizabeth wanted to know who had accused her though she had serious suspicions of Abigail. Then, only in the film, there is a scene in which John and Abigail had an encounter in the forest and where John asked Abigail to end with all, but she believed her own lie. (*The Crucible*, 48:46). This is a typical Hollywood resource to give more intrigue to the love affair between those two characters. However, there was not any love story with a similar resonance in the records we have from this period in Salem.

As regards the attendance of Puritans to the church on Sabbath Day, Reverend Hale found surprising the absence of Mr. Proctor at the church. As was explained above, Proctor stopped

going to church since he did not agree with the way in which Reverend Parris disseminated Puritan faith and gave sermons. Mr. Proctor's youngest son was a symbol of this difference of opinion as the child was not baptized because Mr. Proctor saw "no light of God in that man." (Miller, 396). For the Puritan way of thinking, this was a serious sin because parents who did not baptize their offspring were going against the sacrament. Puritanism tried to purify the church after the reforms that had taken place in the previous centuries and the behaviors that did not follow strictly the Bible were seriously questioned in those societies.

Regarding the next important event in the story by Miller, we find a declaration by Mr. Proctor in which he states that he "know[s] the children's sickness had naught to do with witchcraft." (Miller, 398), (*The Crucible*, 56:07). The problem here is that Abigail would never recognize such a thing, and as many accused had confessed, the task of persuading the trial turned into something almost impossible. Nonetheless, Reverend Hale wanted Proctor to testify in the court since he thought that hysteria was starting to affect the members of the court.

It is also important to analyze the scene in which the poppet appears. Poppets were considered sinful instruments witches used for their conjuration, and its possession in an environment in which any detail could mean a strong accusation was very hazardous. As previously commented, Mary Warren gave one poppet to Mrs. Proctor some days before (*The Crucible*, 45:36). This same poppet was found by Cheever, the schoolmaster in Salem, in Proctors' house. Mrs. Proctor had been strongly accused by Abigail Williams by arguing that Mrs. Proctor's spirit had hurt Abigail and the proof of that was in the poppet as it has a needle stuck on it (*The Crucible*, 58:37). With all these evidences, Cheever had no other option than taking Mrs. Proctor with him though Mary confessed she stuck the needle in the poppet. This was a premeditated action by Abigail who counted on Mary's help. With Mrs. Proctor in jail, John asked Mary to confess in the trial, but she was terrified because Abigail would retaliate against her and because "Abby'll charge lechery on you, Mr. Proctor." (*The Crucible*, 1:02:39).

In this second act, we have seen that the new way of judgment that was developing in Salem is faithfully represented in the works by Miller. In the same way as history tells us, accused people who confess their witchcraft crime were absolved, though as a result of that,

they were no longer admitted in Salem's Puritan society. Moreover, the only thing that was considered acceptable was a totally faithful life according to the assumptions of the Bible, a life in which no person deviated from the standards. And the third important factor appearing in this act is the possession of poppets during witch-hunt. Neighbors not affected by the mass hysteria in Salem found it difficult to demonstrate the fraud of the afflicted as many people confessed just because they wanted to preserve their lives.

ACT III

As for the third act, an analysis of the trials can be done since all the act revolves around this sphere. It starts with Martha Corey's trial. She maintains her innocence until the last day of her life. This has to be connected with an event of the first act in which Mr. Giles said that his wife had been reading some strange books (Miller, 376-7). However, he did not accuse her of witchcraft at any time, but Mr. Giles never knew that this innocent question would end with his wife's life. Then, Francis Nurse declared: "Excellency, we have proof for your eyes. The girls are frauds!" (*The Crucible*, 1:04:41). With this declaration, a second accusation that girls were lying is presented, and in order to prove their accusation, they used Mary Warren as a witness. Warren was one of the girls that had accused many neighbors of witchcraft in Salem, but she declared that "It were pretense [...]." (Miller, 412). Then, with Mary's confession, Danforth made the decision to call the rest of the girls in order to verify Mary's accusation. As it could be expected, Abigail refused the accusation and argued that it was a lie the fact that she herself was a witness of the moment in which Mary stuck the needle in the poppet. With this situation, Mary felt cornered and changed her declaration arguing that Mr. Proctor forced her to make such declaration.

With the next aspect, we can make a parallel analysis between history and Miller's story. In the film and in the play, Mr. Danforth told Mr. Proctor that Elizabeth was pregnant and a similar fact was commented before, but the woman in question, according to history, was Sarah proctor, not Elizabeth Proctor. The Puritan view of life forbid the killing of a pure being, and that is why Elizabeth, in the works by Miller, escaped the gallows. Besides, Mrs. Proctor has

been presented in this work as a woman who never lies, and when Mr. Proctor argued that he had a sexual affair with Abigail, he was accusing her of being a whore, Mr. Proctor explained that “there is a promise in such sweat. But it is a whore’s vengeance [...]” (Miller, 428). This declaration reveals Hollywood’s interferences in the real history of Salem, by which a love story is introduced between two main characters of the story. This love story was very impressive because the girl was the niece of a reverend and John was a Puritan man that has default on the Bible.

Finally, in this act we find another element much related with witchcraft and the devil. It is the yellow bird. For Tituba, it had a special meaning because those birds were taken as mystic messengers. In Miller’s works, Abigail talked about the yellow bird as a being who wants to attack her on behalf of Mary during the trial (*The Crucible* 1:28:39).

ACT IV

From the very beginning of this fourth act, we can appreciate a different view of the characters about the witchcraft menace. Mr. Parris discovered that Abigail Williams, together with Mercy Lewis, had escaped. This fact reveals that all had been a fraud orchestrated by the girls, or it might be a case of mass hysteria as many authors argue. After this incident, Mr. Danforth went to John Proctor in order to get a confession to save him from the gallows as the hangings could not be postponed. Many people had died in vain because of the witchcraft crimes, and judges considered that it would be unfair to stop the hangings.

In order to obtain a confession by John Proctor, Reverend Hale asked Elizabeth Proctor to talk with her husband as she was the only one capable to persuade John.

HALE: [...] Life, woman, life is God’s most precious gift; no principle, however glorious may justify the taking of it. I beg you, woman, prevail upon your husband to confess. Let him give his lie. Quail not before God’s judgment in this, for it may well be God damns a liar less than he that throws his life away for pride. Will you plead with him? I cannot think he will listen to another. (Miller, 444).

After a brief talk with Elizabeth, John decided to confess to preserve his life, but eventually he changed his mind when he was told that the confession had to be public (*The Crucible*, 1:49:10). His name was the only thing he would maintain after all the accusations, and at those times, a good name was very important. As a consequence, John would be hanged with Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey, two other innocent women who refused to confess a crime they had not committed.

Once more, Reverend Hale tried to persuade Mrs. Proctor in order to save her husband, but she answered: “He have [sic] his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!” (Miller, 454). For the Puritan mind, it was better considered if a person died with the truth rather than be alive with a lie that would destroy one’s life. Therefore, Proctor decided to maintain his good name and to die in the gallows as he would have the respect of the town of Salem. This will benefit his offspring and he will die as a good, honest, and innocent Puritan man.

This section has analyzed each act of the play by Miller making reference to the most important aspects in the Puritan society of the seventeenth century. To sum up, the analysis has shown that accusation was enough proof to find anyone guilty of witchcraft in those times, and the people who tried to demonstrate the fraud of the afflicted girls found it very difficult. Those small communities were easily affected by mass hysteria as their beliefs in the supernatural and their fear of the devil was highly intense. Moreover, the introduction of a love affair in Miller’s story was the point of attraction for the audience, and the most relevant aspect that fail to coincide with the real events of Salem. Finally, when fraud was demonstrated in Salem, the court decided not to get involved again in trials dealing with witchcraft, and not to accept again confession as enough evidence to condemn anyone.

CONCLUSION

It is regularly assumed that Arthur Miller was one of the best playwrights in the history of the United States. He managed to represent in a very critical way the events taking place in the 1950s with Senator McCarthy and the anti-communist network that was created using other events of history. The American way of thinking drastically changed in a few years and the Red Scare was one of the greatest concerns of the Americans after the Great Depression of 1929 that caused huge unemployment and a loss of faith in the Capitalist system. Besides, the way Miller criticizes the chaos caused by McCarthyism in the 1950s using the events occurring at the end of the seventeenth century represents an undeniable achievement. As many connections can be found in the events of Salem and the ones of McCarthyism, Miller made a deep critique to those in power so as to avoid a massacre and also to avoid the mass hysteria. However, this work was published in 1953 and it took some years for people to understand the parallelism of both events.

The Salem Witch Hunt remains as one of the most famous in the history of the world, and though many investigations have been carried out, the root cause of these events of unknown condition suffered by the afflicted is still unknown. This study opts for the mass hysteria theory in which the pressure of an extremely isolated community of strictly Puritan members ended up with desperation, hallucinations, visions, mental disorders, and cold people taking advantage of it. Contrarily, mass hysteria is also applicable to McCarthyism because the political beliefs were extremely strict and firm in some anti-communist American citizens and made them see enemies where there were not. In the same way as it occurred in Salem, where many people was accused of witchcraft in 1692 though they were not; in the 1950s, many people were accused of being communist though they were not.

Accusers suffered from social or labor exclusion in those cases. On the one hand, social exclusion in the seventeenth century and in a Puritan society was one of the worst punishments as their religious conception of life was centered on the community. On the other hand, labor exclusion in the 1950s in America meant a return to the Great Depression, from which many families still had not recovered economically.

The last important aspect to remember about both works is the fact that both adaptations of the real events of Salem were faithful to the real historical events. Miller did an admirable work in the sense that he managed to adapt all the real events to a story that would work well when performed. However, he had to make some changes due to stage restrictions in theatre and cinema. Furthermore, the Hollywood adaptation counted on Miller's participation in order to develop the script in a genuine way, being as faithful as possible to the original one. This might be one of the reasons why both, the play and the film, hardly present differences. What is remarkable is the fact that the film, by having a larger budget for its elaboration, had more explicit representations of some implicit scenes of the play.

Moreover, the names of Tituba, Abigail Williams, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne had come to us as four of the main figures of the events of Salem that caused the death of nearly twenty people and the dissolution of a trial that did not longer accept accusation as the only necessary proof for the invisible crime of witchcraft. Its counterpart with McCarthyism has Senator Joseph R. McCarthy as its main figure. In the same way, accusation was enough for one's condemnation and after many investigations of suspected supporters of communism, America turned into a country in which free thought and manifestation of political beliefs were allowed. Nonetheless, *The Crucible* serves to recall those cases of mass hysteria that took place in two key moments of the history of America so that society can prevent them from happening again. Besides, in view of the above, we can conclude that political and religious respect and the avoidance of greed in powerful positions were the key elements for success.

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