

Justice in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* : a deconstructive approach

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Abstract

What is justice and how could it be recognized, when it is done? This study dramatizes the threshold between justice and injustice, purity and insanity, guilt and innocence in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Through a deconstructive approach, it explores the quest for justice via literature and the path to social catharsis amidst contexts of insanity, suspicion, guilt and hysteria. In practice, the paradigms of justice can be used to redress the acts of lived or committed injustice.

Keywords: Catharsis, Guilt, Insanity, Integrity, Justice.

Résumé

Qu'est-ce que la justice et comment pourrait-elle être reconnue, lorsqu'elle est faite? Cette étude théâtralise le seuil entre la justice et l'injustice, la pureté et l'insanité, la culpabilité et l'innocence dans *The Crucible* d'Arthur Miller. À travers une approche déconstructiviste, elle explore la recherche de la justice via la littérature et la voie pour une catharsis sociale dans des contextes d'insanité, de suspicion, de culpabilité et d'hystérie. Au plan pratique, les paradigmes de justice peuvent être utilisés pour corriger les actes d'injustice vécus ou commis.

Mots-clés: Catharsis, Culpabilité, Insanité, Intégrité, Justice.

Introduction

Justice is a concept that has always interested thinkers in Law, Religion, Sociology, Philosophy, and Literature, to name a few disciplines. In Ancient Greece, Aristotle and Plato viewed justice as a virtue, the most important of human values. In his masterpiece *The Republic* (360 B.C, p. 10), Plato explains that “justice is based on the idea of good, which is the harmony of the world, and is reflected both in the institutions of States and in motions of the heavenly bodies.” In this perspective, the order of the State is an essential characteristic of justice. In the *Politics* (350 BC), Aristotle distinguished between distributive justice and remedial justice. While “Distributive justice meant proportionate equality” (p. 131) on the basis of merit, “Rectificatory or remedial justice was meted out by a judge in matters like contracts or criminal law, where the merit of a person was not the consideration (*idem*). In this paper, we suggest to retain Plato’s idea of good and Aristotle’s notion of remedial justice. Thus justice can be defined as the virtue of goodness or fairness, and the proper administration of law. Its ultimate reason is the redressing of grievances, and the establishment of harmony in a society.

Particularly in Literature, the way that justice is represented by the author of a literary work addresses the reader, and arises either satisfaction or uneasiness. As an artist, a writer creates a world and speaks “authoritatively to our common sense, to our intelligence, to our desire of peace, and to our desire of unrest” (G. de Maupassant, cited in Stevick, 1967, p. 399). Thus, the production of a fictional world in a book takes its root in social experience. The way that relationships between human beings are represented in fiction could inspire acceptance or repulsion, excitement or coolness, joy or sadness, and most importantly debate to attain a peaceful cohabitation among human beings. To have peace in a society, justice must be assured. In a literary work, justice could be reimagined, criticized, modeled, or restored. For, as an imagination of life experience, literature offers possibilities. In a literary work, a writer creates characters and envisions their relationships, their dreams, their fears and their conflicts. The writer rearranges events and promotes “the reordering of natural phenomena” (K. Azasu and P. Geraldo, 2008, p. 12) that is, natural life experience is significantly arranged so as to inspire readers. Thus, it becomes interesting to look at the way that justice is carried out in literary texts in order to suggest gateways to responsibility and peace in human societies. Through a deconstructive approach, this paper explores the quest for justice via literature and the path to social catharsis amidst contexts of insanity, suspicion, guilt, and hysteria. What is deconstructive approach about ? According to Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (1994, p. 298-299) :

Deconstruction is ‘a concept’ — though Derrida would say, as he does of his neologism *différance*, it is ‘neither a word nor a concept’ — that focuses

on this instability of meaning. However, by 'instability' it does not suggest that there are no meanings (as many of its critics argue), but rather that meaning is historical, local, and subject to change.

It infers that there is no meaning out of context, and meaning is not static, but rather dynamic or subject to change. Deconstruction began in the 1960s mainly with the work of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Deconstructive approach is an enterprise "To take apart, to produce a reading, to open the textuality of a text" to quote Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in the translator's preface of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1997, p. xlix, first published in 1967). In Derridan perspective, a text cannot have a fixed meaning. Each encounter with a text generates ideas which are not always the same as the first ones. This slippery or unstable aspect of meaning in a local text interests deconstructionists, as they try to decode it. Kate Green and Jill LeBihan (1996, p. 215) point out that:

Deconstruction attacks Western metaphysical thought by showing how it privileges certain ideas and concepts. The kinds of metaphysical concepts analyzed by deconstruction are characterized by the assumption of ultimate sources of meaning which are encoded linguistically (God, Reason, Law, etc.).

The diction in this quote reveals that the sources of meaning are too tightly attached to Western representations, which are most of the time privileged over the multitude of representations that exist. Deconstruction as a method of analysis decodes meaning in texts through linguistic inquisition. Kate Green and Jill LeBihan (1996, p. 215) are of the view that "meaning is always 'in process,' not fixed. Every text is subject to a kind of generalized absence." Ceren Yegen and Mémet Abukan (2014, p. 54) add that "The Deconstruction of Derrida is to end up the hegemony of the determined meaning." It implies that language is unstable and meaning subject to difficult decidability. Thus, our choice of this literary theory lies in our will to not only "reveal contradictions" (W. Harris, 1992, p. 59) in positive language (language as it is used), but also generate the meaning of justice in the play, and the conditions of its existence.

This paper is structured into two parts. The first part deals with the slippery meaning of justice in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. In this part, we show the instability and difficult decidability of meaning, particularly in relation to the notion of justice, as most deconstructionists contend. In the play, justice rests upon too superficial realities such as gossips, false accusations and pretense. The second part aims at offering a reading of justice in *The Crucible*. In this part, we present our perception of justice which has a lot to

do (even if it could not be reduced to) with morals and truth. We suggest that fairness is important for justice and there is no justice without truth.

1. Slippery Meaning of Justice in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

The Crucible is a play which carries on in fiction the notorious Salem witch trials of 1692 in America. During the historical period of settlement, some of the Massachusetts Bay colonists were accused of witchcraft, trialed, and executed. The play also mirrors the 1950s McCarthyism in the United States, where suspicion fueled hysteria and paranoia as some citizens were alleged to sympathize with the Communist Party. As Noorbakhsh Hooti (2011, p. 68) puts it: "*The Crucible* was born out of a 'blending of history, aesthetics and politics.'" History is fictionalized through this allegory for McCarthyism, a historic event of the 20th century. Aesthetics refers to the author's re-building of life experience in a creative and artistic way. Politics is inscribed because there is almost a discussion of witch-hunt, hysteria, and false accusations in societies. The play dramatizes the issue of justice, its corollaries such as morals and truth, and the conditions of its realization. For example, could a fellow actually be just and tell the truth, even if what he says threatens his own life? In a deconstructive way, the play helps the reader imagine how interchangeably justice and injustice could be achieved. In the first section of this first part, we analyze how gossips and suspicion are set as criteria of judicial cases. Then, in the second section, we discuss some contradictions through binary oppositions that elucidate the slippery meaning of justice and its corollaries in Miller's play.

1.1. Gossips and Suspicion as Criteria of Judicial Cases

Gossips are at the core of *The Crucible*. They stand as criteria through which judicial cases are set. As the narrator says: "This predilection for minding other people's business was time-honored among the people of Salem, and undoubtedly created many of the suspicions which were to feed the coming madness."¹ So is made the channel for judicial cases, starting with gossips and suspicion, and finishing with hysteria.

The story in the play is a very fascinating one. Salem, Massachusetts, the setting of the play is a Puritan town which rests upon theocracy. At the beginning of the play, a group of girls who went "dancing like heathen in the forest" (*TC*, p. 10) with Tituba, a black slave in her forties, are discovered by the local minister, Reverend Parris. Parris thinks he saw someone naked running through the trees and a dress lying on the grass. One of his daughter — Betty — faints on suddenly seeing him. A crowd gathers at the Reverend's house while rumors of witchcraft spring in the town. The ministry of Parris

¹ Arthur Miller (*The Crucible*, 1953, p. 5). All subsequent references to this play will be abbreviated *TC* and put in the main text, followed by the page number.

is at stake, since he is worried by people's reaction if they discovered the truth about his own household being "the center of some obscene practice" (*TC*, p. 11). Parris sends for Reverend Hale, an expert of witchcraft, hoping that a reasonable explanation could be given to satisfy the people who gathered in his household, and who spread the rumors that the town is under the plight of the Devil. Besides, he wishes that Hale could exorcise the town from insanity and witchcraft.

While Betty wakes up, Reverend Hale quizzes Abigail, the protagonist Proctor's niece and ward, about the girls' activities in the forest, grows suspicious of her behavior, and demands to speak to Tituba. After Parris and Hale interrogate her for a brief time, Tituba confesses to communing with the Devil, and she hysterically accuses various townsfolk of consorting with the Devil. Suddenly, Abigail joins her, confessing to having seen the Devil conspiring and cavorting with other townspeople. Betty joins them in naming witches, and the crowd is thrown into an uproar. Thus, suspicion and hysteria take hold of the whole community as created panic seizes them.

The trials which are organized just a week later are disastrous since an escalating number of townsfolk are accused of being witches, without real proofs. Just to facilitate their jobs, judge Danforth and the others threaten the townspeople that those who do not "confess" their compact with the Devil will be hanged. Everybody who resists this monstrous lie is simply accused of witchcraft, and hanged. Judge Danforth urges Mary, John Proctor's servant to either confess having made a compact with Lucifer or be hanged. Mary breaks down, lies to save her life and accuses Proctor of being the Devil's servant. Proctor rages against her and against the court. He is arrested. Hale denounces the proceedings and quits the court.

At the end of the summer, witch trials have destroyed the harmony in town. Abigail ran away. She has taken all of Parris's money with her. Hale, who has lost faith in the court, begs the accused witches to confess falsely in order to save their lives, but they refuse. Danforth, however, has an idea: he asks Elizabeth to convince John to confess, and she agrees. Conflicted, but desiring to live, John agrees to confess, and the officers at court rejoice. But he refuses to incriminate anyone else, and when the court insists that the confession must be made public, Proctor grows angry, tears up his deposition, and retracts his admission of guilt. Despite Hale's desperate pleas, Proctor goes to the gallows with the others, and the witch trials reach their awful conclusion as Proctor and the others decide to die in honor.

An analysis shows that gossips and suspicion are central to the story. They are conducive to generalized panic and hysteria when pretense of confession is organized. The inhabitants of Salem who gathered at Parris' house, suspected that some spiritual forces were behind the explanation of children falling ill and dying in town. While the

story evolves, false accusations come to take the place of true evidence, and lead to some people's arrest, trial, and hanging as judges and pastors are called upon to explain and discover guiltiness. It implies that, in a situation where gossips flourish, justice is also at stake, especially when crosscheck is not made before final judgment. Elucidating on the characteristics of a gossip, Sandy Valmores Chua and Kristine June de la Cerna Uy (2014, p. 65), reveal that: "Gossip is about an absent third person. It comes in a veil of secrecy thus, making it imperative that for gossip to occur the target of the gossip must not be around to confirm, deny, or defend his side of the tale." In *The Crucible*, when judgments are organized, no possibility of denial is offered to the pretended witches, which could not assure true justice. Justice is then crippled with this inconsistent plinth.

In order to better understand Miller's representation of justice and injustice, it is necessary to show the linguistic contradictions through binary oppositions so as to elucidate the slippery meaning of justice and its corollaries in Miller's play.

1.2. Revealing Contradictions through Binary Oppositions

In Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, certain words take particular connotations. The meaning shifts and leads to contradicting realities. Illustratively, but not limitedly, we have the concepts of truth and lies, pretense and confession, insanity and sanity, justice and injustice, God and Devil, guilt and innocence. In this subsection, each of the aforementioned binary oppositions will be analyzed as it is dramatized in the play so as to show the deconstructive dynamism of Miller's text.

Truth and lies are interchangeably represented in the play. Abigail, Tituba and the other girls come to pretend that they are under the power of the Devil, while this visibly appears as a lie. For example, Mary Warren, Proctor's servant reveals that Sarah Good "confessed" being bewitched. Mary Warren reveals that Sarah Good is no more among the fourteen women arrested for witchcraft. For Mary, Sarah "sometimes made a contact with Lucifer, and wrote her name in his black book — with her blood - and bound herself to torment Christians till God's thrown down — and we all must worship Hell forevermore" (*TC*, p. 57). Thus, it appears that when lies are told with hysteria, it quickly turns to seem like truth. A person in position of power may hold a lie to be truth.

In *The Crucible*, many characters are accused of being witches and entertaining close relationships with supernatural forces. Some among them come to "confess" their witchcraft, but a close analysis shows that pretense and confession are interchangeably experienced throughout the narrative. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, to "confess" is to "admit to a crime or wrongdoing." The second assertion is to "declare one's sins formally to a priest." Obviously, one could but confess what one has actually done. However, in the play, the verb bears a different meaning. During the

witch trials, many people confess having made a compact with the Devil, but actually, they just pretend so. Proctor denounces the use of the word “confess” and explains that all the girls are just pretending to be bewitched: “They’re all marvelous pretenders.” (TC, p. 106). The expectation that one could but confess what one has really done or experienced shifts, and the very meaning of this word becomes unstable. The word “confess” becomes a deconstructed one, and its meaning biased. Indeed, due to a suspicion and a collective hysteria, judges and the townsfolk insist that the accused person should “confess,” which is to tell lies or admit being what they are said to be. While the suspected are expected to “confess,” they rather tell lies to spare their life. Since the “Deputy Governor promise hangin’ if they’ll not confess,” (TC, p. 52) many persons in the town get “wild” (TC, p. 52) or hysteric at the so-called “confession.” Thus the word “confess” is deconstructed, and its meaning is shifted to “pretend.” To confess has come to mean “to tell lies.” In other occasions, people decide to lie just to keep their honor or reputation. Even, facing Proctor’s and Hale’s testimonies concerning the awkward attitude of the girls, dancing naked in the forest, Reverend Parris negates: “I never saw any of them naked” (TC, p. 105). Coming from a person of his position, no challenging voice can doubt his testimony.

It does not imply that whenever the word “confess” is used in the play, it forcibly refers to a lie. Lies exist and so does pretense. Besides, people who candidly seriate these concepts are also represented. One of them is Reverend Parris, a self-conscious character, who tells Tituba: “You will confess yourself or I will take you out and whip you to death, Tituba” (TC, p. 44). In this context, “confess” bears its appropriate meaning in the words of Reverend Parris who urges Tituba to be trustworthy and tell the truth.

Sometimes, in the play, insanity takes hold of some characters that manifest strange behaviors. The characters’ social position and their personal impact on the community are consequential to how they are charged of witchcraft or not. Another observation is that, often, human beings tend to externally search the reason of the insanity in their community instead of undertaking a self-reflexive approach. They envision the lord of insanity, fault, crimes, to name a few, in other characters and not in themselves: “The Devil’s loose in Salem, Mr. Proctor; we must discover where he’s hiding” (TC, p. 59). While human beings are often busy in searching faults in their fellows, and never think of exploring their own hearts, it only perpetuates wrongs and increases the number of innocent victims in the community. Since social change starts from each individual’s heart, it is advisable to be self-critical whenever it comes to take action.

Likewise, justice and injustice seem to overlap in Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. While those who hold false accusations sustain that justice is done when a person who does not submit to the authority (here the judicial) is hanged, others think that one should

not indulge in unjust affairs even if one has to risk his/her own life. Till the end of the play, Reverend Parris is able to tell the truth and is then restored. He shows that he is simply a human being, with his qualities and his flaws that he acknowledges instead of pretending to be sinless. Proctor chooses to keep his pride rather than compromising. To Rebecca and the others who were about to be honorably hanged, he says: "Give them no tear! Tears pleasure them! Show honor now, show a stony heart and sink with it!" (TC, p. 144).

Many townspeople of Salem falsely envision God and Devil interchangeably. To spare their lives, they take irrational decisions and become even hysteric, justifying their egocentric safety. Mary Warren is one example: she asserts that John Proctor comes at her by night and every day to "sign the Devil's book." (TC, p. 119). This serious and groundless accusation is simply backed by her attempt to save her life whatever the case. "I'll not hang with you! I love God, I love God," (TC, p. 118) which means in fact that she loves the Devil and just wants to save her life. Proctor, breathlessly concluding that: "I say — I say — God is dead" (TC, p. 119) suggests a beginning of the dying Puritan influence on the growing American consciousness.

At times, guilt and innocence overlap in the play. In *The Crucible*, the action takes place in Salem, a small town in Massachusetts in the year 1692. Initially, people from the town deify toiling, and working hard saves them from moral decay, for "the people were forced to fight the land like heroes for every grain or corn, and no man had very much time for fooling around." (TC, p. 4). However, when incomprehensible events take place, they indulge in suspicion, and hysteria. The orchestration of confessions and false accusations of the girls, headed by Abigail and Tituba, lead to the disintegration of the town, and furthermore incredibility among the members of the Salem community.

The discussion in this first part has shown the fluctuating meaning that the concept of justice could carry according to different contexts. Despite this instability of meaning as most deconstructionists recognize in every literary work, it does not suggest the absence of sense. Thus, the second part of our study explores what could be kept as justice in the play.

2. Toward a Reading of Justice in *The Crucible*

From a deconstructionist point of view, meaning is conceptualized within a context. As Gavin P. Hendricks (2016, p. 1) remarks, "everything is a 'text' and meaning and representation are how we interpret it." Thus, to derive a perception of justice in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, there is a need to grasp the author's literary ideology, "the political unconscious" of his text, as Fredric Jameson (1981) would say in his work *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. In this second part, we focus on

Miller's literary background, particularly his attachment to the moralizing text, on the one hand and analyze his representation of justice and truth, on the other hand.

2.1. Justice and Morals: Miller as a Moralistic Writer

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* offers the occasion of reimagining the concept of justice and its meaning(s) which is/are slippery and sizeable, vague and precise or simply put "undecidable," in the sense that the reader lacks any secure ground for choosing between them" (Kakoliris, 2017, p. 55). Miller stands as one of the most prominent modernist figures of American drama in the second half of the 20th century. Through his literary works, the playwright appears as a moralist not only through the way his plots are constructed, but also through his rewriting of life-experience. For history and fiction are complementarily mixed in his works, especially in his masterpiece *The Crucible* published in 1953. History "as an absent cause" (Jameson, 1981, p. 35) is deployed as an ingredient of his fiction, which carries undoubtedly a "political unconscious" (*idem*), an ideology. As Tadeusz Bradecki (Shaw Festival, 2006, p. 4) explains, *The Crucible* "parallels the activities of the House Of Un-American Activities Committee in the USA during the mid-20th century when paranoia about communism pervaded the USA and spread to Canada." This corresponds to the period of the Cold War during which the world acknowledged the struggle for hegemony that involved two great ideologies: Capitalism and Communism. In American politics, those who were suspected to plot with the communists were incriminated. Suspicion arose and often culminated in groundless accusations known as "witch hunt." Even, rumors were spread that Miller has been accused of sympathizing with the communists. His writings are thus directed towards the moralization of the American society, and *The Crucible* stands as a social play with a heavily leftist point of view. In a long passage of the first act that introduces Reverend Hale, the narrator points out the absurdity of preconceived ideas upon God, Reason, Morals, and Politics in such a way that, in the long run "society becomes a congerie of plots and counterplots" (*TC*, p. 34). Illustratively, the narrator explains that "Like Reverend Hale and the others on this stage, we [inferred, the readers] conceive the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology" (*TC*, p. 33). The Manichean view of the world with binary oppositions between elements is aptly discussed the play. The playwright uses great satire in this work where the values of the society are object of attack. Justice and truth appear as important principles that he develops.

2.2. Justice and Truth: Close Twains

To have peace in a society, justice is necessary, and justice could not be really established without truth. A way to attain justice is to tell truth and always do it. John

Proctor seems to have understood this principle. He was accused of lechery or being a lecher, but he endorses this fault and retaliates from hypocrisy. Only then was he able to get back his dignity. Other people, like Reverend Hale, would view this attachment to truth despite the risk of death as excessive. For Hale, a person should not proudly tell the truth if doing so jeopardizes his/ her own life. He strongly defends that pride is “vanity” (TC, p. 145). Proctor rather holds that, he must keep at least his name even if he has sold his soul to the Devil: “I have three children – how may I teach them to walk like men in the world, and I sold my friends ?” (TC, p. 143). For him, honor is crucial and faithfulness to one’s principle is a chore value. He knows that dying in dignity and respect is often preferable to living in cowardice and dishonor.

At the end of the play, Elizabeth Proctor recognizes the goodness in her husband: “He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!” (TC, p. 145). This idea of goodness simply refers to doing in accordance with what one senses as right no matter the circumstances. Especially, truth must be told even if life is at stake. When John Proctor confessed having been false, he gained release, a restoration of his inner self. The court wanted to check his sincerity and asked Elizabeth whether her husband has ever been a lecher to her, to which she answered negatively. John’s life would have been spared if his wife had told the truth to the court. By lying to save her husband’s honor and life, she rather sentenced him to death. This shows that one should simply tell the truth since one does not master all the possibilities around a judicial case.

Justice and injustice are interchangeably represented in the play. What visibly stands for an injustice could be wrongly defended as to make it the norm and truth. Danforth in a reversed meaning puts it during the trials “Who weeps for these [the alleged persons], weeps for corruption !” (TC, p. 144). But, in reality, the character who indulges in false accusation is that corrupted judge Danforth. He reverses the poles of truth and accuses those who are attached to it as corrupted people. Thus, one could decipher a bias in Danforth’s rendering of justice, in the sense that there is an inclination, a prejudice against the triumph of truth and justice. It is a judicial insecurity that shifts justice to injustice.

In most of the cases, human beings are tempted to investigate the explanation of the incomprehensible events not inside, but outside and around themselves. Suspicion can quickly lead to accusation without passing through the filter of evidence and proofs. Hence the threshold between guilt and hysteria appears close when self-interests transcend judicial affairs. In fact, true justice rests upon the presumption of innocence till proofs of culpability are established. Additionally, when superstitions take the place of truth, justice is often endangered, and biased.

In *The Crucible*, Reverend Hale epitomizes the superstitious individuals like the following passage illustrates:

Like almost all men of learning, he [Hale] spent a good deal of his time pondering the invisible world, especially since he had himself encountered a witch in his parish not long before. That woman, however, turned into a mere pest under his searching scrutiny, and the child she had allegedly been afflicting recovered her normal behavior after Hale had given her kindness and a few days of rest in his own house. However, that experience never raised a doubt in his mind as to the reality of the underworld or the existence of Lucifer's many-faced lieutenants. And his belief is not to his discredit. Better minds than Hale's were — and still are — convinced that there is a society of spirits beyond our ken (*TC*, p. 33).

Indeed, people of Salem appear very hysteric when suspicion of witchcraft or pretended witchcraft is revealed. The girls' "confessions" that they are under the force of Devil raises fear in the population. They let extreme panic seize them, and they lack the capacity of analysis and self-control. Similarly, very often, in many societies, especially in Africa, some persons are falsely accused of witchcraft and wickedly treated because of this allegation. However, even a casual analysis reveals that other causes, often ignored, are the real explanation of events, and "mysteries" could be explained, avoided or prevented. Sometimes, the reluctance in making a serious investigation in "strange events" pushes people to indulge in accusation of others as being the source of self-misfortunes. In the play, even some religious leaders like Reverend Hale could not lucidly differentiate allegation from reality. Unfortunately, this leads to people being assigned to imaginary entitlements and their hanging as a punishment for the alleged crimes. This is pure injustice, and Miller clearly denounces it throughout the play.

The judges are partial in delivering the verdict of judgment in the play. For example, during the simulacra of trial, the judge appears then very careful because he knows ahead that Rebecca Nurse and John Proctor are influential persons in the community. In fact, to avoid a rebellion in case these notorious persons were about to be hanged, Judge Hathorne proposes to Elizabeth Proctor to convince her husband to confess. Elizabeth's husband accepts first, but finally refuses as the judge insists that the confession must be written. Conclusively, it infers that in Miller's created context of Salem, justice is rendered according to the degree of members' prominence in the community. Justice, to be set, takes into consideration the capacity of harming or not of the accused person. Reverend Parris explains to Judge Hathorne that charging John Proctor and some other influential persons would be a great mistake, since it would probably provoke riots in the town:

Judge Hathorne- it were another sort that hanged till now. Rebecca Nurse is no Bridget that lived three year with Bishop before she married him. John Proctor is not Isaac Ward that drank his family to ruin. *To Danforth*: I would to God it were not so, Excellency, but these people have great weight yet in the town. Let Rebecca stand upon the gibbet and send up some righteous prayer, and I fear she'll wake a vengeance on you (TC, p. 127).

As a matter of fact, some community members of Salem are cleared by the court verdicts, because of their influential position. Thus, a poor person could be suspected, charged, prosecuted and hanged without great difficulty for the crime that he may not have committed. This situation proves that the judicial system of Miller' Salem community is weak. Characters' reactions to the charging and hanging of the presumed witches and wizards vary according to the identity and status of the victims. Hence, a poor and socially disinherited person's case may not raise any threat than a notorious and influential person, whose case, if not handled with care may lead to a rebellion in town. It appears clear that justice in Salem is partial, depending on the weight of each party at the case. This nullifies the principle of equality before the law and the right to an equitable justice. Justice and politics become tightly related and the threshold between political decision and judicial decision becomes weak.

Conclusion

Through the study of *The Crucible*, two groups of characters could be differentiated. On the one hand appear the defenders of justice, truth and goodness, no matter the context. Following this vision, one should always tell the truth, keep honest and just. Characters such as John Proctor, Reverend Parris and Rebecca Nurse epitomize this position. On the other hand, another group of characters show preference to egoism, self-interest and pretense. The attitudes of these opponents of justice show that justice is a weight when personal safety and interests are jeopardized. Following this vision, self-interest is preferable when it is in conflict with justice. Here appear Judge Hathorne, Judge Danforth, Abigail and the other girls.

Through our analysis, four main ideas are derived. Firstly, in the light of the studied play, different kinds of justice are visible, notably biased justice and true justice. While biased justice rests upon lies and pretense, true justice could not be applied when one does not have sufficient proofs. Besides, to be set, justice takes into account the harming capacity of the accused person. Thus, Reverend Parris fears rebellion and riots in case Rebecca Nurse and John Proctor were hanged because of the political influence that they embody in the town.

Secondly, justice and injustice interchangeably appear as a matter of perception. People in the town would admit or pretend that they have made compact with the Devil just to avoid being hanged. For all those who refuse to “confess” are simply hanged. Saving their own life is preferable to making justice which goes hand in hand with its corollaries of truth and fairness. It implies that individuals would tend to lie and be unjust for the sake of saving their life. Nevertheless, even if this reflex is legitimate, it does not assure ultimate safety. For a lie, instead of solving a problem, simply displaces it and gives it the chance of taking a monstrous form.

Thirdly, from the reading of the play, one could observe that for justice to be permanently set, the town has to reconsider the guarantees it offers to its people when they have good behaviors. Miller contrasts Salem to another town in the play and shows how suspicion and hysteria have devastated the inhabitants of Salem. The play teaches us that we must always stick to our moral principles no matter the situations, and despite the difficulties it implies. Certain values such as integrity, pride and honor are almost sacred. To stick to one’s integrity is conducive to a certain catharsis. This healing process is seen at the end of the play when Elizabeth recognizes and cherishes her husband’s preference to honorably die than living cowardly with self-contempt. John Proctor is then morally restored. He gets back his goodness.

Finally, from the reading of *The Crucible*, binary oppositions can be made to show how some concepts taken for granted appear difficult to define, and permanently describe. Illustratively but not limitedly are the concepts of truth and lies, pretense and confession, insanity and sanity, justice and injustice, God and the Devil, guilt and innocence. Dealing with some of these concepts, Noorbakhsh Hooti (2015, p. 84) puts it that:

both Derrida and Miller’s ideas on religious issues would be more than helpful since they both call for polyphonic stand points when come to the religion, law, and justice (these ideas must remove the shackles from the limbs of mankind not add to the burdens and sufferings).

These concepts produce and involve many sounds, voices, and realities that should not hamper dialogue, and living together. In both Derrida and Miller’s perspective, ascribing any determined, unidirectional and closed meaning is not secure. Ultimately, Miller’s *The Crucible* appears as a call for a more peaceful cohabitation between human beings and the tolerance of differentiated ideas. It is a work that could serve in improving human relationships beyond our oppositions or reductive considerations of any sort.

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