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Per. 5, E.L.A.

6 November 2017

Rough Draft #2

Suddenly an innocent person is being carried away by the marshal and on their way to jail, awaiting trial. It is 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts and they have been accused of witchcraft. Do they die and tell the truth about not conspiring with the Devil, or lie and survive, but be blacklisted forever? This was the tragic reality of many characters in “The Crucible,” deciding whether to stay true to themselves, or falsely confess to be able to survive. Internal and external struggles, witch-hunts, and complete chaos filled the contents of “The Crucible.” However, Arthur Miller was not talking about the witch trials, he was talking about the Red Scare, a series of persecutions toward all those associated with communism, a forbidden topic during the 1950s. In the play, “The Crucible,” Arthur Miller compares the ethical dilemmas people faced during the Red Scare and the Salem Witch Trials; these parallels are shown through scapegoating, witch-hunts, and mass hysteria.

First of all, scapegoating is a recurrence in both the Red Scare and “The Crucible;” it reveals the true character of the powerful. They can falsely expose others in order to save themselves, or even blame others to not admit to their own flaws. For instance, when Reverend Parris questions Abigail, “ Then you [Abigail] were conjuring spirits last night”(Miller 5). Abigail then proceeds to argue, “Not I, sir- Tituba and Ruth”(Miller 5). Despite Abigail knowing this was

not ethical, she still decided to blame others for actions she lead. Consequently revealing her true self. She blamed the powerless, a slave and a child. Abigail wanted to keep her angelic persona without a 'blush' so that she can continue with her manipulative ways and not be doubted. Just like during the Salem Witch Trials, many refused to admit to their own faults, and instead chose to condemn others during the Red Scare. According to the 2017 Commonwealth of Massachusetts, fear for Communists emerged because of production decline, unemployment, labor strikes, and threats from anarchists to mail bombs to prominent Americans. Due to suspicions from the United States communists were blamed for all of these uprisings. An unethical link was present during these accusations; it is irrational to blame a certain group for problems present in society as a whole. In short, moral conflicts between the Red Scare and the Salem Witch Trials can be shown through scapegoating and other ways such as witch-hunting.

Furthermore, witch-hunts, literally and figuratively, are patterns in "The Crucible" and the Red Scare. During the 1692s, there was a constant hunt for more people to accuse of witchcraft. Throughout "The Crucible" anyone who confessed was asked to reveal another alleged witch, like when John Proctor falsely confessed, "Will [Proctor] tell [Danforth] what persons conspired with [Proctor] in the Devil's company?" (Miller 43). Despite already achieving a false confession from Proctor, Danforth wanted more people to condemn of witchcraft. Ethical dilemmas arose because for one, Danforth was only doing this so that he could protect his image. If he continued to find supposed witches the hangings would continue, and the people would think he is protecting their community. The people would continue to admire him and his reputation would be protected. Additionally, ethical dilemmas affected John

Proctor's decision. John chose what he believed was right, which was to be hung. He would have rather died than to live knowing he was the reason others would be killed. If he would have accused others, he would be contributing to the witch-hunts, since the executions were done by word of mouth. This means that any name stated would automatically be considered a witch. Similarly, during the 1950s, the community was urged to expose any people who might be communists and were on a hunt for anyone who seemed like a radical. As reported by History.com, there were constant leaders that started groups in search of communists. For instance, the House Un-American Activities Committee, Joseph R. McCarthy, and J. Edgar Hoover. Political leaders were pressured to convey themselves as avid anti-communists, any alleged subversives would promptly be investigated. During the 1950s everyone was hunting for any communists, if someone seemed like a radical, they were stripped of everything, even their simple rights. Ethical dilemmas surface when the means of investigation was through wiretaps and surveillance. People wanting to live their everyday lives were being spied on, simply for exercising their simple right, like joining a political party. During the Red Scare and the Salem Witch Trials, there were systems in place to find more guilty; invading the simple rights of the condemned and the condemners. In short, virtuous dilemmas in the 1690s and the 1950s come to light through witch-hunts, and other means, like mass hysteria.

Moreover, the reappearance of mass hysteria in the Red Scare and the Salem Witch Trial Hysteria of 1692 shows the reality of the human condition. The community became paranoid of everyone, some even believed they saw entities, or were being controlled by spirits. Thus, many people being falsely lead to accuse others of witchcraft. "[Mary]-[Mary] cannot tell how, but [Mary] did. [Mary]-[Mary] heard the other girls screaming, and [Danforth], Your

Honor, you seemed to believe them,...[Mary] only thought [Mary] saw them but [Mary] did not” (Miller 33). The only reason Mary Warren went along with the girls’ strange behavior was because of hysteria. The other girls pressured Mary into actually believing that she was being acted upon by spirits. Hence, Mary falsely accusing Sarah Good of performing witchcraft on her and also condemning others. Ethical dilemmas arise through this because the people that were accused, were not actually guilty, it was simply paranoia; however, they were blacklisted forever and possibly killed. The people of Salem contributed to the hysteria, nonetheless, this behavior was also present throughout the United States during the 1950s. “The advances of communism around the world convinced many U.S. citizens that there was a real danger of ‘Reds’ taking over their own country. Figures such as McCarthy and Hoover fanned the flames of fear by wildly exaggerating that possibility” (2010 History.com). The community and the public figures strongly stressed the ‘possibility’ of communists overthrowing the U.S. government. Those who were known as communists were just joining a political party of their choice, however, instead of being free to do so, they were incriminated. Ethical dilemmas arise because people were simply blacklisted and thoroughly investigated due to them having left-wing, or unpopular political views. To conclude, mass hysteria is a recurrence in the 1950s and the 1692s; it is one of the ways the real human condition is revealed.

Finally, the true personality of people is revealed when under unfortunate circumstances, like the 1950s Red Scare and the Salem Witch Trial Hysteria of 1692. Whether that be through pointing of fingers, persecutions, or paranoia; it will expose the true character of the accused, accusers, and the silent. To recognize this is important because this can happen again, a

stage in which people will go into chaos when put under pressure. Scapegoating can be seen nowadays, immigrants are constantly blamed for many problems, like stealing jobs. Furthermore, witch-hunts are present today, there is a constant search for immigrants. There are raids for all homes that house immigrants; cars may also be stopped and passengers are asked for their documents. Lastly, hysteria over Muslims being terrorists is a stereotype that has been put in place by society. This is unethical because categorizing a group of people as terrorists, or categorizing someone at all based off their religion is wrong. In brief, society has placed systems that reveal the true, yet horrible condition of humans.

Works Cited

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