

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Hamma Lakhdar University of El-Oued
Faculty of Arts and Languages
Department of Arts and English Language



Mass Hysteria and Dangers of Conformity in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

Submitted by:

- ✓ LAMOUDI Nesrine
- ✓ SOLTANI Ouahiba

Supervised by:

Dr. DJRIBIAI Adel

Board of Examiners:

Dr. MENNAI Chaima	President	University of El-Oued
Dr. DJRIBIAI Adel	Supervisor	University of El-Oued
Dr. Guetatlia Siham	Examiner	University of El-Oued

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to our parents and beloved ones,
for their endless love, support and encouragement.

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Abstract

Salem witch trials are an important period in New England history that American historians have explored in great detail. Scholars have investigated social, economic, and psychological aspects to identify the underlying causes of the incidents. The trials are regarded as the two most important witch hunts in American history, leading to almost twenty executions. "*The Crucible*" is a 1953 play by Arthur Miller, examined 1950s events and emphasized the panic surrounding the Salem witch trials, a present study attempts to shed light on the analysis of the two major themes in "*The Crucible*" play which are the mass hysteria and dangers of conformity and explores the relevance of modern society by examining the events and the issues related to social pressure also the study help to understanding the historical context by provides insight into the historical events surrounding the Salem society helping us understand how fear and conformity can lead to injustices present research adopts the analytical method in order to analyze how miller, through his play, expressed the idea of hysteria and conformity within the historical context, This study reveals that "*The Crucible*" Arthur Miller's play serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of mass hysteria and manipulation through fear for political purposes. It deals with issues such as how we define justice, what happens when people follow blindly and consequences thereof; therefore *The Crucible* remains timeless because it reminds us that literature and society are influenced by historical events even decades later.

Key words: Hysteria, Conformity, Salem Witch Trials, Massachusetts, McCarthyism, Red Scar.

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study:

"The Crucible" is a well-known play written by the American playwright Arthur Miller in 1953. It takes place in the late 17th century during the notorious Salem witch trials and it is based on historical events. Miller's work is seen as a symbolic criticism of McCarthyism, the passionate anti-communist movement that flourished in the U.S. during the early 1950s.

The Salem witch trials, which took place in Salem, Massachusetts, from 1692 to 1693, were motivated by widespread fear and suspicion of witchcraft, and they resulted in the prosecution and execution of many people accused of practicing witchcraft or communicating with the Devil. These trials were fuelled by religious radicalism, personal conflicts, and societal pressures, resulting in widespread hysteria and paranoia.

Through *"The Crucible"*, Miller uses fictionalized from the Salem witch trials to examine larger themes of hysteria, manipulation, morality, and the dangers of conformity. The drama follows the character of John Proctor, a farmer who becomes caught up in the community's turmoil and false charges. Miller utilizes Proctor's journey to explore the damaging effects of fear and the loss of personality. Furthermore, the play not only acts as a harsh critique of the Salem witch trials, but it also represents the social and political context of Miller's day, cementing its reputation as a thought-provoking piece of art with historical and contemporary relevance.

2. Statement of the Argument:

Arthur Miller, an influential American playwright and essayist, is widely recognized for his significant contributions to 20th-century literature. Known for his compelling exploration of societal issues, Miller's play "*The Crucible*" serves as a powerful critique of mass hysteria and the perils of conformity. The play unfolds against the backdrop of the Salem witch trials, offering a mirror to contemporary society and its potential for unfounded accusations and collective fear. So, this research aims to offer a comprehensive examination of the dangers associated with succumbing to collective paranoia, and the enduring relevance of Miller's critique in contemporary contexts.

3. Research Question:

As we embark on this scholarly task, our research aims to delve into a detailed analysis of mass hysteria and the dangers of conformity as depicted in "*The Crucible*". Our primary research question revolves around the following inquiry:

1. How does Arthur Miller's "*The Crucible*" explore the themes of mass hysteria and conformity?
2. What are the psychological and social dangers of conformity and hysteria portrayed in "*The Crucible*" and what are their implications for individual freedom and justice?

4. Literature Review:

Arthur Miller's play "*The Crucible*" serves as a powerful exploration of mass hysteria and the perils of conformity within a puritanical society. The story, set against the backdrop of the Salem witch trials, delves into the destructive consequences of groupthink, fear, and the suppression of individuality. This literature review aims to

examine existing scholarship on these themes within the context of the play, shedding light on the insights it offers into human behaviour and societal dynamics.

In this context, Dr Charlotte Jacobson delves into the dynamics of mass hysteria as portrayed in *"The Crucible"* in her article, "Arthur Miller's Representation of Mass Hysteria in The Crucible." Drawing from historical perspectives on witchcraft trials, her work provides a nuanced analysis of how power structures and individual motivations contribute to the rapid spread of fear and paranoia within the Salem community. Jacobson's research lays a strong foundation for understanding the psychological and social mechanisms at play in the play's portrayal of mass hysteria. In addition to this, Jean-Marie Bonnet examines the representational analysis of conformity in *"The Crucible"* through her article "Society vs. the Individual in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*" (1982), emphasizing the interplay between societal norms and individual identity through a detailed analysis of characters' decisions and behaviours. Jean-Marie Bonnet sheds light on the complexities of conformity and the tensions between societal expectations and personal integrity. Her work offers valuable insights into the psychological and sociocultural aspects of conformity depicted in the play.

The papers reviewed here are only a small sample of the scholarly contributions that have advanced our understanding of mass hysteria and the risks of conformity, as shown in Arthur Miller's *"The Crucible"*. By drawing on previous research, this literature review intends to highlight the play's significance as a thought-provoking investigation of human behaviour, societal forces, and the continuing relevance of historical narratives in revealing modern socio-political processes.

5. Aims of the Study:

The current study aims at investigating the themes of mass hysteria and the dangers of conformity in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. To reach this ultimate aim, sub-objectives will be important to investigate. Firstly, to extract the theme of conformity, its feature in the play must be pinpointed since it helps in understanding how Miller comes to implement this theme. Secondly, bringing out the theme of mass hysteria leads to the uprooting of the motives behind it. Thus, through interrelating both mass hysteria and the dangers of conformity, both themes will indeed be revealed.

6. Significance of the Study:

"*The Crucible*" holds significant academic importance as a literary work and a historical allegory. In literature, it is often studied for its exploration of themes such as mass hysteria, the dangers of conformity, the abuse of power, and the complexity of human nature. It is also a valuable text for studying Arthur Miller's style and use of dramatic techniques.

Historically, "*The Crucible*" is a dramatization of the Salem witch trials, making it a useful tool for understanding that period in American history and the social, political, and religious factors that contributed to the hysteria. It can also be used to draw parallels to other historical events or contemporary issues related to justice, fear, and the impact of groupthink on society.

7. Research Methodology:

As a primary source for this study, the play "*The Crucible*", as well as any other materials pertinent to the topic of study, will be used to generate information. Research libraries and the internet are the tools utilized to gather data. To analyse the

information gathered for this thesis, we want to employ historicist and psychological approaches to literature. We will also employ qualitative methodology to accommodate historical and psychological studies.

8. Structure of the Study:

The structure of this piece of writing is divided into three parts. The first one starts with the general overview of American drama and then addresses the historical background to Arthur Miller's "*The Crucible*". It offers a thorough and detailed analysis, which reveals the motives behind the Salem witch trials. followed by an analysis of the diverse causative factors including religion, society, politics and economics. looks at how this affected the community and society at large and how this culture has lived on through many generations to date. Moreover, it is aimed at McCarthyism and the Red Scare with discuss of Miller's connection to the McCarthy era and highlighting the similarities with the present events like the Watergate scandal

The second part will be concerned with the analysis of the mass hysteria in literature generally and in the crucible particularly. By defining hysteria, and the way it is presented in different literary works. Then we contrast the situation of hysteria in 1962 and 1950. A significant portion of the chapter is dedicated to analysing hysteria in Arthur Miller's "*The Crucible*" This analysis is divided into four parts, corresponding to each act of the play: Act 1, Act 2, Act 3, and Act 4, which is where the story flows, how hysteria develops, how it influences the characters and the plot

The third chapter followed by the in depth analysis to the theme of conformity. discusses the influence of social expectations and norms that promotes conformity recognizing specific individuals portraying such behaviour especially in this case on the effect of fear and hysteria and how fear functions as a source of inspiration, the interaction of contagion and conformity is inherent in the psychological behaviours of

the human mass and the role of authority figures in the process of socialization through the conditioning of people to act in particular ways in different situations.

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter One: Historical and Literary Background of *The Crucible*

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Introduction

Themes such as mass hysteria and conformity have remained timeless and continue to engage literature and the whole society even today. The renowned play of Arthur Miller "*The Crucible*" is the exploration for these issues through the trial of the witches in the 17th-century America. Through the depiction of the people who find themselves in a situation brimming with accusations and social panic, the play becomes commentary of the inner workings of a blind rush and how dangerous it can be when needed to stop.

This chapter gives a clear picture of the American drama and literature history entailing a story about the unique performance of Arthur Miller's "*The Crucible*" It discusses the Salem witch trials, the massive influence of McCarthyism and the red scare of the 1950s, and Miller's association with this unstable time. Furthermore, it passes through the striking parallels between the matters reflected in "*The Crucible*" and modern social phenomena and plots a sophisticated analysis of Miller's universal work.

1.1. Introduction to American Drama:

The American theatre underwent major developments and progress during the 20th century, reflecting the country's expansion and success. At the same time, the establishment of the nation's welfare system resulted in the building of numerous new theatres, encouraging individuals to look towards the stage for amusement. In the 19th century, there was a dearth of outstanding plays but a continual need for melodramatic shows and adaptations of novels. Realism became a prominent theatre movement in the late 19th century, moving away from traditional melodramas and sentimental comedies to emphasize character growth and symbolism.

By the late 19th century, a recent trend that had originated in Europe about two decades prior was beginning to emerge (VanSpanckern, 1990). This signalled a clear change from the

emotional and romantic plays of the 18th century. Character development and symbolism are used in theatre to convey meaning (Wainscot, 1985).

In that period, the majority of American plays were heavily impacted by European plays. However, American drama stood out due to its unique content, focusing frequently on current issues and societal matters. Yet, American plays frequently imitated European plays in terms of style, incorporating melodramatic and realistic techniques. During that time period, American plays often borrowed styles from Europe as they tried to incorporate and imitate the theatrical methods that had already been established.

The start of real American theatre took place during the 20th century. Despite the increasing excitement of the 20th century, realism continued to be the primary form of theatrical expression. Renowned American playwrights such as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and Eugene O'Neill reached remarkable levels of realism by centering on the individual situations of characters instead of the broader societal context (Wainscot, 1985). Realism in literature highlights the significance of unbiased and objective observation within an author's writing. Realist authors frequently discuss this principle in their works, choosing to depict middle-class life and its truths accurately while steering clear of extravagant depictions and high society. Arthur Miller, the renowned playwright who was alive from 1915 to 2005, is a notable member of this group. While studying at the University of Michigan, Miller started writing plays focused on the difficulties experienced by people in a synthetic community.

Furthermore, he authored contemporary tragedies featuring authentic characters. His dramas portrayed his awareness of societal issues and his care for individuals influenced by the misguided beliefs imposed by society. The past holds significant influence over the present. In the United States during the McCarthy era, Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible* amidst political and social unrest. His personal life experiences had an impact on Miller's writing. Arthur Miller's play, "The Crucible", was initially performed in 1953. It was played out in 1692 in Salem,

Massachusetts. The Witch Trials play narrates the tale of a community divided by faith in sorcery, dread, and suspicion.

In his play, Miller explores different themes like morals, truthfulness, the perils of mass panic, and the misuse of authority. He also provides political analysis on current events by making comparisons to historical witch hunts, specifically the McCarthyism era of the 1950s. In the United States during this period, people believed to be Communists were looked into and brought to trial. "The Crucible" remains a compelling and long-lasting piece, making it a common subject for study in educational settings for its representation of American drama.

1.2. Historical Context of The Crucible:

"The Crucible" deployed the historical background of the Salem witch trials which took place in 1692. It also aids as a reflection on the societal and political issues of that time. Arthur Miller wrote the play amidst the McCarthy era, a historical period characterized by the US government's quest for alleged communists and individuals who braced communism. This emphasizes a period in America characterized by fear and mistrust.

Miller compares the Salem witch trials to the McCarthy era in the play, implying that both times were characterized by hysteria, paranoia, and a willingness to believe accusations without solid evidence. Miller was personally called to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee and accused of having communist sympathies. His portrayal of John Proctor in the play was influenced by his past experiences, where the main character, accused of witchcraft, opted for honesty over deception to highlight his integrity.

Arthur Miller's play "The Crucible" highlights the importance of maintaining individuality and warns against mindlessly following societal regulations. The play's characters demonstrate that those who do not abide by their beliefs or challenge societal norms are more likely to be

persecuted. In the McCarthy era, individuals hesitated to resist government investigations out of fear of becoming the focus of scrutiny.

1.3. Salem Witch Trials:

1.3.1. Salem Witch Trials Overview:

Salem Witch Trials took place in colonial Massachusetts from 1692 to 1693. These trials comprised court proceedings and legal actions for persons accused of engaging in witchcraft activities. Ultimately, 20 people, who were mostly women, were put to death, with more over 150 persons being taken into custody (Rosenthal,1993). The Salem Witch Trials began in January 1692 when a group of young girls in Salem Village started suffering fits and seizures. They claimed that their condition was the outcome of three women practicing witchcraft. The accused women were summoned to appear before local judges, who officiated the hearings and ordered them to be arrested.

News about their arrest and allegations rapidly circulated, this led to many persons in Salem and nearby towns being accused of practicing witchcraft. The claims often stemmed from gossip and unfounded presumptions, impacted by internal conflicts in the religious and societal structure of the community. The experiments were carried out in a completely improper way, with the defendants not being provided with legal assistance and frequently experiencing coercive interrogation methods, such as physical torture. A lot of individuals admitted to engaging in witchcraft due to pressure, some even went to the extent of accusing others to defend themselves.

The trials concluded in May 1693 when Governor William Phips of Massachusetts dissolved the Court of Oyer and Terminer, which was responsible for overseeing the trials. Following the legal proceedings, the individuals facing accusations and their families were met with social exclusion and financial destruction, resulting in significant damage to the Salem community.

Several religious variables played a role in the frenzy of the Salem witch trials. Puritanism was a major factor in causing this panic. The Puritans who came to Massachusetts placed importance on moral character and the power of God, believing in a strict interpretation of the Bible. They believed that the Devil was an actual being in existence and that witchcraft was a method he used. The Puritans were also more careful and suspicious of any potential danger to their religious community and thought that it was society's responsibility to maintain moral standards and punish those who did wrong. Historian Richard Godbeer explains that Puritans upheld the doctrine of predestination, which stated that God had already decided who would be saved and who would be damned (Godbeer, 1692).

The Puritans thought that their deeds in this life would have a direct effect on their fate in the afterlife, causing them to feel fear and unease. Historian Stacy Schiff observed that the Puritans existed in a constant state of unease, always conscious of their unworthiness and forever seeking evidence of God's grace (Schiff, 2015).

Moreover, the faith in the Devil and his capacity to take control of individuals was a significant theological aspect. Historian Chadwick Hansen notes that the idea of demonic possession was a key belief in Puritan theology (Hansen, 1969). The Puritans thought that the Devil could possess individuals and control their actions and that he would continuously try to tempt and ruin them.

The behavior of the accused showcased their belief in being possessed. Many people exhibited odd physical symptoms, like convulsions and fits, that were thought to indicate they were possessed by demons. Historian Mary Beth Norton points out that the symptoms shown by the affected individuals were seen in the light of a society that believed in the ability of the devil to inhabit humans (Norton, 2002).

1.3.2. The Causes That Led to the Salem Witch Trials:

1.3.2.1. Religious Factors:

Witchcraft was yet another religious element. In the Puritan community, witchcraft was perceived as a genuine and significant danger. According to the New England Historical Society, Puritans viewed witchcraft as a valid and dangerous occupation, they thought witches struck bargains with the Devil and utilized their powers to cause harm to others. This concept originated from the Bible, which prohibits the act of witchcraft and regards it as a sinful behavior.

In Salem, where numerous unfounded witchcraft rumors circulated, the anxiety about witches was especially strong. As specified by the Salem Witch Museum, several rumors spread in Salem about witches exist in the community, leading to paranoia and fear among the people. The Puritans upheld the idea of "Confession and Redemption" as a means of healing and attaining deliverance. In the Salem witch trials, numerous people admitted guilt to prevent being accused of practicing witchcraft. Marilynne K. Roach's book suggests that the Salem trials were driven by the belief in confessing and making amends.

1.3.2.2. Social and Political Factors:

Historians continue to argue over the reasons and factors that resulted in the Salem witch trials. Nevertheless, there is consensus that multiple social and political factors influenced the hysteria that swept across Salem. The strong religious beliefs and focus on community in Salem's Puritan culture at that time played a major role in influencing outcomes. Historian Richard Godbeer suggests that the Puritan culture in Salem prioritized creating a pure and godly community for the community's welfare. The text that follows must be furnished in order for it to be rephrased. This completely demonstrates that in Salem's Puritan society, the collective welfare of the group was valued more than that of the individual, emphasizing the importance of community. Maintaining a society that upholds moral values was seen as essential for the well-being of the community

another element that contributed was the turbulent political atmosphere in Salem, marked by conflict and discord among the residents. Various factions resided in the city, all working towards their individual goals and interests. Historian Mary Beth Norton explained that Salem was divided among different groups competing for control and influence.

The subsequent process involves examining the data and making conclusions derived from the results. This quote implies that conflicts between residents in Salem may have contributed to the well-known witch trials in 1692. Rivalry for control and authority might have created an atmosphere of doubt and mistrust among different factions, eventually leading to allegations of witchcraft and ensuing legal proceedings.

1.3.2.3. Economic Factors:

The Salem witch hysteria was impacted by different economic factors that existed in the colonial period. A major economic concern in Salem was the substantial wealth gap between the rich and the poor. Historical documents show that the town was primarily controlled by affluent landowners and businessmen, with the less wealthy laborers and farmers facing financial difficulties. This economic inequality could have caused tension and unhappiness among the lower socioeconomic groups, leading to a call for changes in social and economic policies. Land disputes were also a significant economic factor. During the early days of Salem, owning land was a major way to gain authority and strength, leading to conflicts and violence over property lines. Historian Richard Godbeer stated that disputes over property and boundaries were a constant cause of tension among Salem villagers.

Commerce was another important economic factor that played a role in the Salem hysteria. Salem's economy, heavily dependent on maritime and agricultural trade, experienced a downturn signaling financial struggles. The economic downturn caused social unrest between the rich merchant class and poor rural families, worsened by the rigorous Puritan social hierarchy in Salem during that period. This social hierarchy maintained the idea that individuals with wealth and power were entitled to higher levels of respect and control. Historian Mary Beth Norton suggests

that economic factors were significant in the Salem witchcraft hysteria. By the 1690s, Salem's sea trade had decreased, leading to a shift towards agriculture, which left numerous farmers lacking enough land to sustain their families. The increased feelings of discomfort and competition generated by the economic crisis were intensified because numerous farming families were in debt to affluent merchants.

Moreover, women of lower social standing who were seen as challenging the established Puritan hierarchy were frequently targeted with allegations of witchcraft. As the historian Carol F. Karlsen, Puritan society was structured in a hierarchy with a patriarchal system, resulting in women holding a lower status. Women who defied patriarchal power or disrupted the existing order often faced accusations of practicing witchcraft. To sum up, the Salem witch panic was fueled by the powerful Puritan social structure, declining trade and social tensions, and the patriarchal society. These economic, social, and cultural factors were crucial in influencing the events that unfolded in colonial Salem.

1.4. The Consequences of the Salem Witch Trials:

1.4.1. Accusation and the Courts:

The Salem Witch Trials took place in the year 1692. More than 200 people were accused of being involved in witchcraft, with twenty of them being put to death, mainly by hanging. The state also allowed for one execution where the victim was crushed to death by heavy stones. In 1693, many people accused of wrongdoing suffered harsh treatment, with some enduring extended waits for their trials. At least one person died while being held in custody.

The accusations began in February 1692 when a collection of youth from Salem Village, including Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, began showing unusual conduct. They shouted, jerked, and claimed they had seen ghosts. A doctor was called to evaluate their situation, but he couldn't figure out the reason for their symptoms. Soon after, additional girls in the village began

to act in a similar way. They next reported that the spirits were the spirits of local women who had been wrongly accused of being witches.

1.4.2. The Effects on the Local Community and Broader Society:

The consequences of the witchcraft accusations in Salem had a significant effect on both the community and society in general. At first, the trials disrupted the social structure by leading to the arrest and imprisonment of many prominent figures in the community, including wealthy landowners and church leaders, causing disorder and anxiety. Historian Mary Beth Norton stated that during the trials, ordinary individuals were granted power, causing a disturbance in the social hierarchy as prominent members of the community were accused of practicing witchcraft (Norton, 2003).

Afterwards, the community was filled with fear and distrust as individuals started pointing fingers at each other, accusing neighbors and even family members of engaging in witchcraft. Historian Richard Trask argues that the fear and distrust caused by accusations of witchcraft caused people to turn on each other in order to protect themselves from being accused.

In addition, the trials greatly influenced the legal system in Massachusetts. Prior to the trials, people who were suspected of a crime were believed to be innocent until their guilt was proven. Nonetheless, in the courtroom, the accused bore the burden of proof, leading to many convictions without strong evidence. According to historian Bernard Rosenthal, the trials posed a significant threat to the core values of the legal system, as the accused were disregarded in favor of hysteria and mob mentality (Rosenthal, 1997). The statement suggests that the processes were not carried out fairly and neutrally, but rather, they were influenced by the emotions of the individuals involved. The defendant was not given a fair trial due to the failure to uphold basic legal principles like the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial.

In conclusion, the hysteria caused by the witchcraft accusations in Salem had a widespread effect on the community and culture. The breakdown of societal structure, the atmosphere of

apprehension and mistrust, and the obstacles confronting the legal system should be a cautionary tale about the risks of unchecked hysteria and paranoia.

1.4.3. The Legacy of the Salem Witch Trials:

Due to the severity of the Salem witch trials, changes were made to American court procedures to guarantee legal representation, provide the chance to confront an accuser, and presume innocence until proven guilty. Arthur Miller's allegorical use of the Salem trials and witch hunt in *The Crucible* (1953) is still symbolic of oppression against minority groups in the 20th and 21st centuries, mirroring Sen. Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist hearings during the Red Scare of the 1950s.

1.5. McCarthyism and the Red Scare:

"McCarthyism" and the "Red Scare" are markers for a period in American history, particularly the 1950s, characterized by intense fear and suspicion of communism and leftist ideologies. McCarthyism focuses on Senator Joseph McCarthy's tactics in targeting government employees and groups suspected of communist ties. During that time, there was a widespread fear of communist influence within American society known as the Red Scare.

During this time, many people were falsely accused of being communist or having communist tendencies with no evidence to support the accusations. As a result, they faced intense questioning, public examination, being jailed, and being denied opportunities. Events such as the Soviet Union obtaining nuclear weapons, the Korean War, and the espionage trial and subsequent execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg contributed to the fear associated with communism.

The Red Scare had a significant impact on American politics and society, resulting in the emergence of anti-communist anxiety and the suppression of political dissent and resistance. Numerous people suffered job loss or career damage after being accused of having communist beliefs, leading to a lingering anxiety about being labeled as "un-American" or a communist.

The famous American playwright Arthur Miller was greatly impacted by McCarthyism and the Red Scare. Miller briefly joined the Communist Party in the 1940s before departing and later becoming a notable critic of communism. However, McCarthy's past affiliation with the party and commitment to Marxist beliefs made him stand out to his supporters.

In 1956, Miller was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) about his connections and political views. Accusations of defying Congress arose when he refused to disclose the identities of people associated with Marxist organizations. Despite his best efforts, he was found guilty and given both a fine and a jail sentence.

Miller was inspired to write "*The Crucible*" a famous piece that compares the Salem witch trials to the Red Scare and McCarthyism, following his encounters with the HUAC and being accused of contempt of Congress. The play delves into the themes of hysteria, prejudice, and the danger of unfounded allegations. It is commonly viewed as a critique of the atmosphere of suspicion and fear that prevailed during the McCarthy era.

In his essay "Why I Wrote the Crucible," Miller stated that as he explored the Salem hysteria further, he noticed numerous parallels with the occurrences of the 1950s, like individuals ostracizing blacklisted people or ex-leftists suddenly transforming into devoted patriots.

1.6. Miller Connection to the McCarthy Era:

Arthur Miller's "*The Crucible*" is indisputably tied to the social and political instabilities of the McCarthyism period, which is a remarkable historical happening in the United States during the Cold War. It was characterized by Senator Joseph McCarthy's unflinching quest to unveil the communist agents which resulted in an atmosphere where everybody was doubted, people felt fear, and civil liberties were trampled upon - just like the hysteria that took hold of Salem during the witch trials. This was a profound personal experience for Miller, which is clearly reflected in his writing, as evidenced by his decision to write "*The Crucible*" in 1953. Miller's play, which was a representation of the Salem witch trials of 1692, was indeed a direct

parallel to McCarthyism. In "The Crucible", the witch hysteria in Salem was akin to the panic of the Red Scare when the mere accusations ruined the lives and the rational justice was subverted by the paranoia. The climate of that time resulted in individuals blacklisted, losing jobs, and being imprisoned on the basis of weak or even fake allegations of communist activities while the main characters of Salem were hanged and imprisoned on the basis of sham evidence and the collective hysteria. It is quite interesting to see how the scenes in this play such as mass hysteria, false accusations and erosion of civil liberties correlate with the techniques employed by the William Benton and House Un-American Activities Committee to beat the red menace' during the 1950s. However, in the book *The Crucible*, the author uses both characters and events to analyze the destructive force of McCarthyism that Miller denounced as a witch hunt similar to present times. John Proctor, who is arrested for witchcraft and is later executed, is a representation not only of himself but also of the numerous people who were professionally and academically destroyed by the purely baseless allegations brought forward during the former Senator Joseph McCarthy's period of being in charge (Knirck, 2009).

Additionally, the personal bitterness of Miller following the actions of his acquaintance Elia Kazan, who he later learns named before the HUAC as former colleagues in 1952, further prompted his yearn for producing a piece that would serve as a biting statement of about the McCarthy era. (J. F. Shields High School, n.d.) The event involved had the additional effect of prompting the House Un- American Activities Committee to carry out an investigation on Miller. This served to show the depth of Miller's personal investment in the issues and themes which he portrays in "*The Crucible*". The era of McCarthyism is a part of the historical context which makes the play "*The Crucible*" completely understood. In 1953, the playwright, Arthur Miller, managed to challenge McCarthyism's popularity with the play's premier at a time when most Americans admired his anti-communist platform and were concerned with the play's obvious message (Lindsay, n.d.).

In the last couple of years since it was out, "*The Crucible*" has proved a gripping and legitimate work, functioning as a warning bell about unquestionably the dangers of political oppression, mass hysteria, and abrogation of fundamental freedoms. By communicating personally and embracing art as a weapon to fight against the communist era, he has become the personification of a playwright who used his craft to delve into and criticize the social and political evils that his era witnessed.

1.7. Parallelism With Contemporary Events:

1.7.1. Parallels to the Watergate Scandal:

The Watergate scandal began early in the morning of June 17, 1972 (Zapata, 2024), when several burglars were arrested in the office of the Democratic National Committee, located in the Watergate complex of buildings in Washington, D. C. This was no ordinary robbery: The burglars on the other hand were connected to President Nixon's "Operatives" unit, and they had been caught spying on phones and searching through documents. This resulted in a series of Nixon's special maneuvers to his crimes' concealment, and when the Washington Post reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein unmasked his role within the conspiracy, he resigned from the president office on August 9, 1974. The Watergate scandal forever changed American politics as people were no longer able to trust their leaders whom they thought highly until then, and people took time to think more carefully about the nature of presidency (Zapata, 2024).

The Crucible and the Watergate Scandal had major influences on the literary and theatrical representation of the government and power in the American literature. Miller wrote *The Crucible* about McCarthyism, and the Salem witch trials as an allegory featuring the same combating the abuse of power and the erosions of civil liberties by political institutions. This drama pointed to the dangers of unchecked authority and the result of mass hysteria, and, as a result, American literature gained a new voice that criticized political oppression and the introducing fear to pursue political goals. However, Watergate scandal, which revealed political corruption and power abuse of the highest levels of the government, increased suspiciousness and exposure of political

institutions. The Watergate scandal became a lesson for American theater not only because of its implications of power gone unchecked but also because it underscored the need for accountability among those in positions of authority. *The Crucible* and Watergate scandals the similarity of showing government and power more critically and realistically in American drama and literature, for instance, it stressed on the importance of having a transparent, accountable system where individual rights are protected in case of political corruption and misuse of power (Lecture, 2019 & Marie Mattia, 2018).

Conclusion:

As a conclusion, the chapter provides a detailed analysis of the concept of "*The Crucible*" and its representation in American literature. Even though the play was set around the historical facts and the varied links, it displayed, with both the past and the present, this study has demonstrated the significance of the play as a timeless classic of art, which continues to provoke critical reflections on human nature and the tenderness of democratic ideals in the face of the fear and mob mentality.

CHAPTER TWO:

Chapter Two: Mass Hysteria in *The Crucible*

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Introduction

This chapter explains the main terms and meanings of "mass hysteria" in Salem, Massachusetts, and explores how it is portrayed in American literature. The presentation of hysteria in literature has been greatly influenced by modern medical concepts and discoveries, particularly in naturalistic literature. This chapter will accurately detail the portrayal of hysteria in characters, especially during the Salem witch trials. It will explore the signs of hysteria, including illogical actions and bodily illnesses, and claim that inhibiting sexual impulses and anxiety about societal opinions play a role in its formation.

2.1 What Is Hysteria?:

Historically, hysteria was believed to mainly affect women and was associated with a dysfunctional uterus. Yet, within contemporary psychology, it is considered a concept of the past. Similarly, it is defined as a condition of heightened emotions, illogical behaviour, and physical manifestations like shaking, inability to move, and uncontrollable muscle contractions. Even though it is no longer considered a disease, modern psychology categorizes it as a psychoneurosis characterized by emotional sensitivity and disturbances in psychogenic, sensory, vasomotor, and visceral functions. This frequently appears as actions that show an excessive or uncontrollable fear or emotional overflow. As per Merriam-Webster's description of "hysteria".

2.1.1 Sigmund Freud and Hysteria:

In the opinion of Sigmund Freud, hysteria can be seen as the result of transforming mental energy into physical energy. This indicates that emotional or psychological challenges can manifest as physical issues such as paralysis, tremors, and convulsions. Freud saw hysteria as a neurosis caused by repressed feelings and unresolved problems. He thought that it was frequently connected to subconscious struggles, especially involving suppressed sexual urges or childhood traumas. Freud believed that treating hysteria required therapy to bring unconscious conflicts to light and help the patient resolve them.

2.1.2 Charcot and Hysteria:

Jean-Martin Charcot, a French neurologist who was born in 1825 and died in 1893, has made substantial contributions to the research and accurate information regarding hysteria. Charcot described hysteria to be a mental disorder displayed through physical manifestations like paralysis, convulsions, and sensory problems, with no clear physical explanation. He believed that hysteria mainly stemmed from mental unsteadiness, often triggered by traumatic events like abuse or emotional grief. Charcot saw it as a malfunction of the nervous system, a type of dissociation where the mind disconnects from the body. He treated hysteria with empathy and understanding, exploiting hypnosis and counselling to help patients in regaining control of their health. His work greatly benefitted neurologists and Psychologists.

2.1.3 Arthur Miller and Hysteria:

Miller describes hysteria as a force capable of dividing communities and overriding rationality. In Puritan society, emphasis is placed on hard work, communal bonds, and strong religious convictions, while individual privacy and leisure activities like theatre or reading are discouraged. These strict values create a stifling atmosphere where people are unable to express their grievances. *"The Crucible"* shows how Abigail, Reverend Parris, and Thomas Putnam take advantage of the hysteria for their own benefit. As an example, Abigail wrongly blames Elizabeth Proctor for practicing witchcraft in order to remove her as a competitor for John Proctor's love. This shows how the rigidity of Puritan social expectations plays a role in the emergence and propagation of mass hysteria.

2.2 Hysteria in Literature:

Hysteria has long been associated with femininity in literature, and this perception can be traced back to the Renaissance. During this period, hysteria was often compared with the masculine emotion of sadness, and this established a gendered understanding of these emotions

that lasted over time. In his popular article called (A Strange Pathology), Hysteria in the Early Modern World, 1500-1800, G.S. Rousseau argues the dual nature of hysteria and states that it was mainly viewed as a disorder affecting women. According to him, men experienced a cycle of emotions that comprised erotic infatuation, love sickness, unrequited love, anger, and melancholy, without any reference to hysteria. This shows that hysteria was not considered a part of the emotional experiences of men, and that, there was no space in this cycle for discussing male sexual organs or related matters. In G.S. Rousseau's essay "A Strange Pathology: Hysteria in the Early Modern World, 1500-1800," he discusses the binary nature of hysteria: "For men, a cycle was thus set up of erotic infatuation, unrequited love, love sickness, anger, and melancholy. Hysteria was pre-empted nowhere did the sexual organs enter the sequence, nor was there space for priapic phalluses or morbidly wandering scrotums."

2.3 Comparison: The Hysteria in 1692 and in 1950:

The occurrences of the Salem Witch Trials in 1692 and the Red Scare of the 1950s are often related because they led to prevalent panic and the unjust condemning of innocent individuals. Persons were accused in both situations without enough evidence, ensuing in the unfair conviction of the accused without proper trials. Arthur Miller, the writer of "The Crucible," was inspired by the commonalities of the two occurrences to draw comparisons, indicating that both were motivated by fear, paranoia, and a hunger for power and control.

In both the seventeenth century, Puritans and mid-twentieth century anti-communists employed fear and paranoia to accomplish their objectives. The trials served as a means for Puritan leaders to strengthen their authority and uphold strict religious uniformity. In the same way, Senator Joseph McCarthy utilized the American public's fear of communism to uncover and eliminate potential risks to the country's safety during the Red Scare. In each instance, the ruling elite exploited fear to silence resistance and keep a firm grip on society, a warning about using panic to quash criticism.

The Red Scare, also called McCarthyism, was a period of strong anti-communist anxiety in the United States in 1950. Because the Soviet Union was able to develop nuclear weapons successfully, there was a great deal of fear about the global spread of communism, leading to an atmosphere of distrust and worry. Numerous individuals were unfairly accused of being communists without evidence, leading to frequent blacklisting and job loss. During this time, the House Un-American Activities Committee was established to investigate potential communist activities, resulting in a decline in trust in the government and restrictions on free speech.

Intense fear and paranoia characterized the Salem Witch Trials in colonial Massachusetts in 1692. People accused of practicing witchcraft were forced to go through trials, agony, and eventually executed. Despite mainly impacting colonial Massachusetts, the Salem Witch Trials led to a decrease in faith in local government and religious leaders.

Both occurrences had notable consequences and act as cautions about the perils of hysteria and fear within a community. These occurrences show how anxiety and distrust can weaken confidence in government and other organizations, underlining the significance of following proper procedures and legal norms. The effects of these incidents existed for many years, as the Red Scare created a climate of fear and suspicion until the 1960s, while the Salem Witch Trials led to doubt in religious leaders and the handling of witchcraft accusations for social control. These occurrences highlight the risks of public panic and the essence of safeguarding the rights and freedoms of the people, especially in times of anxiety and unpredictability.

2.4. Hysteria in The Crucible:

Miller's "The Crucible," published in 1953, offers a gripping depiction of the Salem witch trials that occurred in 1692. Miller adapted historical proceedings for dramatic effect. He condensed characters and adjusting their ages to fit the constraints of the stage. Despite these alterations, the play addresses enduring themes that resonate with contemporary audiences. Notably, Miller focused on the two pivotal judicial figures, Hawthorne and Danforth, in his

adaptation. Although the play includes imaginative elements, it stays true to the core of the story and the outcomes for its characters.

Miller's 1953 play, "The Crucible," depicts a detailed picture of the "Salem witch trials" in 1692. Miller modified historical events to create a more dramatic impact, combining characters and changing their ages to suit the limitations of the theatre. In spite of these changes, the play tackles timeless themes that connect with modern viewers. Miller's adaptation notably centered on two key judicial figures, Hawthorne and Danforth. Even though the play has some creative changes, it stays true to the core aspects of the events and the destinies of its characters.

Miller employed hysteria as the main theme of the play to discover the risks of collective hysteria and the essence of personal morals. With the upsurge in witchcraft accusations in Salem, the villagers are swept up in a rapid of accusations and revenges. Miller illustrates hysteria as a spreading sickness that affects the whole town, causing individuals to suspect witches everywhere and betray each other in a frantic attempt to protect themselves. This is shown in Act II when John Proctor, the main character, challenges Mary Warren, who accused his wife of witchcraft, and states "There are wheels within wheels in this village, and fires within fires!" (Miller 66).

This metaphor illustrates how hysteria evolves and sustains itself as fear intensifies and people begin to see signs of witchcraft everywhere they look. Abigail Williams' character exemplifies how those in power can exploit hysteria. She is one of the girls who first point fingers at others for practicing witchcraft, which leads to a series of events. Characterized as crafty and deceitful, Abigail exploits the hysteria in order to acquire control and sway over others. Miller uses her as an example of how hysteria can lead to oppression, manipulating accusations for personal vendettas and seeking revenge.

In Act III, Abigail and her friends accuse Mary Warren of witchcraft, with Abigail threatening her, showing how she uses hysteria to intimidate and control others, "Think you be so mighty that the power of Hell may not turn your wits? Beware of it!" (Miller 98).

Miller uses John Proctor's character to underscore the significance of personal conscience and the risks of unquestioningly following group beliefs. Proctor, a flawed individual who committed adultery with Abigail, strives to redeem his moral integrity. In spite of his imperfections, he is among the few characters in the play who resist giving in to hysteria, opting instead to uphold truth and justice. This is evident in Act III, as Proctor boldly confronts the court, declaring, "I have been acquainted with her, sir." I am acquainted with her. [...] She plans to dance with me on the grave of my wife! (Miller, Page 102). Proctor's words show his willingness to speak up against the hysteria, even if it means putting his own life in danger.

In *"The Crucible"*, Miller looks to history as a warning about the risks of mass paranoia. He demonstrates how fear and paranoia can be used by those in power to control others, while also showing how individuals can give in to group thinking, resulting in severe outcomes. The performance emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, individual accountability, and standing up against fear and paranoia to avoid becoming swept up in widespread panic.

The Crucible is divided into four acts, each showing the development of hysteria in Salem, Massachusetts. Abigail Williams, the main character, is perceived as the catalyst for the events, as her desire for John Proctor initiates a series of dark occurrences that enthralls everyone. The play delves into the themes of avarice and intricate feelings of every character, reflecting the actual personalities in Salem in 1692, hence signifying a somber portion of American history. An in-depth examination of the play will focus on how the emotions of its two main characters develop in every act.

2.4.1 Act One:

In the first act of *"The Crucible"*, Miller conveys hysteria through dialogue, stage directions, and character actions, creating a feeling of panic and fear that adds to the collective hysteria of the community. Abigail's function is employed to exhibit the dangers of unchecked hysteria. In the first act of *"The Crucible"*, Arthur Miller employs different literary methods to depict the theme of hysteria. He showcases how people rapidly start to speculate and panic when

Betty Parris and Ruth Putnam are discovered unconscious through dialogues between characters, leading to a rise in hysteria fuelled by accusations and blame among the town's residents.

Miller also utilizes stage directions and character actions to establish a disturbing and unsettling ambiance that strengthens the feeling of panic and hysteria. For instance, Betty and Ruth display physical symptoms of hysteria, like trembling and convulsing. Furthermore, the dimly illuminated room and the characters partially obscured in shadow contribute to the unsettling atmosphere. In addition, Miller employs the character of Abigail Williams to exhibit the perils of unbridled hysteria. Initially portrayed as a victim, Abigail coerces the other girls into fabricating false accusations, stressing how hysteria can be exploited to influence situations and result in grave repercussions for guiltless persons.

Note some key examples of mass hysteria in Act 1 of the play:

1. The play begins with Abigail, Betty, and the other girls in Salem facing allegations of engaging in witchcraft in the woods. When Reverend Parris confronts them, the girls start accusing others of witchcraft in order to shift the blame away from themselves. This triggers a sequence of allegations that escalates into widespread panic in the community.
2. The girls' frantic conduct: Betty Parris is seen "screaming hysterically" in the first scene when found in the woods.
3. Abigail and the other girls also displayed hysteric behaviour, like screaming, trembling, and claiming to see spirits, which further fuels the growing hysteria
4. Spread of accusations: As the girls continue to accuse more and more people of witchcraft, the hysteria spreads fast through the community. Neighbors begin turning on one another, and soon the entire town is caught up in the mass hysteria.
5. Power Abuse: Those in positions of authority, like Reverend Parris and Judge Danforth, use the girls' accusations to consolidate their own power, further exacerbating the hysteria.

In summary, the mass hysteria in Act 1 of *"The Crucible"* is driven by the girls' false accusations, their own hysterical behaviour, the rapid spread of the accusations through the community, and the abuse of power by the town's leaders. This sets the stage for the tragic events that unfold throughout the rest of the play.

2.4.2 Act Two:

In Act 1 of "The Crucible," panic is introduced, and in Act 2, Miller expands on it by showing the characters' reactions to the accusations of witchcraft and the increasing distrust and fear in the community. The play serves as a warning against the dangers of panic and mass hysteria and how easily lies and rumors can spread. In Act 2, Salem is consumed by fear and suspicion, and the town is quick to accept wild accusations without any evidence. The arrest of Elizabeth Proctor is a clear example of the hysteria that has taken over the town. The authorities arrive with an arrest warrant based on nothing but the girls' words, disregarding any evidence. The community reacts with panic, with some believing Elizabeth is guilty and others defending her innocence.

Moreover, when Mary Warren presents Elizabeth with a handmade poppet, created during court proceedings, it shows the escalating paranoia surrounding the witchcraft allegations in Salem. Mary Warren, who is part of a group of girls responsible for the accusations, becomes convinced that her innocent act of making the poppet is a grave mistake. Despite knowing that the poppet is harmless, she gives in to the other girls' pressure, fearing accusations if she does not comply with their narrative. Elizabeth, who knows that the poppet is innocent, is powerless to stop the spread of accusations. This illustrates how the town has given in to hysteria, believing baseless claims without any evidence. These scenes demonstrate how Arthur Miller portrayed hysteria in Act 2, the consequences of uncontrolled hysteria, and the phenomenon of mass hysteria in Salem.

2.4.3. Act Three:

In Act 3 of *"The Crucible"*, Arthur Miller depicts hysteria as a destructive and illogical force endangering the societal balance. He reveals the risks of group mentality and conformity through courtroom scenes and dialogues.

The atmosphere in the courtroom grows more intense as accusations and denials are exchanged, escalating the tension and nerves of the characters. Miller demonstrates how fear and paranoia fuel the frenzy, with individuals suspecting their own community members of being witches in league with the Devil. This trend is evident in the interrogation of Martha Corey by Judge Hathorne and Deputy Governor Danforth, who continue to press her about witchcraft despite her ongoing denials, insisting that her refusal to confess must mean she is guilty. Through the intense courtroom setting, Miller shows how the people of Salem abandoned logic and reason, succumbing to the influence of hysteria and abandoning their principles in the process.

2.4.4. Act Four:

Act 4 is the culmination of the play and emphasizes the importance of honesty, integrity, and the destructive impact of baseless accusations and groupthink. In Act 4, John Proctor is depicted as consumed by guilt and despair, illustrating hysteria. Though Abigail Williams doesn't directly express her feelings in Act 4, her character and emotions can be inferred from her past behaviour. Proctor's feelings are mainly shown through his words and behaviour. At the start of Act 4, Proctor is prepared to confess to practicing witchcraft in order to avoid being executed. Nevertheless, just as he is ready to sign the fake confession, he has a change of heart and tears the paper into pieces. Despite admitting his guilt, he still vocalizes his inner conflict and deep regret. Choosing not to sign the deceitful confession highpoints the essence of staying true to one's convictions, predominantly in difficult circumstances.

Proctor is fighting with the repercussions of his choices and the damage he has caused, feeling distressed and worried. Even though facing mortality, he remains focused on safeguarding his image and maintaining his principles. Miller shows how mass hysteria can cause people to become consumed by group fear and distrust, leading them to overlook ethical and just behaviour.

Conclusion:

Arthur Miller's play "*The Crucible*" has been influential in shedding light on the hysteria that happened in Salem. Miller's work emphasizes the damaging outcomes of collective thinking and how fear and distrust can overpower rationality and logic. Miller shows how personal intentions can lead to widespread panic using Abigail Williams and Reverend Parris as examples. Hence, "*The Crucible*" acts as a cautionary tale about the risks of unchecked fear and the value of rational thinking in averting widespread panic.

CHAPTER THREE:

Chapter Three: The Representation of the Theme of Conformity

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Introduction

"*The Crucible*" comes into the picture when a society that has to conform to the demanded social conducts and standards is not a choice but something that is imposed. The idea of conformity as the theme is everywhere in the story. You will notice how it drives the behavior of both protagonists as they interact with the tight social norms and structure, gender roles, and religious belief of the community they are going to. The new sense of conformity called for suppressing the individual judgment for the sake of society standards and rules that sometimes take the place of truth and freedom. This becomes especially crucial in *The Crucible* because the attempts of the community participants to glorify social norms and religious beliefs had large consequences in one of the biggest events in the United States history. Not only does the play explore the theme of conformity in an historical context—within the setting of Salem witch trials—but it also deals with it as a universal expression of the conflict between the individual freedom and the community order that can never be reconciled. In this chapter, we shall explore the role that conformity plays in the plot, which includes consideration of the social etiquette and the norms which exert influence on the behavior of the characters, how conformity and rebellion are repercussed and the conflict between individual autonomy and collective conformity. In this research, we would explore how the behavior and decision-making of individuals are impacted by their deviation or adherence to the community's set social standards and social obligations.

3.1. Investigating the Theme of Conformity:

Concerning "*The Crucible*", different manifestations of the culture of conformity play an important part in the establishment of the conformity culture in Salem. Frugality in lifestyles and extreme social expectations for Puritan citizens offer a highly restrictive social structure in which any deviation is publicly criticized or severely punished. People conform to these social standards to defend themselves from isolation and to enjoy prestige within society. On the other hand, the majority of the people living in Salem have endorsed the brutal actions of individuals such as Reverend Parris and Judge Danforth by reinforcing the culture of conformity and suppressing the

voices critical of the status quo. Church attendance and religious compliance, which must by necessity be basic requirements, are used by the church as mechanisms for the enforcement of conformity and the shaping of behavior in order to meet the accepted goals. Fear and social pressure greatly contribute to the formation of conformity given the fact that the pervasive sense of straying away from the socially acceptable norms and the pressure to go with the expected community standards build a culture that does not encourage individuality; and should an individual decide to express their unique personality, they risk being socially excluded. The aforementioned issues in *"The Crucible"* all play a role in a culture that emphasizes individual compliance and conformity, support for authority figures, maintenance of reputation, and adherence to religious customs. This culture of conformity, which is characterized by the absence of personal autonomy and suppression of dissent, can lead to forgetfulness of the truth and favoring of injustice within the community.

3.1.1. Social Expectations and Norms:

The profound societal standards and social norms of the Salem community as portrayed in *"The Crucible"* have their origins in the Puritan ethical system and adherence philosophies of the 17th-century time, which emphasized religious orders, social classes, and the position of women. Those expectations are impressively shown throughout the play; they define the characters and their behavior, and lead typically to a conformist culture within the community.

In Salem, individuals are expected to follow the church's orders and community norms, as highlighted by Reverend Parris's emphasis on church attendance and conformity to the clergy's rules (The Crucible Questions and Answers - ENotes.com, n.d.). This is seen when characters like John Proctor face criticism and punishment for acting outside of cultural standards, such as plowing on the Sabbath and challenging authority figures like Reverend Parris. Proctor's defiance of these norms is reflected in his statement, "I will cut off my hand before I'll ever sign a warrant for your arrest, Mr. Danforth," showcasing his resistance to conforming to unjust practices.

Another important part of Salem's cultural obligations is maintaining an appearance of piety. Characters like Elizabeth Proctor and Rebecca Nurse are under pressure to comply to the community's rigid cultural norms in order to maintain their status. Elizabeth Proctor's refusal to conform is clear in her statement, "I have given you my soul; leave me my name!" which emphasizes the importance of reputation in Salem society and the penalties of nonconformity.

Furthermore, patriarchy was an acknowledged social rule in all Salem families in which men held sway and younger women were to be submissive. Women, who do not follow these norms and especially those who threaten that structure which holds the power today are often accused of the witchcraft. The representation of Abigail Williams is one of the most significant and outstanding examples of using "the power of the patriarchy" for one's own benefit, which she does by unjustly blaming other people for witchcraft. For instance, the way Abigail curses and rejects Elizabeth Proctor is shown through her declaration, "She is gone! She's gone! Oh, my dear John, she's gone!" (Act 2, Scene 1). While some people like the people, and others choose to go along with the mass hysteria, which they both symbolize, they lead to the characters joining the culture of the Salem community. The grief seeps into people's minds like poison, and they become part of the plague without even noticing it to protect themselves from being found guilty of the same thing. The example of how Mary Warren becomes an accuser after her attack of defiant resistance during the trial illustrates the influence of society on person's mobility.

Overall, Salem's cultural expectations and conventions create an uncomfortable climate in which individual autonomy is traded for communal conformity. The rigid adherence to religious regulations, social hierarchy, and gender norms, combined with the dread of punishment and the stress on reputation, contribute to a conformist culture that pervades all aspects of Salem life.

3.1.2. Characters who conform:

In *"The Crucible"*, the characters Abigail Williams and John Proctor represent opposing methods to complying to Salem society's social expectations and regulations, as well. Abigail Williams, motivated by a desire for power and anger, first joins the prevalent hysteria by falsely accusing others of witchcraft. Her manipulation of society norms and expectations enables her to gain influence and control over people around her. Abigail's compliance to the Salem hysteria is shown in her comment, "I saw Goody Hawkins with the Devil! I saw Goody Good with the Devil!" demonstrating her willingness to conform to popular madness in order to achieve her personal aims.

On the other hand, John Proctor, a complicated character with a strong sense of ethics, struggles to adhere to certain society conventions while opposing others. According to the research (*The Struggle of Conformity in the Crucible and Conversion* | 123 Help Me, n.d.) we can determine that his refusal to comply with unjust practices, such as signing a false confession, originates from an internal conflict between defending his ideals and safeguarding his reputation. Proctor says, "Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life!" demonstrates his refusal to adhere to the dictates of the court, emphasizing the importance of his integrity and identity.

Abigail's acceptance of the cultural panic has grave consequences in Salem including false accusations, pandemoniums, and brutal killing of innocent souls. The process of her agreement to the courts illegal upward results into a series of events leading to destruction of the whole vicinity. In making other people's cultural values her own, at the time, Abigail represents the dangers involved in obeying blindly and the grave impact of absolute power. However, John Proctor's tragic end is caused by his decision not to falsely plead guilty to any witchcraft allegations made against him. Even though this course of action subjected him to severe punishment, his resolve to remain true to himself and his values was unshaken. His quote reads, "I have confessed myself! Is there no good penitence but it be public? God does not need my name nailed upon the church! God

sees my name; God knows how black my sins are!" (Act 4, Scene 1) symbolizes his internal fight with conformity and eventual decision to choose his values over societal standards.

These examples from *"The Crucible"* demonstrate the complex nature of conformity in Salem culture, as well as the various motivations and effects of adhering to or rejecting conventional norms. Abigail's manipulative conformity and Proctor's internal fight with conformity are vivid examples of how societal factors influence individual conduct and the ethical challenges that arise in a society driven by fear and hysteria.

3.2. The Impact of Fear and Hysteria:

Fear and hysteria emerge as an unconscious manner of expressing hatred and rage controlled by rigorous Puritan culture, resulting in the compromise of justice and logic. The community's dread and frenzy produce a collective mentality that overpowers rationality and individual thought, prompting neighbors to turn on one another and accuse people they've known for years of witchcraft and devil worship. Fear breeds fear, and the community tends to assume that the dread must be justified, resulting in a vicious cycle of accusations and punishment. (LitCharts, 2013)

3.2.1. Fear As a Motivator:

Arthur Miller in his play, *"The Crucible"* saw fear as the means to prompt conformity, and thus the characters follow the unbending religious and social norms of the community in fear of punishment, social isolation, or death. This fear causes a great psychological and emotional damage not only within the individual but their community as well.

Mary Warren is an illustration of how fear drives compliance. Initially, she joins Abigail Williams' group and accuses others of witchcraft. When faced by the court, she admits that their charges were untrue, adding, "...It were only sport in the beginning, sir, but then the whole world cried spirits, spirits, and I—I promise, you, Mr. Danforth, I only thought I saw them but I did not"

(Act 3, Scene 2, Page 107). Despite her early rejection against the frenzy, Mary Warren eventually gives in to the demands of the court and the community, accusing others of witchcraft for fear of punishment and ostracism. Similarly, characters like as John Proctor are chastised for failing to attend church on a regular basis and plowing on the Sabbath. These activities are interpreted as violations from the community's strict religious and social norms, resulting in warning and ostracism. Proctor's reluctance to comply to these conventions eventually leads to his execution, demonstrating the serious implications of nonconformity in Salem culture (Theme of Conformity in the Crucible). Furthermore, fear of death is a powerful motivator for conformity in "*The Crucible*". Characters such as Elizabeth Proctor are accused of witchcraft, causing them to accept their fate rather than face additional punishment. This anxiety is exacerbated by the harsh character of Puritanism, which condemns even minor sins to hell, forcing citizens to continuously walk on eggshells. (Examples of Conformity in *The Crucible*, n.d.)

Fear has serious psychological and emotional consequences for both individuals and communities. It causes hysteria, a state of psychic anarchy in which emotions and fear take hold and all reasonable thought is quickly suppressed (Conformity and Mentality in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* | Cram, n.d.). As an instance of unconscious resentment and rage mediated by a strict Puritan culture, this madness gives rise to sudden accusations, fights for dominance, and annoyances.

Ultimately fear plays a role, in shaping the actions of the characters in "*The Crucible*". The fear of punishment, rejection or even death serves as a driving force for characters to adhere to the social norms of their community even when it goes against their personal beliefs or reality. This sense of unease is further fueled by figures and the strict principles of Puritanism creating a culture where conformity prevails and ultimately leads to devastating outcomes.

3.2.2. Mass Hysteria and Conformity:

Mass hysteria is a phenomenon when a large number of people experience equivalent symptoms without an obvious cause, plays a significant role in shaping conformity within a community. The anxiety and dread that come before mass hysteria affect individual behavior and societal dynamics, resulting to a range of consequences (Fritscher, 2023).

Collective fear has a significant influence on individual behavior, forcing people to conform to the dominant narrative out of fear of being punished, ostracized, or killed. Individuals align their activities with the group because they are afraid of being classified as deviant or going against the organization's ideas (Harbor Clinic, 2021). Individuals who are afraid of social marginalization or retaliation may repress their dissident thoughts in order to conform to the group's consensus. Moreover when people collectively feel afraid it affects how society functions by fostering a sense of conformity within the community. While shared concerns and unease can bring people together and strengthen bonds they can also limit freedom and independent thinking. In times of mass hysteria, group members may emphasize group unity over independent reasoning, resulting in the phenomenon known as groupthink (Harbor Clinic, 2021). Groupthink suppresses dissent and opposing views, promoting conformity and preventing the exploration of multiple ideas.

The human inclination toward conformity aids hysteria spread, as groupthink helps to explain the phenomenon of mass hysteria (Bagus et al., 2021). In a society with a minimal state, unfavorable news might spark such hysteria because people focus on it and feel a loss of control, generating psychological tension that can grow into hysteria and spread to a larger group. In the context of the Salem witch trials, widespread hysteria led to pressure to adhere to the group's beliefs and behaviors (Lee, 2022; Mohapatra, 2023). The society had a cause of fear and pandemics in return resulted in irrational behavior and false accusations, when people blindly followed the trend and considered it as given.

3.2.3. Authority Figures Promoting Conformity

The role of authority figures in exploiting fear to promote conformity is a central theme in understanding the dynamics of power and control in society. Authority figures, such as politicians, and religious leaders, often leverage the human tendency towards fear and anxiety to compel individuals to conform to their desired behaviors and beliefs (Tesner, 2023).

One of the most common ways authoritative figures manage fear is to instill a sense of threat, whether real or perceived, and then portray themselves as the solution or protector. Politicians frequently use this strategy, exaggerating the risks of specific groups or ideas in order to justify their own authoritarian policies. Similarly, religious leaders might create dread of heavenly punishment or societal ostracism in order to secure obedience to their beliefs (Archon, 2024; Tesner, 2023).

In Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, The characters of Reverend parish and Deputy Governor Danforth, as religious and legal representatives, respectively, indicate how those in power can use fear to keep the community in fear and in their grip. He, Reverend Parris, head of the community, instills terror in a small town by witchcraft. When his daughter, Betty, becomes sick, Parris quickly suspects the devil, saying, "My daughter and niece have been struck down by witchcraft!" (Act 1, Scene 1). This quote creates the mood for the hysterical spread, with Parris appointing himself as a shield against the supernatural malevolence. Meanwhile, Judge Danforth the deputy governor, with his power to compel conformity by instilling fear, acts similarly. When John Proctor questions the court's decisions, Danforth issues a scary warning: "A person is either with this court or he must be counted against it" (Act 3, Scene 1). This binary framing offers no room for dissent, compelling citizens to either comply with the court's instructions or suffer the penalties of being considered an enemy of the state.

These authoritative figures' use of fear is demonstrated much more clearly in their punishment of people who refuse to conform. When Giles Corey refuses to answer the court's inquiries, Danforth threatens him with death, telling him, "You will confess or I will have you

pressed" (Act 3, Scene 1). The possibility of bodily injury acts as a strong deterrent, forcing Corey and others to conform to the court's authority. Moreover, the authority leaders in *"The Crucible"* use the community's fear of social discrimination to preserve conformity. Reverend Parris, for example, warns the villagers that anyone who do not attend church on a regular basis would be treated with suspicion, adding, "There is a party in this church. I am not blind; there is a faction and a party" (Act 2, Scene 2). The risk of being classified as an outsider or a member of a "faction" motivates people to comply to the religious norms of their communities.

To summarize, the play illustrates vividly how influential leaders, for instance Reverend Parris and Deputy Governor Danforth, exploit stressors among their subjects as well as maintaining law and order using their power. It is an important evidence of the various risks which uncontrolled authority poses. Moreover, the large extent to which panics affect societies' organization along with individual actions remains significant up to date thus making it imperative for people to comprehend authority and submissiveness intricacies over time.

3.3. Individual Autonomy vs. Conformity:

The influence of conformity on personal independence and self-determination is also remarkable as most of the time individuals have to give up their beliefs or principles to act in line with group norms or command of an authority being. In *"The Crucible"*, people are pressured into collectively accepting an unreasonable and irrational darcy prior to experiencing those who are against it. They face some harsher consequences and there is more pressure to conform. For instance, the fear of being marginalized, punished or being rejected as an outsider can make even persons who have their own views and outlook, follow the group against their will. People like John Proctor and Rebecca Nurse defy being stereotyped by adhering to their own personal code of ethics. Thus, they become symbols of autonomy struggle .

When relating this issue to modern-day societal challenges, one can realize that many different forms of social pressure are present that may cause similar struggles between personal freedom and the desire to fit in. For example, conformity can be witnessed in contexts such as corporate practices, social networking patterns, or system of government since it involves following certain rules without questioning them even when one knows they are wrong. Conformity has many different ramifications for uniqueness and autonomy in contemporary society. On the one hand, conformity can promote social peace and contribute to the smooth operation of a society. However, it can inhibit innovation, creativity, and critical thinking by discouraging opposing viewpoints and individual expression (Hanaki & Owan, 2013). In addition, social psychology research, like that of Asch's conformity experiments, demonstrates that the desire for social approval can influence people to conform even when they internally disagree with the group's position (Morgan & Laland, 2012). Moreover, the obedience to authority, as explored by Milgram, reveals how individuals can perform actions they find abhorrent when instructed by an authoritative figure, diminishing personal accountability (Obeying and Resisting Malevolent Orders, 2004).

To sum up, conformity in "The Crucible" is a theatrical metaphor for these psychological problems, and examining them within the play can shed light on the complex relation between social requirements and personal freedom. The play follows this topic with great relevance to our society today because the issue of finding a balance between conformity and individualism is as critical as never before.

Conclusion:

"The Crucible" delivers a cautionary tale about the loss of society's individuality as well as the grave effects on human existence invoked by conformance. The story of Arthur Miller about the Salem witch trials shows how individuality and personal morality can be buried beneath the habits of conforming and blindly following the authority which might lead to injustice and a

disintegration of cohesion in society. On the other hand, the characterization of John Proctor and Elizabeth Proctor who are faced with the choice of escaping the hysteria or staying and resisting the pressure to conform reveals the depth of personal stakes while fighting the indoctrination. Their tales, therefore, implicate that a perseverance and readiness to challenge the existing norms is what mostly calls for if one wants to champion the cause of personal freedom even at the risk of incurring life changing repercussions.

General Conclusion

In Arthur Miller's *"The Crucible"* mass hysteria and the dangers of conformity are depicted in a poignant manner highlighting the disregard for individual rights in a society influenced by mob mentality. The play evidently manifests the invaluable message of resistance to the autonomy of an individual being under pressure from society's influence. Miller features the narrative of the tragic witch trials in Salem and not only through this fiction exposes the events of the historical period of the time, but also offers an allegory for McCarthyism in his era. In turn, the characters' moral dilemmas expose the possibility of massive destruction for the people that the protagonists want to save if this leads for it to be the only reason for their actions – fear and self-preservation being the key motives.

The present work was divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, we used the main events that inspired Miller's play as a tool to prove that McCarthyism came in and the fear of Reds played a massive role in the 1950s, which means that the play from that time is as relevant as it is today. McCarthyism, being the epoch of the most severe anti-communist passion in the US, led to absolute fear, blacklisting and the discrimination of people who were trusted to be Communist or having Communist sympathies. The age of aghast is marked by multiple similarities with the Salem Witch Trials, girls of chills spill into the crowd where hysteria is employed to manipulate and force people. The author does a brilliant job in linking these two events which are centuries apart. This sustains the readers' imagination that the themes explored in *"The Crucible"* remain timeless. The second chapter explores two angles of hysteria from a historical and literary viewpoint. The similarities through the different periods and works are shown using the age of hysteria and its historical relevance. It is then followed listing the major themes and patterns which inform how hysteria interacts with people and society. The study of hysteria is provided through

the progression of acts, giving the reader intricate exploration of how hysteria develops and influences the characters and the plot, causing obvious repercussions and revealing the layers beyond. Lastly, the third chapter delves into the theme of conformity in "*The Crucible*", providing insights into the complexities of conformity, fear, and hysteria in "*The Crucible*" presenting a deeper understanding of the characters' motivations as well as the broader societal implications depicted in the play.

The results reveal the ways to which Miller skilfully conveys the mood of the town which turns into a witch-hunting frenzy following the testimonies of a few girls who have claimed to have met the Devil. It is also important to note that this hysteria is not only brought upon the characters in the play but the society as a whole was ridden with such fears during that period. This highlights the fact that fear is an easy tool to mobilize and swiftly generates a hysteria that is as destructive as it is deadly.

In conclusion, it can be noted that "*The Crucible*" acts as a powerful message of people's intolerance, passion, and people's individuality and reflection while being under the social pressure influence. It is useful in that it tells us that in organisations, environments and cultures that appear to be fully sensible and that have been created by good people in pursuit of good goals, it is possible for darkness to enter and for the worst to emerge.

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المخلص

تُعد محاكمات الساحرات في سالم فترة مهمة في تاريخ نيو إنجلاند والتي استكشفتها المؤرخون الأمريكيون بقدر كبير من التفصيل. قام الباحثون بالتحقيق في الجوانب الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والنفسية لتحديد الأسباب الكامنة وراء هذه الحوادث. تعتبر المحاكمات أهم مطاردة للساحرات في التاريخ الأمريكي، مما أدى إلى ما يقرب من عشرين عملية إعدام. "البوتقة" مسرحية لأرثر ميلر، تناولت أحداث الخمسينيات وسلطت الضوء على الذعر الذي أحاط بمحاكمات الساحرات في سالم، وتحاول الدراسة الحالية تسليط الضوء على تحليل الموضوعين الرئيسيين في مسرحية البوتقة وهما الهستيريا الجماعية ومخاطر المطابقة واستكشاف أهمية المجتمع الحديث من خلال دراسة الأحداث والقضايا المتعلقة بالضغط الاجتماعي كما تساعد الدراسة على

فهم السياق التاريخي من خلال توفير نظرة ثاقبة للأحداث التاريخية المحيطة بمجتمع سالم مما يساعدنا على فهم كيف يمكن أن يؤدي الخوف والمطابقة للمظالم. يتبنى البحث الحالي المنهج التحليلي لتحليل كيفية تعبير ميلر من خلال مسرحيته عن فكرة الهستيريا والامتثال ضمن السياق التاريخي، وتكشف هذه الدراسة أن مسرحية آرثر ميلر "البوتقة" بمثابة حكاية تحذيرية حول مخاطر الجماهير الهستيريا والتلاعب من خلال الخوف لأغراض سياسية. إنه يتعامل مع قضايا مثل كيفية تعريف العدالة، وما يحدث عندما يتبع الناس بشكل أعمى وعواقب ذلك؛ لذلك تظل البوتقة خالدة لأنها تذكرنا بأن الأدب والمجتمع يتأثران بالأحداث التاريخية حتى بعد مرور عقود.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهستيريا، المطابقة، محاكمات ساحرة سالم، ماساتشوستس، المكارثية، الندبة الحمراء