

THE INFLUENCE OF TRANSGRESSION ON THE HUMAN'S LIFE IN ARTHUR MILLER'S THE CRUCIBLE

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ABSTRACT

Many researches, although, have been conducted on American Literature in general, but this study focuses on The Impact of Transgression on the Human's Life in which is presented by Arthur Miller throughout The Crucible. The play explores several complex and trans-historic topics, many of which relate to the playwright's experiences during the McCarthyism era. Miller asks his audience to value independent and personal truths, which he defines as more morally right and good than social truth. This is because, in the playwright's mind, social veracities are often manipulated and exploited to gain a desired personal result regardless of how they affect people's lives.

The study comprises four chapters. The first chapter includes the introduction, aims and value of the study, Socio-political background, The Crucible as a Tragic Play, Author's Biography and his major literary works and summary of the Play. While the second chapter concerns with the literature review. The third chapter focuses on the outcomes of this research paper which is Social Transgression, Political Transgression and Religious Transgression. The last chapter includes the main conclusions of the study.

Keywords: Arthur Miller, The Crucible as a Tragic Play, Social Transgression, Political Transgression, and Religious Transgression.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research paper deals with one of the most prominent works of Arthur Miller, a famous play is so-called *The Crucible* published in 1953. The play is well-known all around the world and the applicability of the play does not have the boundaries of time and place. The play consists of four acts and it went viral during the 1950s as retaliation against the negative impact of McCarthyism. The research paper starts with an introduction of the socio-political background, The Crucible as a tragic play, author's biography and most of his literary works, and a brief summary of the play. Then, a literature review of the play; finally, and most importantly the social, political and religious transgressions in the play.

The study aims to state the role of transgression in societies and its downfalls and effects on people's lives and the likelihood of destroying the spirit of communities and living together. Furthermore, transgression is categorized into different aspects so as in the future if a researcher would like to investigate a particular kind of transgression; there is no better place to start with than our brief but beneficial study. Also, the stereotypical of transgression in societies is considered as an act of illegal and law breaking conduct, however, in this play it is categorized into different phenomena which are no longer fallen under the mentioned above.

Regarding research methodology of this study is close R. based on the analysis of the quotations from the Primary book (*The Crucible*). The value of the study is that the ability to analyze a famous author's work and reveal the hidden messages laid in the writing and acting in the play *The Crucible*. Transgression is the main focus of this work and explaining the play and its characters' motifs and flaws is an important factor of understanding the nature of human beings.

As a final point, *The Crucible* is a play worth taking time off to read, watch, and study. The values and messages shown in the play are considered as lessons in our daily lives that is a valuable benefit for all. Moreover, a great experience in showing how life could change to its worst case

scenarios and its consequences if people in power and ordinary citizens are lured by simple yet disastrous acts of individuals.

2. SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Socio-political is quite obvious that the history and society of the public affairs of American people are really stated in this play by the writer. It shows different aspects of society including McCarthyism which was a movement in the 1950s that focused on fighting and limiting communism that threatened to spread throughout American society and government institutions. The hysteria of the US government's intelligence and security services was the danger of communism spreading throughout the globe, thus, this paranoia commenced to start the fight against such threat to America and the westerner countries. During this period the FBI accused many people of communism. This led to the accused persons not only suffering employment and career jeopardy but also the likelihood of their life and reputation being ruined and destroyed. The anti-communist leader Joseph McCarthy, saw the extend on anti-communist necessity for the duration of United States of America who constructed a Red Scare, McCarthyism led a huge and scarce fight on many sectors which included show biz and entertainment industry as well (Jabbar, 2016)

The McCarthyism influence based on false charges is so far bad through term associations about ordinary and political lives of United States citizens. It is true that in light of the fact that Senator McCarthy was indifferent and accused of false charges, the real Communists who occupied and carried out secret activities seemed to confirm the situation of the victims. It should also show us the issue of Amerasia, and not everyone is to blame for treason or covert secret activities regardless of whether the perpetrator can be judged legally. In fact, also not all accused victims of this case were so innocent, however, they were attracted to surveillance intrigues not because of treachery but of foolishness or passion or arrogance, and then they moved cruelly for a long time to maintain a strategic distance from the obvious and clear vision of the threat of communism on the American life style and political agendas. While various government officials mingled to increase the positive political position on the issue, and government officials engaged in securing a site, the situation was the main loss and led to more and more complicated situations and conflicts. (Radosh, 1996, p. 219)

3. THE CRUCIBLE AS A TRAGIC PLAY

Tragedy in Literature is typically a conflict between the main character and other forces affecting him that can be external or internal leading to the suffering and disastrous consequences due to some tragic flaws that the protagonist poses. The Crucible is one of the best examples that Arthur Miller uses to reveal oppression and injustice occurred to many innocent people in the Salem community that is an allegory of what was really happening in the McCarthyism era. John Proctor and many other characters are fallen victim of the theoretical system of Puritanism in which every aspect of life is controlled by extreme religious ideologies and beliefs. These radical religious authorities have expected people to live and stick together in perfection, besides, pure communities with zero tolerance towards sins of all kinds. In these communities, no criticism or questioning the authorities is ever permitted.

Further, there are other elements in The Crucible that accumulate and add to the disastrous tragedies of losing so many good citizens from the small community of Salem. These destructive elements are greed, jealousy, believing in the supernatural. Moreover, officials were depending on assumptions to persecute people when they believe that God is using them to do his job, using the young to reveal unseen crimes. Some individuals abuse these events and tragedies to get what they want which could be land, wealth or in the case of Abigail replacing John's wife Elizabeth. (Aqeel, 2015)

4. SOCIAL TRANSGRESSION

Starting with defining transgression as an act of breaching and breaking the ethical and/or formal principle rules of law and order. Additionally, when acceptable and structured behaviors and limitations that are central to understanding social life in general and deviation in particular are crossed. However, societies deal with transgression differently and there is no clear-cut division between criminal and moral transgression. The level of punishable offenses differs and while in many societies homosexuality and adultery have been considered criminal transgressions and/or pathological in others is considered less offensive. Further, distinction and limits may itself be a motive to stimulate transgressions because in many cases transgression can be fun (Langman, 2007)

In *The Crucible*, social transgression is probably one of the most prominent and within comes the reputation of the most influential characters in the play. Thus, much concern for reputation is woven in *The Crucible*. "Proctor, Now Hell and Heaven grapple on our backs, and all our old pretense is ripped away—make your peace!...Peace. It is providence, and no great change; we are only what we always were, but naked now. He walks as though toward a great horror, facing the open sky. Aye, naked! And the wind, God's icy wind, will blow!" (Miller, 2003, p. 150). Here, it is obvious Proctor is foreseeing his reputation being destroyed when the affair with Abigail reveals to all the public in Salem, which inevitably will lead to his good name being ruined. However, this is the only way to repent, put this behind him and enables him to forgive himself. (Staffaroni, 2016). "Abigail, in a temper: My name is good in the village! I will not have it said my name is soiled! Goody Proctor is a gossiping liar!" (Miller, 2003, p. 59). On the other hand, here Abigail is concerned as well about her (name). This is why she puts the blame on Tituba. In the theocratic society of Salem, she would face severe punishment which already treating women unfairly. Also, as an orphan, unmarried, young and who had an affair with a married man, she would be in a very awkward and extremely critical situation. (Staffaroni, 2016)

Miller uses reputation as the most important and having a good name is what matters most even if it leads to lose someone's life. Moreover, it controls every characters in Salem and affects their decisions, choices in an attempt and necessity to keep the perfect image they once had.

5. POLITICAL TRANSGRESSION

Political Transgression is what pushed, motivated and inspired Miller to write the play. He indirectly criticized McCarthyism and used the play to draw a parallel between McCarthyism and Salem witch trials since in both accusations were claimed without any proper regard for evidence which led to suffering and ruining of many good people's lives. Authoritarian was an irrational mean used for oppression and misjudgments (Bloom, 2010, p. 74).

In the Puritan society, the ministers and judges such as Reverend Hale and Judge Danforth were given the ultimate power and authority to carry out what they believed and certain is the work of God. (Bloom, 2010, p. 59). "Hale, I came into this village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died; and where I turned the eye of my great faith, blood flowed up. Beware, Goody Proctor—cleave to no faith when faith brings blood" (Miller, 2003, p. 216). Reverend Hale, in the above refers to the power of authority to destroy lives instead of saving them as he proclaimed the reason of his arrival to Salem. Armed with knowledge and is convinced that he will find enough proof of witchcraft but is eventually faced with the truth of the court's great injustice and feels very guilty about his rule. "Danforth, Now hear me, and beguile yourselves no more... Postponement now speaks a floundering on my part." (Miller, 2003, p. 212). Judge Danforth is another prideful Character who misused his power and authority in the play. He is convinced that he is doing the right thing and is obeying and implementing God's judgment on guilty people in rooting out witchcraft. In his quote he represents the complete government control

on people and the arrogance of authority when he refuses to postpone hangings of many people despite the repetitive requests of others around him. This was carried out by Danforth just to prove his credibility as a judge even if it leads to the death of so many innocent lives.

The criticizing of political transgression in both Salem and the McCarthyism share many similar aspects. The play reflects the brutal, political yet abusive use of power carried by authorities and people in power in persecuting people. Believing they are doing their part of patriotic and religious duties in the best interest of the nation and God's will.

6. RELIGIOUS TRANSGRESSION

Religious transgression is very prominent in the Play and the example given in Puritanism as an extreme form of Christianity. Sins of any kind were not tolerated and the strict nature of their belief gave them no right to challenge or complain about the rule of authority as it is considered a crime against the power of God on earth. Thus, religion is excessively abused to rule people and instead of serving God, the opposite is carried out by religious authorities.

"You work for me, Tituba, and I make you free! I give you pretty dress to wear, and put you way high up in the air, and you gone fly back to Barbados!" And I say, "You lie, Devil, you lie." (Miller, 2003, p. 106). In the above, it is clear that under pressure Tituba has confessed working for devil and practicing witchcraft to escape death after promised salvation, although, she is making up stories and lying to Hale and Parris. She does admit talking to Devil and working for him to do his dirty work which in return is promised to return her back to her home land.

Another sinful act committed by many in the play is the feeling of overwhelming guilt and the effect resulted on their lives; misery, discomfort, guilt and death. John Proctor (the Protagonist) has clearly displayed his guilt of adultery when he is asked to recite the commandments and he leaves out adultery. This is obvious that cheating on his wife has left a scar in his life and soul that cannot be forgiven which as he believes has damaged him in God's eye. "Proctor, thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, nor make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain; thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. Thou shalt honor thy father and mother. Thou shalt not bear false witness... Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." (Miller, 2003, p. 132). The sin of adultery is the reason he refuses to confess when he leaves the courtroom and chooses death rather living in torment and agony. "Proctor God damn our kind and we will burn, we will burn together!" (Miller, 2003, p. 200)

One of the most conspicuous disobedience and sins in The Crucible is the practice of witchcraft by the young girls in the woods which became the center of attention and conflicts in the play that later resulted in many more injustice and unlawful practices in the community. Also, guilt is another sin that is considered and affected many people has led into making ultimate sacrifices.

7. CONCLUSION

The study deals with the investigation and the impact of transgression not only on an individual's life but also on societies and how the play affects people's mind. It reveals the facts about the transgression and its impact on the one who reads it. Generally, the focus of this research is on the background of American society during 1950s especially the McCarthyism era, in parallel with The Crucible play. It also revolves around the tragedy and the three types of transgression which are social, political and religious, therefore, the study illustrates the power of these elements in which they can manipulate the one's life and the characters in The Crucible play.

According to social transgression reputation is extremely important in a town where social standing is tied to a person's ability to follow religious rules. Although, religious rules have great impacts in systemizing the society in general and the characters in The Crucible in particular. It is not pure from sins and disobedience in the play and generally in any society.



Another significant factor in the study and in *The Crucible* play is political transgression. Miller manages to capture pure humanism and raw emotions while incorporating a historical event truthfully and making it relatable to his audience, however, the political observations would not overpower the story, still in a time when artists were afraid to create and audience afraid to approve. *The Crucible* is often referred to as a direct commentary on McCarthyism, relating the Salem witch Trials of 1692 to the McCarthy era and utilizing Miller's own political view as a tool to make a statement to and about his society. The playwright is considered an American hero because he stands up for what is right. He does not buckle under the weight of authority even when it becomes painfully clear that he will not win.

Ultimately, the play is set in a time and manner which reflects human suffering and oppression that could be applied in many cases and connected to many historical events which have had similar impacts and consequences on ordinary lives and communities. Readers will be inspired to know that the events which have taken place have affected their present and foreshadow their future. By reading the text, societies realize the consequences of their actions, and that the results of their decisions have long lasting effects. The messages are hidden within the context inspire further analysis by students and researchers alike, benefitting all generations of readers to come.

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