



## John Proctor's moral responsibility in Arthur Miller's "The Crucible"

المسؤولية الأخلاقية لجون بروكتر في مسرحية البوتقة لأثر ميلر

### La responsabilité morale de John Proctor dans "Les Sorcières de Salem" de Arthur Miller

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#### ملخص

الهدف من هذا المقال هو إظهار كيف يمكن اعتبار جون بروكتر، بطل مسرحية البوتقة للمسرحي آرثر ميلر. يبدو أن رؤية الكاتب المسرحي للمسؤولية الأخلاقية مرتبطة بشكل وثيق بمفهوم أرسطو القديم. رؤية المسرحي للموضوع تؤكد على الفردية والنزاهة، لذا فهي لا تختلف كثيرا عن المفهوم الأرسطي القديم، وكلاهما يؤكد على الفردية والنزاهة بافتراض أن الإرادة والفضيلة هما شرطان أساسيان للشخص لكي يكون عميلا مسؤولا. يتم عرض هذه الرؤية للمسؤولية الأخلاقية من قبل بروكتر الذي سيخضع لتغييرات أساسية طوال المسرحية. في المشهد الأول يظهر البطل الرئيسي كشخصية منفصلة حيث يرفض الاعتراف بعلاقته اللأشعرية مع أبيقيل وييليمس لأجل المحافظة على سمعته. لكن نهاية المشهد الثاني تكشف تغييرات في شخصية البطل الذي بدأ يدرك أنه لا يستطيع البقاء سليبا خاصة عندما تقوم أبيقيل بآتهام زوجته إليزابيث بممارسة السحر في نهاية المشهد الثالث يبدو أن بروكتر وصل إلى تحقيق الذات عندما أتاحت الفرصة للاعتراف بالسحر وإدانة أصدقائه للبقاء على قيد الحياة يرفض البطل الاعتراف الكاذب ويختار الموت. يمكن القول أن بروكتر عميلا مسؤولا وهو أكثر اهتماما بنزاهته من سمعته.

الكلمات الدالة: آرثر ميلر؛ البوتقة؛ المسؤولية الأخلاقية؛ إدراك الذات؛ الفضيلة؛ أرسطو؛ الإرادة الحرة.

#### Abstract

The present article aims at showing how John Proctor, the protagonist in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, can be regarded as a responsible agent in the light of Aristotle's concept of moral responsibility. It seems that the playwright's vision of moral responsibility is closely allied to the ancient Aristotelian concept. Both emphasize individualism and human integrity by assuming that free will and virtue of character are two essential

conditions for a person to be a responsible agent. This vision of moral responsibility is displayed by Proctor who will undergo fundamental changes throughout the play. In Act I, we meet a detached character who refuses to confess his adulterous affair with Abigail Williams to the Salem court to preserve his reputation. However, the end of Act II reveals changes in the character of Proctor who begins to realize that he can no longer remain passive especially since his wife Elizabeth is accused of witchcraft by Abigail. In the end of Act III, Proctor seems to reach self-realization. When he is offered the opportunity to confess to witchcraft and denounce his friends to remain alive, the protagonist deliberately refuses to provide a false confession and chooses to hang. We can say that Proctor becomes a morally responsible character who is more concerned with his personal integrity than his public reputation.

**Keywords:** Arthur Miller; the crucible; moral responsibility; self-realization; virtue; Aristotle; free will

### Résumé

Le présent article vise à montrer comment John Proctor, le protagoniste dans "Les Sorcières de Salem" de Arthur Miller, peut être considéré comme un agent responsable à la lumière du concept de responsabilité morale d'Aristote. La vision d'Arthur Miller concernant la responsabilité morale semble être étroitement liée à l'ancien concept Aristotélicien. Les deux mettent l'accent sur l'individualisme et l'intégrité humaine en supposant que le libre arbitre et la vertu du caractère sont deux conditions essentielles pour qu'une personne soit un agent responsable. Cette vision de la responsabilité morale est affichée par Proctor qui subira des changements tout au long de la pièce théâtrale. Dans le premier acte, on rencontre un personnage détaché qui refuse d'avouer au tribunal de Salem sa liaison avec Abigail Williams afin de préserver sa réputation. Cependant, la fin du deuxième acte révèle des changements dans le personnage de Proctor qui commença prendre conscience du fait qu'il ne puisse pas rester passif d'autant plus que son épouse Elizabeth est accusé de sorcellerie par Abigail. A la fin du troisième acte, Proctor semble atteindre la réalisation de soi. Lorsqu'on lui offre la possibilité de se confesser de la sorcellerie et dénoncer ses amis, Proctor refuse délibérément de fournir une fausse information et choisit la mort. On peut dire que Proctor devient un personnage moralement responsable, plus soucieux de son intégrité personnelle que de sa réputation publique.



**Mots-clés:** Arthur Miller; les sorcières de Salem; la responsabilité morale; réalisation de soi; vertu, Aristo; libre arbitre.

### Introduction

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* centers on the Salem witch trials that took place in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. Despite the common belief that witches are things of the past, the play shows that the American society has not come very far from the days of Salem witch trials. Produced in the 1950s while anti-Communism was the prevailing sentiment in the United States, a good number of critics such as Walker (2011) considered the play as an "*allegory through which he [Miller] could denounce McCarthyism, and at the same time, not run the risk for significant legal actions against himself*" (p.75).

However, if the playwright addresses particularly dark periods in American history, the play has not proved limited to a particular period. Miller(1996) argued that *The Crucible* is "*not merely a response to McCarthyism...It is examining... the conflict between a man's raw deeds and his conception of himself...the question whether conscience is in fact an organic part of the human being*" (p.173). Therefore, Miller transcends time and place to explore man's internal conflict between selfish interest and moral responsibility.

Fischer(2005)explained that most philosophers assume that "*the concept of free will is very closely connected to the concept of moral responsibility*" (p.7).Therefore, free will is one of the main concepts to consider when we study Proctor's moral responsibility. To know whether Proctor is morally responsible, it is imperative to answer two essential questions. The first is to know whether Proctor's wrongs were the result of free will. The second is to verify if Proctor has free will to carry out actions in accordance with his moral obligations even if it would require the sacrifice of his own life. Considering moral responsibility from Miller's perspective, the playwright seems to share the view that man can exercise free will. Miller (2005) argued:

*I think...the only thing worth doing today in the theatre, from my point of view, is to synthesize the subjective drives of the human being with what is now demonstrably the case, namely,*



*that by an act of will man can and has changed the world...I have seen communities transformed by the act of a committee. I have seen the interior lives of people transformed by the decision of a company, or of a man, or of a school. In other words, it is old fashioned, so to speak, and it is not moot simply to go on asserting the helplessness of the individual. (p. 204)*

### 1. John Proctor: A Passive Character

In order to understand how moral responsibility and free will are developed by Miller in his play, we should analyze how the playwright's protagonist evolves throughout the play. In the beginning of the play, Proctor is presented as a good father and husband who holds his family very dear. He is also a hard worker who is dedicated to having a successful farm. He is even working on Sundays occasionally. His wife Elizabeth says, "My husband is a good and righteous man. He is never drunk as some are, nor wasti' his time at the shovelboard, but always at his work" (Miller, 1953, 3, p.892-894). In addition, Proctor appears as a covenanted Christian. Despite the fact that he does not attend services regularly because of his wife's illness, he still prays in his house. All these traits allow Proctor to gain love and respect in his community

However, Proctor's image as a good and respectful man will prove fragile. In the first act, the audience will soon sense that the protagonist is a tormented character. Despite his respect in the community, Proctor feels that "he is a sinner not only against the moral fashion of his time, but against his own vision of decent conduct" (Miller, 1953, 1. 557-559). His anguish mostly originates from his adulterous betrayal of his wife with Abigail Williams, a servant in his household. To comprehend what good conduct is brings us to examine Aristotle's conception of virtue or what he calls *arête*.

Explaining Aristotle's view, Warne (2006) noted that "a person's possession of virtue guarantees his acting for the correct reason; a person who does not possess virtue may act for a variety of reasons" (p. 44). He went on to argue that a person acts from a virtuous state "if (i) he knows what he is doing; (ii) he decides on his action and for its own sake; and (iii) he performs his action from a firm and stable



*state of character*" (p.44). Aristotle's vision of virtue reveals another important aspect to consider when studying moral responsibility. In addition to having free will, being able to distinguish between what is morally right and wrong is equally important to be responsible.

If we examine Aristotle's conditions, we notice that Proctor knows that his act of adultery is morally wrong. His feelings of uneasiness are revelatory of his awareness. However, the audience can easily notice the Protagonist's struggle to hide his anguish when he avoids talking about his sin with his wife Elizabeth:

*Proctor: Spare me! You forget nothin' and forgive nothin'  
Learn charity, woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all  
seven month since she is gone. I have not moved from there  
to there without I think to please you, and still an ever-  
lasting funeral marches round your heart. I cannot speak  
but I am doubted, every moment judged for lies, as though  
I come into a court when I come into this house!*

Palmer (2012) stated that Proctor's resentment towards his wife Elizabeth indicates that at this point he "*is not ready to confront his shame... He is hoping to cope with the situation merely as a transgression...that can be repaired so that his sense of self can remain intact*" (p.33). Despite his awareness, Proctor is not capable yet of confronting himself. He still tries to maintain his image as an upright and worthy man.

If Proctor is internally aware that his unfaithfulness to his wife is not a decent conduct, he does not seem to realize yet that his mistake is not without consequences. This is noticed in his answer to his wife when she charges him with a promise he made to Abigail, "How do you charge me with such a promise? The promise that a stallion gives a mare I gave that girl" (Miller, 1953, 2, p.334-335). Proctor fails to see that Abigail will soon seek revenge and ruin his life.

Miller's protagonist cannot confront himself, let alone confess his sin in public. Unnati (2013) argued that Proctor's reluctance to act can be explained by "*his immense pride and fear of public opinion*" (p.26). He is afraid to be judged by the Puritans who not only consider adultery as an immoral act, but also punish the adulterer. Bremer and Webster (2006) explained that "*the Massachusetts code in 1648*



*in America...made adultery (and other sexual crimes) capital offenses...In Massachusetts... [adultery] was punished by public humiliation or whipping*" (p.422). Therefore, by maintaining a detached attitude Proctor is seeking to preserve both his life and reputation.

On several occasions, Elizabeth voices her husband's hesitation and tries to make him act, "*I do not judge you. The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you*" (Miller, 1953, 2, p.29-30). Bloom (2008) noted that Elizabeth "*knows that judgment...must come from the self. That the only goodness that counts is interior to the individual*" (p.79). Therefore, from Aristotle's perspective, we can say that Proctor's wife attempts to make her husband act from a virtuous state by urging him to confess to adultery not to please her but because confessing it is the right thing to do.

When Abigail and a group of young and sexually repressed girls start accusing most of the respectable members of society of witchcraft in Salem, Proctor remains passive. He attempts to keep an objective distance from the court trials. Once again, his wife Elizabeth tried to open his eyes when she asked him if he went to Salem. Unfortunately, Proctor's answer to his wife, "*Why? I have no business in Salem*" (Miller, 1953, 2, p.63) proves that he is still unable to act.

Palmer (2012) explained that Proctor's uncertainty to go to the court and denounce Abigail as a fraud "*arises from his fear of having his sexual relationship with her exposed*" (p.33). Analyzing Aristotle's vision of virtue, Warne (2006) stated that a person is acting virtuously if this person "*does gladly what is fine even if that involves enduring some pain*" (p. 42). Therefore, from Aristotle's point of view, Proctor does not react as a morally responsible character. He does not discredit Abigail, because denouncing her would uncover his adulterous relationship with her and cause him pain. In other words, he is not doing what should morally be done, but he is rather acting for personal reasons.

## **2. Toward Self-Realization**

Hooti (2011) explained that Proctor finds himself "forced to redefine his "*self in the context of changed circumstances, which necessitates his personal involvement in the trials*" (p. 70). The shocking news that the name of his wife Elizabeth is brought up in



court by Abigail can be regarded as a turning point in Proctor's moral struggle. At this point, Proctor is caught in a dilemma. He is confronted to the choice of confessing adultery and denouncing Abigail as a fraud, or his wife will be imprisoned and hanged.

Tension rises in the end of Act II when Elizabeth is finally arrested for witchcraft based on Abigail's claims. At the beginning, Proctor tries to hold his detached attitude. He wants to save his wife without getting involved. Proctor knows that Abigail, Mary Warren and the other girls saw no spirits the night when they were caught in the forest. He equally learns that it was his servant Mary who made the poppet that was found in Elizabeth's house and put the needle inside of it. But in his quest to free Elizabeth, Proctor presses Mary to go to the court to speak the truth, "*My wife will never die for me! I will bring your guts into your mouth but that goodness will not die for me!*" (Miller, 1953, 2., p.925-926). Mary's testimony would convince the course that Elizabeth was not involved in witchcraft and that the whole trials were just a farce. This revelation would thus free Elizabeth without Proctor's being involved.

However, Proctor's plan does not seem to work. Despite the fact that Mary knows the truth and wants to help Elizabeth, she is not strong enough to withstand the pressure and testify against Abigail and the girls, "*I cannot, they'll turn on me*" (Miller, 1953, 2. P.922). At that moment, Proctor decides to react in order to save his wife. He is no longer trying to preserve his old image as a worthy man, but he confronts himself, "*Peace. It is providence, and no great change; we are only what we always were, but naked now*" (Miller, 1953, 2., p.933-934). Despite Mary's warning that Abigail will charge him with lechery if he tries to challenge her, Proctor ends up confessing to his adultery to bid his wife free. He finally screams, "*How do you call Heaven! Whore! Whore!*" (Miller, 1953, 3. p.793). This is a critical point in the play as it marks the beginning of Proctor's self-realization. In fact, Proctor's journey to Salem is integrally related to the abstract journey into his own self. For the first time, Proctor comes to see himself as an active rather than a passive agent. In other words, he is not caught in the chain of causes but he is part of them. He seems to realize that he is a cause of his wife's arrest, and he can be equally a cause of her release. Therefore, Proctor's confession signals his ability to exercise free will in order to change the course of events.



If we compare Proctor in Act I to Proctor in the end of Act II, we observe a change of attitude. The protagonist is no longer acting for the same reasons. In the beginning of the play, Proctor did not want to confess for personal reasons, namely saving his reputation and preserving his image as a good Puritan. But in the end of Act II, he decided to confess for the sake of preserving his wife's life. He did so because this is the right thing to do even if it would tarnish his own reputation. This brings us to conclude that Proctor begins to act from a virtuous state and assumes moral responsibility.

Miller takes his character a step further and makes him face another dilemma in the end of Act III. Proctor's confession to adultery put him in a more complicated situation when Mary turned against him. Despite the fact that Proctor's servant knows that her conduct is wrong, she is too weak to act from a virtuous state. Mary ends up pointing a finger toward Proctor in order to preserve her life out of fear of being accused by the manipulative Abigail, "*You're the Devil's man!*" (Miller, 1953, 3., p.1057-1058). Like Proctor in the beginning of the play, Mary acts for personal reasons rather than for the sake of what is morally good.

Ironically, Proctor who comes to the court to free his wife finds himself wrongly accused for the same crime. After having disclosed his sin of adultery, Proctor should now confess to witchcraft. This time, the situation is different as Proctor is compelled to affirm a sin that he never committed. Here Miller dramatizes the conformity of the Puritan society of Salem. He shows the audience the extent to which Puritanism is trying to control people's choices. In the village of Salem, the individual should not behave according to what he thinks is morally good but he is forced to act according to the dictates of the Puritan ideology. This conformity makes it even harder for Proctor to exercise free will and takes the right action. Proctor should beat both his interior fear and the external tyranny of the Puritan authority.

Unfortunately, the Puritan influence is still lingering in the contemporary American society. Zafirovski (2007) pointed out that Puritanism "*created a society more uniform, rigid, and intolerant...more repressive, politically and culturally...than...any other within the Western world*" (pp. 300-301). The term "witch-hunt" is



forever immortalized in American diction as it means to wrongly accuse of disloyalty any group of people who are of a different religion or hold a different political opinion. During the McCarthy era, conformity became the norm in the American society, and anything looking to oppose this (Communism in particular) would be considered treasonous. Hundreds of Americans were accused of being communists sympathizers. Nowell-Smith (1996) affirmed that “*a hysterical wave of anti-Communism overtook a film industry*” as many actors, writers and movie industrial professionals were blacklisted. Although the power of blacklist created a climate of fear within the industry, some artists were able to stand up against the anti-Communist machine.

Miller, who was himself blacklisted, was one of the artists that reacted against American intolerance in the 1950s. The long lasting impact of witch-hunt hysteria is displayed by the playwright when he made an allegory between the witch trials of Salem in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the McCarthy hearings. Miller (2000) stated clearly that “*it has probably never occurred to me to write a play about the Salem witch trials of 1692 had I not seen some astonishing correspondences with that calamity in the America of the late 40s and early 60s*” (para.1). Therefore, we can conclude that Proctor is not a character that is limited to the context of Puritan New England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The crisis faced by the protagonist embodies the conflict that any individual can experience in the conformist American society.

Reverend Parris, Judge Danforth and, to a lesser extent, John Hale are the main characters that illustrate well the restraints of the Puritan society in Salem. Being the men of the court and the church, they have the power to shape people's decisions and actions without being questioned. During a conversation with Proctor, Parris sharply states, “*You people seem not to comprehend that a minister is the Lord's man in the parish; a minister is not to be slightly crossed and contradicted*” (Miller, 1953, 1., p.772-775). He adds, “*There is either obedience or the church will burn like Hell is burning!*” (Miller, 1953, 1., p.777-778). These statements clearly reveal the conformity of thought imposed in Salem. The individual is forced to obey the Puritan authority to preserve his life and his reputation.



In Act IV, Proctor emerges from weeks in prison to meet his wife. The audience may notice that Proctor's state of mind is somehow the same as in Act I, as if we have a return to the initial situation. For the second time in the play, the protagonist fails to act from a virtuous state. Despite his disbelief in witches, Proctor is tempted to confess to witchcraft in order to preserve his life. He does not seem to realize that his confession will perpetuate the lies about the presence of witches in Salem and will thus give more power to the Puritan authority.

Proctor's inability to act as a moral agent is noticed in the heart-rending moments between him and his wife, "*I have been thinking I would confess to them, Elizabeth... What say you? If I give them that?*" (Miller, 1953, 4., p.442-444). At this compelling moment of the play, the protagonist is pictured as a passive and broken man who is acted upon more than he acts for himself. To alleviate his anguish and justify his immoral conduct, Proctor attempts to persuade Elizabeth that he is not a perfect man. However, we sense from Proctor's words that he is trying to convince himself more than he is trying to convince his wife. And the irony of the situation is that Proctor refuses to lie and say he is a saint, but he is tempted to provide a false confession to remain alive:

*Proctor: I cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is a  
 raud. I am not that man. [She is silent] My honesty is broke,  
 Elizabeth; I am no good man. Nothing's spoiled by giving  
 them this lie that were not rotten long before. (Miller, 1953, 4., p.458-461)*

Similar to Act II, Elizabeth once again attempts to urge her husband to act from a virtuous state when she says, "Do what you will. But let none be your judge. There be no higher judge under Heaven than Proctor is!" (Miller, 1953, 4., p.449-500). Reflecting upon Elizabeth's attitude, Cohagan (2005) argued that whether Proctor "*chooses to live by giving a false confession or chooses to die, she [Elizabeth] gives him the power to choose for himself - not to be defined by her expectation of what a good man is*" but by choosing the right action for its own sake (p. 21).

It is no coincidence that at this crucial point of the play Miller makes Elizabeth experience a moment of redemption. While in Act II Elizabeth was only preaching that her husband should confess his



sins, in Act IV she practices what she was preaching and comes to acknowledge her own wrongs, “ I have read my heart this three months, John...I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery” (Miller, 1953, 2.,p.482-484).Elizabeth moves from ignorance to knowledge, and she realizes that she was partly responsible for her husband's unfaithfulness. Through Elizabeth's self-realization, Miller is teaching Proctor how he should behave to become a responsible agent by showing him a model.

Elizabeth's act of redemption is worthy of consideration from Aristotle's point of view. Warne (2006) explained that, for Aristotle “*virtuous are habituated states of character*”(p. 38).He added that the philosopher “*argues for his account of the origins of virtue by rejecting two alternative accounts: (a) virtuous are 'by nature' or innate and (b) virtuous are taught*”(p.38). Therefore, according to Aristotle, we can deduce that Proctor can change and become a responsible agent. Nonetheless, it is not enough for Proctor to be taught how to become a virtuous agent by Elizabeth but he should learn through a process of habituation.

Therefore, from Aristotle's perspective, we can note that throughout the play Proctor has been going through a process of habituation to reach a virtuous state of character. The first performance was made in Act III when Proctor did the right action and confessed to adultery. In Act IV Proctor is again called to make the right choice after being accused of witchcraft. It is only by repeating different virtuous actions that the protagonist can learn to be a responsible agent. However, at this point of the plot, Proctor is still reluctant about whether he should confess to witchcraft or be hanged despite his wife's countless efforts to arise his sense of responsibility. His internal conflict is echoed in his tormenting questions, “*God in Heaven, what is John Proctor? What is John Proctor?*” (Miller, 1953, 4., p.517-518).

Finally, Proctor confesses verbally to witchcraft to save himself from being hanged, “*I want my life*”(Miller, 1953, 4., p.505). At this critical moment, the audience may feel a strong sense of disappointment. Proctor appears as a defeated character that has lost the battle within himself. He does not show any signs of resistance to the conformity



of the Puritan society; and he passively lets Dan forth and Hawthorne to determine his choice.

### 3. John proctor: a moral responsible agent

The end of Act IV can be regarded as the most crucial turning point in the play as Proctor's conflict reaches its peak. This time not only should Proctor confess his name, but he is also pressed by Judge Danforth to implicate other people and denounce them as witches, "*Your soul alone is the issue here, Mister, and you will prove its whiteness or you cannot live in a Christian country. Will you tell me now what persons conspired with you in the Devil's company?*" (Miller, 1953, 4., p.614-617). Through Danforth's contradictory arguments, Miller sheds light on the hypocrisy of the Puritan society. While the judge admits that the whole issue is about Proctor's soul, he forces him to incriminate other people's souls. In so doing, the Puritan court can spread fear and suspicion among the people of Salem and maintain its domination.

At this critical moment the audience notices a change in Proctor's attitude. He emerges from ignorance to knowledge. Palmer (2012) noted that the protagonist "*sees that his confession is not merely about his own honor but about the honor of others*" (p. 36) when he cries out, "*I speak my own sins; I cannot judge another...I have no tongue for it*" (Miller, 1953, 4.,p.620-622). As we have noticed, in the end of Act II Proctor realized that his infidelity to his wife and his obstinacy to denounce Abigail were not without harmful consequences, but his self-realization came late.

This time, before confessing, Proctor becomes aware that selling out his friends will necessarily ruin their names. More importantly, as Gouda Abdel Aziz and Sulieman Al Qunayeer (2014) pointed out, Proctor realizes that his false confession will "*destroy his good name*" (p. 252). This argument was also emphasized by Palmer (2012) who stated that Proctor "*cannot engage in the dishonor of others and still maintain his fragile new sense that while being no saint he still is a good-enough man*" (p. 36). Considering Aristotle's conception of the process of habituation, we can note that Proctor has learned to behave virtuously by practicing different virtuous actions, namely confessing the sin of adultery, though late, and refusing to name his friends.



At this stage, Proctor speaks from a stable state of character. He admits the collapse of his old self and he openly acknowledges all his sins. Proctor appears as the only judge of his wrong actions. When Judge Danforth wanted to post the signed document on the church door, Proctor snatched it back and refused to hand it over to the judge, because this time he fully understood his wife's words, "*Let none be your judge*" (Miller, 1953, 4., p. 499). Proctor shouts:

*Proctor: I have confessed myself! Is there no god 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! It is enough!* (Miller, 1953, 4., p. 659-662)

Once more, the Puritan court comes under harsh criticism. Danforth's insistence to have Proctor's confession public clearly reveals the corrupt authority of the Salem's court. The audience can easily notice that the judge is more interested in having Proctor's confession nailed to the church door than in Proctor's salvation, because a public confession, as Palmer (2012) explained, would 'implicate him in the public humiliation and destruction of those who will not bend to its terrorism and confess to witchcraft' (p. 37). Proctor is aware of the wicked purposes of the court that is why he refuses to cooperate:

*Proctor: You will not use me! I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor! You will not use me! It is no part of salvation that you should use me!* (Miller, 1953, 4., p.664-666)

Proctor finally comes to understand that the violation of others' names entails the loss of one's name. Now he knows that preserving his name and his friends' names is the right thing to do. Under Danforth's orders, "You will give me your honest confession in my hand, or I cannot keep you from the rope" (Miller, 1953, 4., p.696) Proctor shouts in agony:

*Proctor: [with a cry of his soul]: Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!* (Miller, 1953, 4. 688-692)



Proctor's journey into the self is about to come to an end. At last the protagonist makes his choice and exercise free will. He finally declares to all the court officials, "You have made your magic now, for now I do think I see some shred of goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to weave a banner with but white enough to keep it from such dogs" (Miller, 1953, 4., p. 706-709). Gouda Abdel Aziz and Suleiman Al Qunayeer (2014) argued that Proctor chooses "a heroic death over a dishonorable life". Therefore, this time Proctor behaves as a responsible agent. He does not act for personal reasons, but he performs the right action even if this will cost him his life. Proctor has come to peace with the situation, and he is now ready to build a new self that he can be satisfied with.

### Conclusion

In the end of the play, the audience can make a connection between Miller and Proctor. Like Proctor, the playwright too refused to name persons who had supposedly attended Communist party writers' meetings. The protagonist's last words obviously recall Miller's answer to the House Committee on Un-American Activities, "*I am not protecting the Communists or the Communist Party. I am trying to...protect my sense of self. I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him*" (Pells, 1985, p. 324)

Miller's defiance of the committee caused him troubles and almost ruined his carrier. Pells (1985) stated that the playwright "was duly arraigned and convicted for contempt of congress, fined five hundred dollars, and reprimanded with a suspended sentence of thirty days in jail" (p.324). Yet, in a similar way to his character, Miller behaved from a virtuous state and did not accept to bear witness against his friends. He was ready to lose his social status but not his name.

From what has been said, we can consider Proctor as a universal character through which Miller is defying any form of social conformity. The point that the playwright is trying to lay stress on is that every individual should be fully aware that there are different competing opinions and ways of life. A responsible individual, in Miller's point of view, is the one who can scrutinize theses different opinions, judge them critically, and act virtuously on the best of his own judgments.



According to Miller, what makes Proctor a tragic hero is his struggle to reconstruct his "self". Miller (1996) argued, "The tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing- his sense of personal dignity...the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his rightful position in his society" (p. 4). Therefore, despite Proctor's death in the end of the play, we cannot regard him as a defeated character. As we have noticed throughout the play, Proctor has been struggling both against internal and external conflicts. It is this struggle that makes his death heroic. Miller (1996) added to his vision of tragedy and tragic hero:

*Tragedy, called a more exalted kind of consciousness, is so called because it makes us aware of what the character might have been. But to say or strongly imply what a man might have been required of the author a soundly based, completely believed vision of man's great possibilities...And it is the glimpse of this brighter possibility that raises sadness out of the pathetic toward the tragic.(p. 10)*

Therefore, Proctor is worthy of respect not because he has succeeded to retrieve his self, but because he has approached this "brighter possibility" of what he might have been. This idea of a self that can be glimpsed and not realized is central to many of Miller's tragedies. Willy Loman's final statement in *Death of a Salesman* is not very different from Proctor's last words, "I am not a dime a dozen. I am Willy Loman"(Miller, 1949, 2., p.2427-2428). Both come very close to their brighter versions of their selves before the curtain falls.

In his last moments, Proctor seems to experience what Aristotle call *seudemonia*, a Greek word commonly translated to happiness. The philosopher tried to make a link between happiness and virtue of character. Discussing Aristotelian ethics, Simpson (2013) argued that happiness is "the activity of the virtue of the soul" (p. 236). He went on to say that it is "the greatest and best of human goods"(p. 217). Therefore, we can deduce that from Aristotle's point of view, virtue of character is the most important constituent of happiness.

When proctor was escorted to be executed, his last words to his wife were, "Give them no tear! Tears pleasure them! Show honor now, show a stony heart and sink them with it!"(Miller, 1953, 4., p.712-713).At



this very moment, the audience may notice not only a change in the protagonist's attitude, but also in his state of mind. Despite the fact that Proctor is about to die, he experiences a state of happiness. Feelings of happiness have arisen in the protagonist because at this point of the play he is conscious of being a worthy and responsible man. He has achieved the highest good by sacrificing his life for the sake of saving his name and the good names of his friends. Elizabeth's answer to Hale, "He has his goodness now" (Miller, 1953, 4., p.741) is a remarkable act of respect towards her husband who has now recovered his good name.

We can conclude by saying that Proctor is the embodiment of man's ability to have moral responsibility. In the end of the play, the protagonist wins his external battle against the conformity of thought in the Puritan community. He proves to be a product of his own rather than a mere product of his society. Proctor's heroic death testifies his capacity to defy the Puritan conventions and exercise free will. The protagonist equally triumphs against his interior fears and torments. He finally confronts himself and reaches self-realization when he decides to perform the right action by refusing to confess to a lie. In so doing, Proctor loses his soul but he recovers a sense of self-worth and integrity.

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