

## *The Myth of Political Liberty in Arthur Miller's The crucible*

Dr. Gandouz Ayeb Olfa  
University of Sattam- Saudi Arabia  
o.gandouz@psau.edu.sa



0000-0001-7271-3227

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**Abstract:** *This paper brings attention to the affinities between liberty and license in Arthur Miller's the Crucible (1956). The play is an allegory for the ideology of McCarthyism which is based on questioning citizens for their Marxist orientations and accusing them of being engaged in an "Un- American Activity." The excessive freedom of the Capitalist elite has resulted in the repression of the Communist group. In the play, Miller produces a polemical attitude towards excessive liberty by representing it as a myth and criticizing the abuse of power by the dominant socio-economic group. A special focus will be laid to the court of justice in Salem where judgment is becoming subjective and truth is manipulated. Miller succeeds at drawing parallel lines between the historical and the literary and at sneering at the ideal of liberty by showing that it is a myth.*

*The first part will start with the historicity of the text and the aim is to grasp the political atmosphere during the nineteen fifties and to have an idea about the system and ideology Miller is attacking. To achieve the objective of analyzing the myth of freedom in the play, I will move to a close analysis of the play and pay special attention to the thematic concerns and to the traits of characters.*

**Keywords:** *Liberty, license, myth, Witchcraft hysteria, McCarthyism, tolerance, injustice, science, tangible vs. intangible evidence.*

**Résumé :** *cet article attire l'attention sur les affinités entre liberté et licence dans The Crucible d'Arthur Miller (1956). La pièce est une allégorie de l'idéologie du maccarthysme qui consiste à interroger les citoyens sur leurs orientations marxistes et à les accuser d'être engagés dans une "activité anti-américaine". La liberté excessive de l'élite capitaliste a entraîné la répression du groupe communiste. Dans la pièce, Miller produit une attitude polémique face à la liberté excessive en la représentant comme un mythe et en critiquant l'abus de pouvoir du groupe socio-économique dominant. Une attention particulière sera portée à la cour de justice de Salem où le jugement devient subjectif et la vérité est manipulée. Miller réussit à tracer des lignes parallèles entre l'historique et le littéraire et à se moquer de l'idéal de liberté en montrant qu'il s'agit d'un mythe.*

*La première partie commencera par l'historicité du texte et l'objectif est de saisir l'atmosphère politique des années cinquante et d'avoir une idée du système et de l'idéologie auxquels Miller s'attaque. Pour atteindre*

**Corresponding author : Gandouz Ayeb Olfa**

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*l'objectif d'analyser le mythe de la liberté dans la pièce, je passerai à une analyse fine de la pièce et porterai une attention particulière aux préoccupations thématiques et aux traits des personnages.*

**Mots clés :** *Liberté, licence, mythe, hystérie de la sorcellerie, McCarthisim, tolérance, injustice, science, preuves tangibles et intangibles.*

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## 1. Introduction

The *Crucible* is considered as one of the well-known works in presenting the sufferings of the human beings through centuries. The masterpiece is one of the best melodramatic achievements of the contemporary human being. During the heydays of the twentieth century, a man fell in the obligation of accepting his cursed fate of being oppressed and tortured by the prevailing ideologies set forth to limit his freedom.

The story of the man was not uttered out loud and little was said about his subjugation and despotism. The *Crucible* put into exposition the American grand political influence as well as suspicions about the rising global wave of the communist movement so mainly the work was written during the period of the cold war between the United States and the USSR. Through this work, the author wanted to present a sincere intention that of aiding people to free their minds and to consider all the political alternatives of the era that can in return affect the other sectors of life.

Lack of total freedom was manifested through the absence of justice in courtrooms that were predicated to the prevailing powers. Hence, the judgements they made in courts were used to burn citizens' deportments and achievements. We can observe as well that the author emphasises the mission of the modern man who would not be slave to such influences and ideologies and would rather fetch for horizons to give a new definition to freedom.

Known as a very famous American dramatist, Arthur Miller tends to be preoccupied with the notion of human liberty and is in total disagreement with the sum of powers and ideologies that would but contribute to the destruction of the political data set mainly to limit human liberty. Truthfully, the author may have no intentions to set war on given political systems but only to explore the deficiencies put around peoples' liberties in the world. On equal footing, he intends to shed light on the immoral practices attached to the twentieth century social practices.

In doing so, he referred to past events only to ensure the persistence of the same socio-political practices from that remote past to the present era which is considered as a way of demeaning humans. In oe way, the *Curcible* is not intended to shed light on the heroic endeavors of certain individuals in the contour of the work but to highlight the defiance of societies to reject all unfounded accusations that are based on those fake systems.

The work is designed in the form of a satire to make fun of those fraught behaviours leading people to tolerate with obligation not with conviction. It can be said that the author was influenced in return with the McCarthean era as a twisted image of that period. Hence, it is an ideology that went in opposition with the communist movement because of imperial influences.

## 2. Literature Review

The present paper is meant to analyze the myth of freedom in the *Crucible*. The play has been studied by many critics who discussed different issues. In Twentieth Century

Interpretations of the *Crucible*, John Ferres compiles different essays related to some contemporary readings of the play, the dramatic elements, the Influence of Paul Sartre, the significance of hysteria and the meaning of the silent language. Ferres pays attention to the parallelism between Salem Witch trials and the ideology of MacCarthysim in a post-Cold War context. He examines the way “Miller is depicting a society in moral crisis and through character, situation, and mood the unmistakable evokes contemporary parallels” (Ferres 8).

In the same vein, in his *The Temptation of Innocence in the Drama of Arthur Miller*, Terry Otten focuses on the relationship between drama and history and on the interplay between history and tragedy. He argues that “the *Crucible* fulfills the definition of a historical play and moves it toward the dimensions of tragedy” (Otten 68). In addition, in her seminar paper entitled “*The Crucible: A Story of Witch Hunting and the Red Scare*,” Deborah Heinen studies the parallelism between the Puritan persecutions during the seventeenth century and the political execution during the second half of the twentieth century. She declares that “the Salem witch hunt and the McCarthy era are definitely two of the rather unpleasant chapters of American history to think of” (Heinen 1).

The common point between the critics mentioned above is their insistence on the historical value of the play and on the way history repeats itself. I will focus on the same idea of parallelism and develop it by analyzing the historicity of Miller’s text. I will also employ the idea of parallelism in relation to the myth of freedom and to the political climate which is based on exclusion rather than on inclusion.

Apart from history, other critics discuss gender issues in the play and examine the psychological profiles of some characters. For example, in her “*Rediscovering the Witches in Arthur Miller’s The Crucible: A Feminist Reading*,” Wendy Schissel blames Miller for some misogynist tendencies and for putting on stage some female characters who perform evil deeds. She writes: “I am troubled by the fact that Elizabeth is...the victim of John’s virility. Abigail is blamed because she is evil. I do want to question the gender stereotypes in the play” (Schissel 64).

I will add to the idea of gender, by focusing on the double marginalization of Tituba who will be excluded because of her gender and race. The Characterization of Tituba has been tackled from different perspectives; in “*Unsafe Convictions: Unhappy Confessions in the Crucible*” Valerie Lowe uses speech act theory and argues that “Tituba’s confession is void according to Austin’s performance of happy ending.... The uncontrollability of perlocutionary effects is exemplified by the unintended result of Abigail’s accusation and Tituba’s subsequent confession” (Lowe 78).

I will also analyze the speech of Tituba, but in relation to the myth of freedom. Focus will be on the way the racial and female other is silenced for the sake of serving the interests of the elite. The study is eclectic because it will also deploy Raymond Williams’ notion of the “structure of feelings,” will refer to some theatrical productions of the play and will examine some of the playwright’s interviews and perception of some characters to delve into the connection between liberty and license.

### 3. Research Questions

The present paper is an attempt to answer the following research questions:

- In what ways is freedom a myth? What is the relationship between liberty and license and what are the political and socio-economic manifestations of the myth of freedom?
- In what ways is the racial other disillusioned with the myth of freedom? How are members of the Salem community prevented from enjoying moments of physical, political, social, mental and personal freedom? And what are the effects of abusing social and political powers on the personal freedom of Salem citizens.
- How are the scientific and judicial fields affected by the myth of freedom and how does the myth move from illusion to reality?

### 4. The Historicity of the Text: A Historical Perspective

Before dealing with the myth of freedom in Miller's *Salem*, it is pertinent to start with the parallelism between Salem witch trials and McCarthyism. In the first part, I will use the new historicist notion of "the historicity of text" and put the text on its historical context by focusing on the parallelism between McCarthyism (or the red scare of 1953) and witchcraft trials.

What is specific about "historicism [is that it] gives the eternal image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past. He remains in control of his powers man, enough to blast open the continuum of history" (Ryan 39). Put differently, the past plays a fundamental role as it affects the present; the act of writing contributes to the modernization of history and it results in blurring the boundaries between the past and the present. In this respect, in one of his interviews a new historicist and Marxist researcher declares: "I do not want history to enable me to escape the effect of the literary but to deepen it by making it touch the effect of the real, a touch that reciprocally deepen[s] and complicate[s] history" (Neill 6).

We infer through this affirmation that new historicism is based on an interdisciplinarity between the literary text and the historical documents. The historicity of texts is one basic tenets of new historicism which is based on the belief that "history is not a set of events outside language but a body of writings in which events and their causes are constructed textually" ("textuality"). In *The Crucible*, the affinities between history and the literary text are conveyed through the similarities between McCarthyism and Salem witch hunts. McCarthyism appeared during the second half of the twentieth century, when Senator Joseph McCarthy tended to create certain phobia within the American government. He accused some politicians of being traitors and of having communist orientations. "Looking for a way of bolstering a political career, [McCarthy] became the driving force behind an investigation into communist infiltration into organizations in the USA" (Hendry and Lea 2).

The mood of fear recalls the atmosphere of paranoia in *The Crucible*. Like in Salem where Abigail contributes to heighten the witchcraft hysteria and to accuse innocent characters of having a pact with the devil, McCarthy accused innocent citizens of embracing a communist ideology and of being traitors of the American capitalist system.

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“[McCarthy] did not hesitate to name actors, writers and politicians as communists....

Dalton Trumbo was one of the highest paid screenwriters in Hollywood until the House Un-American Activities Committee charged him of being a Communist” (Beley 2006, 139). In fact, Trumbo was accused because he used to attack political corruption and to express his ideas freely. For example, in one of his passages, Trumbo uses the following terms while describing a fictional hero: “He had a vision of himself as a new kind of Christ, as a man who carries within himself all the seeds of a new order of things.... You plan the wars your masters of men plan the wars and point the way we will point the gun” (qtd. in Trumbo 14).

Trumbo is clearly criticizing the tyrannical system which is based on a mythical representation of democracy. Trumbo’s statement is a further indication of the chasm between the political speech about promoting liberty and the reality of censorship. In addition to screenwriters, some playwrights were stigmatized because of their free thinking and because of their ideological differences. Indeed, Senator Joseph McCarthy used to convict citizens without having a tangible evidence. Miller himself was accused of having communist affinities, was even required to sign an “Anti- Communist Declaration” to prove his patriotism and was not given a license to attend some theatrical productions of his plays. Tennessee Williams reacted against the refusal at providing Miller with a license by writing, “our country is persecuting its first artists and renouncing the principles of freedom which our ancestors founded” (qtd. in Gottfried 236). Williams believes that the inherited Puritan maxims of freedom are flouted.

The myth of liberty also elucidates through stifling female rights during the second half of the twentieth century. For instance, Dorothy Kenyon, the US representative to the UN commission on the status of women was banned from participating in the political life and was accused of being engaged with a communist group. In fact, “in 1950 Kenyon was accused by McCarthy of being a fellow traveler. Though she was ultimately cleared by the senate investigating committee, she received no political appointments” (Meyerowitz 85).

Like Kenyon who was indirectly excluded from the House of the Senate, Helen Douglas was stigmatized and excluded from the House of the Senate by Richard Nixon. “[She] lost her bid for the Senate in 1950 to Richard Nixon, who smeared her with charges of radicalism and association with communists” (Meyerowitz 85). It is clear that female freedom is restricted and women are stereotypically perceived as easily-tempted creatures who can be convinced at being inscribed within a communist political community. The situation of women as scapegoats to the system is further confirmed through the use of official numbers. In reality, it has been observed that “three-fourths of the accused were women, many who stood to benefit economically from inheritance. They were primarily widows, unmarried women, or married women over forty, unlikely and unable to produce male heirs” (Ziez 13).

The maltreatment and the exploitation of women during the era of McCarthyism is reminiscent of the position of women during the Salem witch trials. The same gender issue will be noticed in the *Crucible* where some female characters will be stigmatized as being “witches.” Both Abigail and McCarthy made false accusations against innocent people. McCarthy accused people of being communists, whereas Abigail accused people of being witches. The overexploitation of the socially disadvantaged women shows that political

freedom is a myth which is invented by the elite for the sake of amassing money and achieving certain lucre.

### 5. The Oppression of the Racial Other

In the play, the lines between liberty and license are blurred from the very inception of the play when Parris preaches about liberty and virtue but does not abide by them. In this context, he persecutes Tituba and accuses her of encouraging Salem girls to have a pact with the devil: “my daughter and my niece I discovered dancing like heathen in the forest... I saw Tituba wavering her arms over the fire when I came on you. Why was she doing that? And I heard a screeching and gibberish coming from her mouth. She was swaying like a dumb beast over that fire” (Act 1, 20).

Tituba is presented as a scapegoat because of her African origins. Tituba is accused of disrespecting the Puritan maxim of bodily mortification because she motivates the girls to dance. Indeed, dancing in the woods is a sign of freedom of the female body. This freedom is restricted by Parris. His description of Tituba’s practice of spirituality as “gibberish” suggests the estrangement of the racial other and indicates the mythical aspect of liberty. Tituba is tantalized in Salem because of keeping faithful to her African roots. We deduce through the horizontal relationship between Parris and Tituba that the excessive freedom of the governing elite has led to the oppression of liberty for the minority groups.

In the play, the racial other is perceived as a trouble maker and as a source of evil: “Devil, him be pleasure man-in Barbados, him be singing and dancing.... It’s you folks\_You riles him up round here.... He freeze his soul in Massachusetts, but in Barbados he just as sweet” (Act 1, 27). Members of the Barbados tribe are associated with negative connotations (“devil”) because they present a threat to the strict rules on Salem that are based on certain license and on a constant control of the female body.

Unlike members of the Barbados community who give priority to life celebration and who are often witnessed singing and dancing, any manifestation of celebration or joy is not allowed in Salem where gray remains the dominant color. This color suggests the idea of dimness and rejecting earthly life; what is specific about some female characters in Salem is that they are convinced that they have to tame their emotions in order to be socially. Tituba does not adhere to the Puritan mold as she keeps faithful to her national culture and her unconventional manners are the main sources behind her denigration. She is the prey of accusations because Abigail and the highly ranked elite render her responsible for the whole phenomenon of witchcraft. In this context, Abigail insists: “Tituba, Tituba.... She made me do it! She made Betty do it” (Act 1, 45).

The repetition of the verb of action “to do” suggests that both Abigail and Betty are forced to dance in the forest which is the locus of the devil and that Tituba is responsible for the girls’ evil deeds. Accordingly, the black woman is imprisoned at the end of the play because her racial difference is considered as an alien element in a society which seeks at establishing cultural conformity. In her last appearance in the play, Tituba is not well recognized: “the place is in darkness but for the moonlight seeping through the bars. It appears empty” (Act 4, 112). It gives the impression of being empty, but the shadow of Tituba is witnessed behind the bars. This image of darkness and imprisonment shows that Tituba is downtrodden and that racial freedom is stifled in a society whose members

preach about tolerance, integrity, honesty and moral goodness. It is crystal clear that freedom is limited as it is accompanied with license and imprisonment

## 6. Socio-economic Ambition: In Infringement on the Personal Freedom of Salem Citizens

The myth of freedom is further elaborated through the abuse of power by Thomas Putnam (the representative of the socio-economic elite). His abuse of power is reflected through his manipulation of Salem citizens and his role in making them entrapped in a web of accusation. Indeed, “so many accusations against people are in the handwriting of Thomas Putnam, or that his name is so often found as a witness corroborating the supernatural testimony” (Act 1, 23). He adds a fuel to the atmosphere of suspicion by tarnishing the reputation of others to gain economic profit. His wife is an accomplice in reduplicating the irrational and uncontrollable fear. Mrs Putnam informs Rebecca nurse: “*there are wheels within wheels in this village and fires within fires*” (Act 1, 33). Unlike Rebecca who is characterized by her deep spirituality, serenity and belief in concrete proof, Mrs. Putnam sticks to intangible evidence. The Putnams’ prerogative of setting restrictions to grant authority shows the coexistence between liberty, restriction or license inside the Salem community.

The restriction of freedom can also be examined through the characterization of Putnam (the head of the church in Salem). What is specific about this preacher is that he is afraid to lose his political power and social position rather than paying attention to the basic needs of Salem citizens or even to the needs of his family. In this respect, he is embarrassed because of the sickness of his daughter, he forgets his role as a protective father and is rather concerned with keeping his prestigious state. He is often noticed “quaking with fear, mumbling to himself through his sobs, he goes to the bed and gently takes Betty’s hand” (Act 1, 18). He addresses Susana “Go directly home and speak nothing of unnatural causes” (Act 1, 18). This statement shows his deep concern about his reputation and indicates the discrepancy between the apparent piety of Parris and his sham spirituality. Shallowness stems from his interest in his public image instead of giving priority to his religious conviction.

In the process of investigating about the practice of witchcraft in the forest, Parris warns Abigail: “Now look you, child, your punishment will come in its time. But if you trafficked with spirits in the forest I must know it now, for surely my enemies will, and they will ruin me” (Act 1, 19). A great deal of tension is made clear through the inner struggle between feelings of duty and self-interest. Tension is heightened when Parris and the other protagonists are overwhelmingly concerned about their reputations and are dedicated to reach a better social position at the expense of the other. In this way, he violates the Puritan demand for guaranteeing social integrity and adds fuel to the atmosphere of hysteria. This type of hysteria prevents Salem citizens from enjoying moments of freedom and inner peace.

The violation of personal freedom can be analyzed through the image of the sick child which has an allegorical dimension. The sickness of the young daughter is an alarming figure as it suggests the danger threatening the Puritan society. Like the body of the little girl which is characterized by the presence of suffering, the social body suffers from a remarkable deterioration at the level of values. Mrs. Putnam declares the existence

of sickness using the following terms: “I’d not call it sick; the devil’s touch is heavier than sick. It’s death, y’know, it’s death driving into them, forked and hoofed” (Act 1, 14). She is implicitly referring not to the physical sickness, but to the psychological, social and political ones. In fact, “the Crucible presents the questions of social illness within the context of the Puritan theocracy and the witch-hunting madness it inspired” (Wertheim 15).

The psychological sickness is manifested through this “witch-hunting madness”, the constant fear and the atmosphere of hysteria. On the other hand, political sickness is made conspicuous through the characterization of Putnam and his remarkable abuse of power and his amalgamation between political and religious powers. It is noticeable that social illness is dominant in Salem where freedom becomes a myth as citizens are prevented from practicing spirituality or from living in a serene environment. Their words and their actions are not spontaneous since they are not allowed to have moments of free thinking. The idea of controlling the faculty of mind will be examined through the characterization of the scientist who will ironically be involved within the witchcraft hysteria.

## 7. The Confused Scientist

The myth of liberty reaches its paroxysm when the intellectual Reverend Hale shifts from having a blind belief in science to being equipped with a dubious thought and being influenced by the superstitious belief in witchcraft. In order to better understand the close link between liberty and license, it is pertinent to refer Raymond Williams’ “structure of feelings” which consists in studying the role of society in shaping the feelings of the individual. Indeed, “the structure of a ghost hunting event draws on social issues and values relating to paranormal beliefs, historical events” (Hill 21). In the play, feelings are domesticated when they are restrained and manipulated. “The structure of feelings” will be analyzed through the role of witchcraft paranoia in triggering fear and the psychological malaise of the intellectual Reverend Hale.

The structure of feelings shows that “it is not the consciousness of man that determines their political being, but political being that determines their consciousness” (Marx 40). In this respect, the political mood and the atmosphere of irrationality have an impact on the rational disposition of Hale. The characterization of Hale adds a comic note to the tragic atmosphere of witchcraft. Indeed, Hale is put into a ludicrous position when he shifts from being dedicated to decipher the mystery to submitting to the atmosphere of hysteria. Situational irony arises when the doctor declares in an assertive tone: “Here are all your familiar spirits your incubi and succubi: your witches that go by land, by air, and by sea; your wizards of the night and of the day. Have no fear now” (Act 1, 29). The doctor seems to be self-confident and mocks the superstitious belief. “He feels himself allied with the best minds of Europe Kings, philosophers, scientists and ecclesiastics of all churches. His goal, is light, goodness and its preservation” (Act 1, 30). However, he will deviate from his goals as his self-confidence is shaken by the atmosphere of doubt and hysteria.

The myth of freedom is exemplified through the doubt of the scientist who is supposed to be equipped with a free mind. The absence of freedom emerges when the scientist is overloaded with fear. He asks the sick child in a skeptical tone: “does someone afflict you,



child? It need not be woman, mind you, or a man. Perhaps some bird invisible to others comes to you-perhaps a pig, a mouse, or any beast at all.” (Act 1, 39).

Animal imagery implies the belief in the existence of demonic spirits. By means of irony, the playwright shows that Hale, the knowledgeable doctor is becoming irrational. Instead of contributing to the promotion of light and inner peace, the scientist transforms from being engrossed in his own quest for truth to being influenced by the dark atmosphere in Salem and to accusing innocent characters without any evidence. For instance, he puts much pressure on Tituba and convinces her to confess despite the fact of being innocent. He advises her: “You are God’s instrument put in our hands to discover the devil’s agents among us. You are selected, Tituba, turn your back on him and face God- face God, Tituba and God will protect you” (Act 1, 38). His speech is characterized by its illogicality since it is based on abstract ideas and on the exploitation of socially disadvantaged people. This illogicality contributes to the figuration of hysteria. Producing the hysteria of witchcraft alludes to the myth of freedom which is based on a chasm between speaking about liberty and setting boundaries and permissions for the practice of liberty. In addition to the field of science, the myth of freedom can be studied through the judicial field. In fact, the next part sets out to examine the effects of excessive liberty and on the power which is placed in the hands of judge Danforth.

### **8. Abusing Judicial Power**

The interplay between liberty and licence or excessive liberty leads to injustice. In this respect, Danforth, one of the oldest judges in Salem, abuses power when he turns a blind eye to the ocular proof. He affirms: “we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good.” (Act 3, 62). This type of imagery presents the way Danforth magnifies the supreme power of the court and its role in preserving justice. However, injustice is prevailing in the Salem society. It is noticeable that religion is a cover behind which the hidden intentions of the court are achieved. The arrogant behavior of Danforth is further reinforced through his belief in the superiority of the court as the highest form of righteousness and equity. In this respect, he informs Francis: “*you must understand, sir that a person is either with this court or he must be counter against it.*” (Act 3, 75). The statement evokes the haughtiness of the judge and his corruptive attitude.

On the other hand, Proctor stands for moral goodness because he is trying to put an end to the witchcraft hysteria. His moral goodness is exemplified through the efforts to convince the judge about the innocence of some devoted wives. He is providing him with a testament about the bright reputation of the ladies. Proctor offers an objective assessment when he refers to the opinion of the landholding farmers about Mrs, Nurse, Proctor and Gorey. He asserts that “[farmers]’ve known the women many years and never saw no sign they had dealings with the devil.” (Act 2, 35). Proctor is obviously trying to appease tension and not to yield to the atmosphere of corruption of his Puritan community.

The goodness of Proctor is set in contradiction with the characterization of Danforth. The aim of the playwright behind setting two contradictory characters is to make the audience aware about the coexistence between good and evil in the same society. In this context, in one of his interviews Miller expressed his wish to rewrite and develop the characterization of Danforth: “I would perfect [Danforth’s] evil to its utmost and make an open issue, a thematic consideration of it in the play.

There are people dedicated to evil in the world; that without their perverse example we should not know the good” (qtd. in Bloom 167). The playwright chooses to rewrite the evil side of Danforth and not any other character because he wants to further highlight the role of corruption and illegal judges in shaping the myth of freedom. Freedom remains a myth in Salem because the governing elite give citizens the impression of being liberated, but they set impediments to personal freedom by relying on censorship and on controlling the behavior of some characters. Freedom proves to be a myth, but Proctor will contribute to the movement of freedom from myth to reality by putting an end to the system which is based on license and on spying on the other characters.

### **9. Freedom: From Myth to Reality**

Proctor is unique in the sense that he refuses to get involved in the web of accusations. This uniqueness created a problem at the level of the movement from page to stage and the choice of the right actor who will put into light the virtuous side of Proctor and his balanced psyche. In this respect, “Jed Harris disliked Miller’s choice of Arthur Kennedy to play Proctor, and demanded a series of rewrites in an unsuccessful attempt to undermine the playwright’s confidence” (Ackerman 131). Miller chose Kennedy because of his spontaneity and his humble nature which are the major features of Proctor. On the other hand, the stage producer preferred to put on stage another Proctor which is characterized by his arrogance and prestigious position in Salem. Harris’s wish to manipulate and to impose his ideas on actors is an example of the dominant ideology of dictatorship that was dominant during the second half of the twentieth century.

This ideology is different from Miller’s intellectual freedom and his fervent desire to set his characters free from social and political corruption. In this context, Miller affirms in one of his conversations: “I am trying to find a way, a form, a method of depicting people who think” (Griffin 25). Proctor is one of Miller’s characters who think twice and who do not blindly obey the tyrannical system and who succeed at guaranteeing freedom to his peers.

Despite the fact that the New York production of the play failed to capture the attention of the audience, but Miller succeeded at improvising a special scene when he stages the mind of Proctor and invents a conversation between the hero and Abigail. Indeed, “after the initial reviews, Harris withdrew from the production and left Miller to try to salvage the show. Miller tightened the script and added a new scene at the close of the second act between Proctor and Abigail recycled from an earlier draft of the play” (Ackerman 131). The scene is meant to highlight the serene disposition of Proctor and his objective treatment of Abigail who spreads the rumor about his adultery and his pact with the devil.

Unlike the conventional Abigail, Proctor is a mentally free and through the characterization of Proctor, Miller criticizes the myth freedom. In fact, Proctor redefines freedom and in the final scene, he subverts licensed liberty when he chooses to put an end to Salem hysteria. In the final scene he announces: “I speak my own sins; I cannot judge another” (Miller 1996). He decides to preserve justice instead of preserving his life. The protagonist believes that freedom should be based on respect and responsibility. “He becomes a martyr for truth, in doing so [he] preserves the sanctity of individual freedom” (Magill 412). In this way, Proctor rejects the myth of freedom by proving that freedom is

a choice. He chooses to be sentenced and killed instead of accusing others without any evidence.

Accordingly, he turns the myth of freedom into reality when he sets Salem citizens free from accusations, corruption and injustice. He is a tragic hero because he is destroyed at the end, but he succeeds at creating a new spirit based on freedom and on the respect of the other. Miller can be criticized for making Proctor a victim of the myth of freedom, but his triumph lies in giving the secret behind the transfiguration of freedom from being an illusion to being a real reality in Salem. The secret lies in being responsible and in putting limits to the abuse of power.

## 10. Conclusion

To conclude, the paper has been an attempt to show that excessive freedom leads to the absence of freedom. In the same vein, Miller exposes political power and shows that liberty is a myth. The play is teeming with instances of injustice that put into question the notion of liberty. The myth of liberty is introduced in an ironic style and is projected through the way judges praise their practice of justice.

The analysis of the theme of absence of freedom at the social, judicial, political, economic, spiritual and even scientific levels and the examination of these different fields has led to the conclusion that freedom is a myth because it is based on a gap between the speech and the actions of the governing elite. Through the voice of Proctor Miller debunks licensed liberty by resisting corruption. Proctor refuses to carry out the tyrannical political agenda when he accepts to be killed instead of harming the other Salem citizens. He is physically killed but morally victorious as he succeeds at establishing a new order in Salem and at putting an end to the web of espionage, gossip and paranoia. Licensed freedom is subverted and given a new shape when Proctor propounds that freedom is a choice and it is based on respecting the freedom of the other.

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