

The Ethics of Truth in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

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Abstract

In the 17th century, the American society witnessed a historical event known as the Salem witch trials. These trials resulted from the accusation of Salem people of being involved in witchcraft and other crimes, though, most of the time, there were insufficient proofs. Allegorically, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* revolves on the story of a hero and other characters who try to conserve their honesty and integrity while they assert themselves against the social group to which they had hitherto belonged, doing this at their own risk, incurring ostracism and even death as a result. Some keep their honesty no matter the case while others simply indulge in dishonesty and lies. What does the particular creation of John Proctor and other honest characters symbolize in *The Crucible*? Using psychoanalysis, this article dives into the conscious and unconscious minds of both the playwright and the characters to show how the ethics of truth is sketched as a fundamental human value.

Keywords: accusation–ethics– lies – pretense – truth.

Résumé

Au XVII^e siècle, la société américaine a été témoin d'un événement historique connu sous le nom de procès des sorcières de Salem. Ces procès résultaient de l'accusation portée contre les habitants de Salem d'être impliqués dans la sorcellerie et d'autres crimes, bien que, la plupart du temps, les preuves étaient insuffisantes. Allégoriquement, *The Crucible* d'Arthur Miller tourne autour de l'histoire d'un héros et d'autres personnages qui tentent de conserver leur honnêteté et leur intégrité tout en s'affirmant contre le groupe social auquel ils appartenaient jusque-là, le faisant à leurs propres risques

et encourageant l'ostracisme et même la mort. Certains gardent leur honnêteté quoi qu'il arrive tandis que d'autres se laissent simplement aller à la malhonnêteté et au mensonge. Que symbolise la création particulière de John Proctor et d'autres personnages honnêtes dans *The Crucible*? En utilisant la psychanalyse, cet article plonge dans les esprits conscients et inconscients du dramaturge et des personnages pour montrer comment l'éthique de la vérité est esquissée comme une valeur humaine fondamentale.

Mots-clés: accusation –éthique– mensonges – prétention – vérité.

Introduction

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* is a famous allegorical play. Drawing from the notorious witch trials that took place in Salem at the end of the 17th century, the play also evokes the anti-Communist persecution (also called “witch-hunts”) launched by Senator McCarthy in the 1950s. Actually, literature, as the aesthetic imagination of life, always derives from social events as a source of inspiration for writers to narrate life-like stories in an inventive way. It calls people's awareness on their misbehaviors and daily actions. Thus, the writers of fiction often take the society as their raw material to produce complete literary works that suit certain goals they have, wittingly or unwittingly. Pointedly, W. V. Harris (1992: 193) makes it clear that “literature is imaginative, creative, artistic, or aesthetically oriented writing.” Going further, T. J. Reiss (1992: 1) defines literature as “a socially purposive discursive activity that we suppose to serve some specifiable role within the totality of different discursive practices composing what we call society.” Likewise, through his creative techniques and craftsmanship, Miller has successfully depicted the ethics of truth in his play *The Crucible*.

What is truth? According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, truth is “the quality or state of being based on fact. A fact that is believed by most people to be true.” (A. S. Hornby, 2005). Such a definition is empirical and based on the observation. As M. P. Lynch (2001: 19) corroborates, truth refers to “a statement of the facts as they are.” Venturing in the critical explorations of truth, Susan T. Garder (1998: 78) lays more emphasis on empirical realm in her *Truth: In Ethics and Elsewhere* and posits that “All truths wait in all things, They neither hasten their own discovery nor resist it” In addition, Henry Sidgwick (2017) shows how truth is connected with justice in relation to social laws through his *The Methods of Ethics*. Mohamed E. Bayou *et al.* (2011) take a distance to get engaged in truth and science especially the interest of truth in accountancy in their

To Tell Truth: A Discussion of Issues Concerning Truth and Ethics in Accountancy. Simply put, truth is the quality of being true, genuine, actual, or factual. On the opposite, as *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* clarifies it, to tell lies refers to “say or write something that you know is not true.” (A. S. Hornby, 2005). This is seen when people convert lies into truth through their eloquence or the art of using words powerfully. Visibly, truth is an undeniable human virtue. Human beings weave confidence basing on truth because, it results from honesty.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English defines ethics as the “moral principles that control or influence a person's behaviour” (A. S Hornby, 2005: 523). From this definition, it is obvious that a person has to behave in accordance with their society's moral principles. In this respect, ethics calls for truth and the respect of morality. Morality is the distinction between bad and good. As J. Bennett (2017: 1) makes it clear:

ethics is sometimes seen as directed to the true moral laws or rational precepts of conduct, and sometimes as an inquiry into the ultimate end of reasonable human action—the good or ‘true good’ of man—and how to achieve it. Both views are familiar, and will be carefully considered; but the former looms larger in modern ethical thought, and is easier to connect with modern ethical systems generally.

Despite the previous scholars' exploration on the theme of truth and its corollaries, there is still a room for this study to show why it is worthwhile to stick to truth through the psychoanalytic theory. A theory is a set of rules, which enables the reader to provide meaning in a literary work. W. V. Harris (1992: 410) defines a theory as “the attempt to state the principles by which criticism and/or interpretation of literary works should proceed.” He goes on to add that “a critical theory” may refer to “analyses of literature or other aspects of culture from the point of view of social /political theories that oppose the existing culture as the product of monopoly capitalism.” (Ibid.). So, the meaning and the exploration of any literary piece depends on the critical theory, which is used throughout the critical analysis. According to K. J. Sibi (2020: 75), “Sigmund is the father of modern psychology, which analyzes the human mind and claims that the unconscious mind, controls the conscious mind.” Venturing in the psychoanalytic theory, Charles E. Bressler (2011: 124) evidences that “During psychoanalysis, Freud would have his patients talk freely in a patient-analyst setting about their early childhood experiences and dreams. When we apply these methods to our interpretations of works of

literature, we engage in psychoanalytic criticism.” From this definition, one derives that the psychoanalytic theory aims at evaluating the unconscious and conscious state of mind of characters, since their inner thoughts determine their actions. According to W. V. Harris (1992: 304), psychoanalytic theory is used to explain “the general processes of literary creativity; the origin of the literary work in the individual author’s mind; the thoughts and actions of a character in a literary work, the structure of a literary work, or readers ‘responses.’” So, through psychoanalysis, this work intends to decipher the inner thoughts of characters that push them to either tell lies or truth. It also analyses the author’s intention in creating John Proctor and other remarkably honest characters. This article is structured into two main parts, namely the inverted truth in *The Crucible*, on the one hand, and the limits of truth and its importance, on the other hand.

1. The Inverted Truth in *The Crucible*

Sometimes, people think that what any individual tells with conviction is pure truth. However, lies may be taken for truth and vice versa. A person who decides to make his listener trust him may manufacture a story and present it as a pure truth. But this is just a pretense. The first section of this first part presents fright and threat as the motives and grounds of pretense in *The Crucible*; the second section develops the interest and the limits of pretense; and the last one elucidates the importance of telling truth.

1.1 Fright and Threat as Motives and Grounds of Pretense in *The Crucible*

Pretense is often part of human attitudes and it is frequently remarkable among people. Sometimes, people just pretend to tell truth not for the sake of pretending, but their society or environment pushes them to make such a choice. Most people do so in the hope of defending themselves before a danger and escape guiltiness. To pretend means “to behave in a particular way, in order to make other people believe something that is not true.” (A. S. Hornby, 2005). It is to tell the opposite of what is actually hidden in one’s heart or mind. Those who pretend have some particular strategies and make people believe in what they tell with a firm conviction. Pretense is visible in Miller’s *The Crucible* through Mary Warren’s words: “It’s not a trick! *she stands*. I...I used to faint

because I...I thought I saw spirit.”¹. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Marry Warren’s stuttering evokes a pretense. Her sentences are cut at certain times when she takes the floor. The fact that she pauses while speaking, stands for hesitation, which is an opportunity for her to get ready and think in order to tell more lies. In addition, when Marry Warren says: “I *thought* I saw spirits” in the above quotation, she unintentionally betrays a lie. Either one *sees* or one does not. But *thinking* that one sees betrays her pretense of befriending witches. Through her inner thoughts, Mary Warren wants to bring the audience at the court to make of her viewpoint a reality. From the psychoanalytic angle, the saying of Mary Warren evokes lies and pretense. Since she says that she “thought” she saw spirits, it means that she is just telling what she thinks and that is quite different from reality. In another way round, Marry Warren is just imagining her thoughts and this cannot be considered as truth. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to trust her that she saw some spirits. Therefore, pretense refers to the fake statement that aims at convincing other people by misleading them to the wrong thoughts.

Very often, an individual would blame another one when it is found that what the latter says is lie without really understanding why the person tells such a lie. From this view, K. Cantareno (quoting B. M. DePaulo *et al.*) speculates: “Lying is a particular form of dishonesty where people “intentionally try to mislead.” (2018: 4). Sometimes, people tell lies or pretend to tell truth for the sake of fame or pleasing society and their surroundings. They tell lies or pretend by constraints without being totally responsible.

Truth is universal once it is mostly believed by most people and facts are to explain its evidence. However, truth may vary from one individual to another depending on their intuition. In case one’s intuition and inner feelings are stronger, they may betray truth. What the intuition agrees may greatly vary from the circumstances, because “when we assert, we present ourselves as speaking the truth.” (M. P. Lynch, 2001, 2). The individual’s education, background, environment may sometimes shape them in either considering things as truth or lies. In *The Crucible*, Judge Danforth has nothing to do rather than abiding by the Salem tradition and laws according to which, they should condemn people basing on what others say about their fellows. So, Danforth neglects to check facts, make investigation and listen to the victims themselves. His accusation of Elizabeth and Abigail in the following extract is very evocative:

¹ Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*, New York, Penguin Classics, 1953, p. 107. All subsequent references to this book will be parenthetically marked *TC* followed by the page number and put in the main text.

Danforth: “In an ordinary crime, how does one defend the accused? One calls up witnesses to prove his innocence. But witchcraft is ipso facto, on its face and by its nature, an invisible crime, is it not? Therefore, who may possibly be witness to it? The witch and the victim. None other. Now we cannot hope the witch can accuse herself; granted? Therefore, we must rely upon her victims – and they do testify, the children certainly do testify. As for the witches, none will deny that we are most eager for their confessions. Therefore, what is left for a lawyer to bring out? I think I have made my point. Have I not? (*TC*:100).

The aforementioned quotation infers that Judge Danforth is compelled to believe whatever the children who pretend to be witches or victims declare. However, such a posture is too easy for a position. A judge should always look for evidences and proofs in any case, which is presented to him. When he or she cannot find them, wisdom suggests prudence before any decision. Besides, to rely on the pretense of the children to condemn people is biased, since these children are compelled to lie and survive. Menacingly, Judge Danforth instructs the children: “either you confess” or “you will be hanged.” (*TC*: 44). Of course, for the children, it would be preferable to pretend to be witches or victims and be saved. From this perspective, fear is at the center of everything and consequently, the accused have only the choice of saying what the judge expects from them. Here is a clear motive for some people to pretend or tell lies. They do so out of fear to avoid punishment or any unwilling situation. Thus, Tituba and Abigail “confess” to be witches so as to save their lives, but this confession is not a true one, because they are just fearing to be hanged. Visibly, Danforth relies on what he thinks, that is his belief. In the same line of thought, Jukka Mikkonen (2021: 3) quoting W. T. Stace says that:

My view is that there is only one kind of truth, which consists in the correct ascription of a predicate or relation to a subject. Accordingly, every artistic truth is or contains a judgment. If this is not the case, then there is no justification for calling it ‘truth.’ It may be, for all I know, something very valuable, something perhaps even more precious than truth. But truth it cannot be, for only that which is capable of being expressed as a judgment can be true or false.

Fear rises from a threat, either overtly expressed or inductively perceived. The violence, which is exerted on an accused person may not be bearable for the latter. In this case, whatever people propose him/ her to stop his/ her sufferings would be accepted without too much questioning. For example, when Parris threatens Tituba saying “you will confess yourself or I will take you out and whip you to your death, Tituba! (*TC*: 44), his words just stand for a threat, since there are no grounds, which show that Tituba is actually a witch. Paris is judging Tituba basing only on the words of Abigail,

without any further investigation. He accuses Tituba as if he sees her himself in witchcraft. Likewise, the words of Putnam charge Tituba of guiltiness: “This woman must be hanged! She must be taken and hanged!” (TC: 44). The fact that Parris and Putnam insist on the accusation of Tituba is a cheating guiltiness on the accused, because they have no tangible proofs to justify their blame. Similarly, Danforth accuses Marry Warren of witchcraft without verifying and requiring the due proofs. So, for them, what comes into their mind is the total truth. But this way of doing conceals a danger. Pointedly, Jason Bradshaw speculates that the fact of “accusing someone of witchcraft became a social convenient way of disposing of one’s enemies.” (1953: 72). In the following passage, the judge Danforth accuses Marry Warren at the trial court before the public and his words transform the false accusation into reality:

It does not escape me that this deposition may be devised to blind us; it may well be that Mary Warren has been conquered by Satan, who sends her here to distract our sacred purpose. If so, her neck will break for it. But if she speaks true, I bid you now drop your guile and confess your pretense, for a quick confession will go easier with you.” (TC: 102).

The aforementioned passage shows that Danforth accuses Mary Warren of witchcraft without even minding her plea and idea. Observably, Danforth is more interested in the others’ opinions than Mary’s. Her viewpoint does not count at all. This is the procedure from which Danforth derives truth and look at reality. Therefore, Danforth is far from truth, but he rather plunges in the accusations of the innocent without any ground.

Truth frees minds and enlightens souls. It is also a guide for life through which human beings interact for serious affairs and political purposes. Truth arouses peace, which is the central foundation of a society’s welfare. In African traditional societies, truth has been a prominent virtue since the period of our forefathers. Owing to its efficiency, value, prominence, and accuracy, human life evolves smoothly and steadily for social harmony and stability. From this perspective, truth is significantly important and an overwhelming power. Pretense arouses accusations, since Abigail complains: “She is blackening my name in the village! She is telling lies about me!” (TC: 23-24). “Abigail, *in tears*: ‘I never knew what pretense Salem was, I never knew the lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men!’” (TC: 24). This quotation means that Christians in *The Crucible*, ought to be the role model of the pagans. Unfortunately, they are among those who tell lies. This

section has shown that most people pretend due to certain constraints such as fear and threat. The coming section will shed more light on the interest as well as the limits of pretense.

1.2 The Interest and the Limits of Pretense

Human behaviors depend upon their thoughts. Thoughts depend upon the daily influences one receives from the environment. B. Hestir reports that “Aristotle clearly thinks language and thought are closely related. Both are tied to judgment and naturally emerge together in the cognitive development of humans, and are intentional insofar as assertions purport to indicate something.” (2013: 194). Very often, people act without their will as the result of their uncontrolled thoughts, which are influenced by external forces. Likewise, when people tell lies or truth, it much depends on how their environment shaped them. K. J. Sibi does well to find Sigmund Freud’s three levels of consciousness in a human being: “According to Sigmund Freud, the human mind has three layers: a conscious mind; a preconscious mind and an unconscious mind.” (2020: 76). For this purpose, we notice that most of the time, the unconscious mind has control on the conscious mind. In this regard, one should not be astonished of some behaviors of people. These behaviors may be controlled by certain external power and therefore, they are not always responsible for all that they say or do. Betrayal, envy and jealousy may push people to pretend by accusing others. Betrayal for example is visible among characters in *The Crucible*:

Betty: “you drank blood, Abby! You didn’t tell him that!

Abigail: “Betty, you never say that again! You will never---

Betty: “you did, you did! You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!

Worries in Salem:

“Mrs. Putnam: to Hale: Is it a natural work to lose seven children before they live a day?” (TC: 39).

What Betty and other children say is quite pretense in the hope of blaming their enemies at the court. Pretense may have two levels, such as the fact of taking truth for lies and vice versa. For instance, a person cannot say that blood has a different color than the red one. In this case, pretense has its limits. This case is quite reflected in the following passage:

Proctor addressing to Hale, “Why do you never wonder if Parris be innocent, or Abigail? Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning as clean as God’s fingers? I’ll tell you what’s walking Salem---vengeance is walking Salem we are what we always were in Salem, but now the little crazy children

are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law!
This warrant's vengeance! I'll not give my wife to vengeance." (TC: 77).

It is obvious that John Proctor is denying the accusation on his wife. This is normal, and he wonders to know what makes the words of the accuser to be true and reliable is important.

Another reason why people tell lies is the lack or lower self-esteem. In this case, most of people who tell lies, are surely running after some profits or gains. For instance, if the only precious means of gaining a post or a grade is to tell lies, then most people will venture in pretense. According to K. Cantareno, there exists two kinds of lies, namely the beneficial and the protective lies: "Beneficial lies are aimed at providing gains at least in a short-term. That is, telling such a lie is plausible when a liar perceives them as an opportunity to acquire additional profits, material or psychological." (2018: 9-10). It is obvious that those who tell lies aim at gaining fame and avoiding staining their social rank. L. B. Gustave maintains his remark of the infusion of lies everywhere to gain fame:

Lies of faces, lies of hearts; lies of thoughts, lies of words; lies of false glory, false talent, false money, false names, false opinions, false loves; lies in all things and even in the best; in art, in thought, in sentiment, in the public welfare, because to-day these things no longer have their end in themselves because they are nothing but the means of obtaining fame and lucre. (2001: 21).

From the psychoanalytic perspective, this quotation clearly means that most of the time, people are more inclined to tell lies than truth, especially when their interests are at stake. In the hope of gaining wealth and celebrity, people become immersed in lies. In *The Crucible*, Betty insists on her thoughts as follows: "I saw George Jacobs with the devil! I saw Goody Doe with the Devil!" (TC: 48). Nothing shows that Betty's statement is true. Rather, she is just telling what will please people and particularly the judge. Also, she is merely calling the names of those she hates or dislikes. Pointedly, Cantareno while quoting DePaulo *et al.* states: "Lying is a particular form of dishonesty where people intentionally try to mislead." (2018: 4). These confessions are all pretense. The children are just accusing the others, especially the ones they hate, and it is an occasion for some people to accuse their enemies who are innocent. Hysteria takes hold of them. Illustratively, Hale says: "I have seen too many frightful proofs in court- the devil is alive in Salem, and we dare not quail to follow wherever the accusing finger points!" (TC: 71). Hale's assertion has no foundation, but it is only limited to his thoughts or suppositions of "too many frightful proofs" (ibid.) This statement has neither physical nor tangible proofs. Hale is just suggesting, guessing and manufacturing truth; hence the limit of pretense.

From this perspective, Hale is in the burden of accusation that pushes people to pretend. Therefore, pretense is often due to certain constraints. Moreover, most characters in *The Crucible* pretend out of their will. For instance, both the judges Hawthorne and Danforth threaten the innocent by obliging them to pretend. Otherwise, they will be hanged. In this case, it is difficult to consider the authenticity of the trials at the court. By the way, B. M. DePaulo speculates, “Lies are told to close friends, lovers, parents, and children.” (2004: 13). Actually, lies are sometimes meant for protection and self-defense. Throughout this section, we have explained that pretense has limits in certain cases. Also, lies are necessary in certain situations like personal interest and self-protection. However, it is significantly important to tell truth in order to secure the balance of life, because one wonders what the world will look like if people only focus on telling lies.

1.3 The Importance of Telling Truth

For the welfare of each human being and for the harmony of the world in general, truth is an essential moral virtue in human life. Moreover, the fact of telling truth is an efficient manner to save one’s life and maintain strong relationships. Some people who keep their dignity and their words show that they have a high self-esteem and self-reliance. In *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller delves into the themes of honesty and pride through the character, John Proctor, the only character who decides to value his honor more than his own life. Moral values and ethics are undoubtable in Proctor’s character in that:

Moral argument can be difficult, and its conclusions unobvious. But to whatever extent such generally acknowledged underlying standards inform the appraisal of particular moral judgements and argument, to that extent the claim that moral discourse is not genuinely assertoric but serves merely as a medium for the expression of attitude will seem unmotivated in contradistinction to the idea that the truth predicate which applies within it is some sort of construct out of the relevant species of discipline. (C. Wright, 1995:211).

Clearly, Proctor pays death as the price of his integrity and honor. It is obvious that he discards himself from any beneficial lies and protective lies. This is the case of Reverend Paris as well as John Proctor by extension. Proctor’s value is very scarce, because few can accept to die for honor. Overtly, the remaining characters prefer their lives to honor. This attitude reveals that they are not only fearful, but they also have lower convictions. Furthermore, if truth is told to gain confidence, to save one’s life or obtain a financial gain, it is also clear that some people maintain to telling truth no matter what the social pressure and threat might be. In so doing, those honest people tell truth in order to have a

psychological peace of mind and gain fame, honor, dignity and confidence from others. Telling truth is a value, because “for philosophers, then, like value educators, the issue of objectivity versus relativity is no small issue. If there is no such thing as truth, much of their discipline is pointless.” (S. T. Garder, 1998: 79).

Visibly, Proctor epitomizes the Puritan values of integrity, honesty and bravery. Thus, *The Crucible* is an advocacy of Puritanism. The playwright creates John Proctor as the ideal Puritan man and expands Puritan values through this character. It is significantly necessary to tell truth in its entire root. The advantages of such a quality are for both the individuals themselves and their surroundings. Those who insistently tell truth are frank and they gain other people’s confidence. People rely more on them and stand by them whatever the case. In fact, society automatically grants certain consideration and responsibilities to those who stick to truth. Such persons are also granted dignity, respect and honor. In fact, nothing is more valuable than human dignity. So, a person who loses his/her dignity is like a hall in the air without strong foundation on the ground. Mackenzie and Bhatt shed more light on the importance of telling truth:

Truth has considerable intrinsic and instrumental value that should be protected and respected. Truth is important to the integrity of the person, institution and nation, to the proper functioning of democracy, and, of course, to how to live well. Indifference to the truth erodes trust, and trust is indispensable to truthfulness. (2019: 219).

Belief, confidence and social consideration are sometimes the fruits of being honest and telling truth. These scarce qualities are not given to anybody. Few people would maintain to truth telling. But those who do hold to truth are rewarded by their surroundings in terms of social consideration and respect. That is the reason why, in Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, John Proctor is illustratively championed for always telling truth despite death challenges. He saves his honor till the end. His wife Elizabeth does recognize it when she declares proudly: “He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!” (*TC*: 145). This evokes that Proctor showed his humanity by keeping his dignity. Such a frank person would be a source of inspiration, a landmark for his own children and the whole society. Alive, he can lead a group. Even dead, his life would inspire moral values to the younger generation who will later on build a stronger, faithful and harmonious society. Telling truth is therefore important, although it is sometimes difficult to tell absolute truth in all domains and at any time. What are the limits of truth?

2. Truth and its Limits

It is often taken for granted that truth is always required in every domain forgetting that there are certain situations, which impose the absence of truth, or at least its hiding. The second part of this article sheds light on the domains that restrict truth and certain aspects of life where truth would be veiled. To do so, we will analyze first the embodiment of the mind of some characters, before looking secondly at truth on trial in the play.

2.1 Embodiment of the Mind of some Characters in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

One talks of truth when there are tangible facts. We talk about truth when we can see it, touch it, taste it, feel it, or generally, experience it. M. P. Lynch is of the view that: “to speak the truth is to speak of reality.” (2001: 2). In addition, when the majority adheres to a reality, then it becomes a popular truth. However, there are certain truths that cannot be seen, touched, tasted, felt, or experienced, but they actually exist. For instance, the metaphysical aspects, the dogmas and spiritual truth are believed without seeing evidences. The existence of God is well-known by most people; however, one cannot see, touch nor communicate to God face to face. In the same vein, there are overwhelming powers and the manifestation of our ancestors that are also a reality despite the difficulty to touch such a reality. Even if one cannot see all those people, we cannot deny their existence. For, as B. Diop sustains in his poem “Les Souffles,” “les morts ne sont pas morts” [*the dead are not dead* (our own translation)]” (1960). Besides, there are certain situations where people cannot show proofs of what they are saying, but deep in their heart, what they are saying is actually true. This is the example of the metaphysical truths, which cannot be demonstrated. Unfortunately, it is difficult for the other people to believe without tangible facts or proofs. For Aristotle, “the criterion of truth does, in fact, exist, and is found in that objective evidence, which determines our assent, and engenders in us certainty of the truth.” (Quoted by J. Lindsay, 1921: 475). This is the example of the trial on Martha Corey who complains in *The Crucible*, but couldn't be listened to because she has no proofs but only her words:

Hathorne's Voice: “now, Martha Corey, there is abundant evidence in our hands to show that you have given yourself to the reading of fortunes. Do you deny it?”

Martha Corey: “I am innocent to a witch. I know not what a witch is.”

Hathorne: “how do you know, then, that you are not a witch?”

Martha Corey's Voice: "if I were, I would know it." (TC: 83-84).

Danforth's question is a temptation that aims at dribbling to Martha Corey in order to bring her to pretend. In this case, it is obvious that truth is not always limited to proofs. In another way round, truth is not only defined in the light of proofs, facts, and evidence. Human mind is most of the time controlled by the inner thoughts that rise from the unconscious mind. Henceforth, the mind of a human being consists of two levels, namely the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. In the same line of thought, G. Keith and J. LeBihan elucidates that:

The idea that there are unconscious processes, operations in mind that cannot be represented, is the key concept of psychoanalysis. Repression is the action that produces the unconscious by rendering experiences, thoughts, desires and memories irretrievable. Psychoanalysis is the process whereby clues to repression are recognized and repressed in a way that can be understood by the conscious mind. (1996: 147).

From this passage, it is obvious that the conscious mind is straightly attached to the thoughts, desire, and feelings of an individual. Bounding in the same perspective, Aamir speculates that "there are certain types of situations that are typically human." (2014: 44). Like external factors, this quotation clearly indicates that certain overwhelming power and mysterious forces have control on human beings. In a nutshell, truth is not always told in every domain, and it also has flaws like other human virtues. The last coming section will elaborate on truth that results from trial and show whether all that judges admit on trial in *The Crucible* is actually true.

2.2 Truth on Trial in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

Sometimes ignorance prevents people from going deeper to discover proofs, they rather venture on superficial elements to draw reality. It is often taken for granted that all that is said during a court trial, at the palace of justice, is purely true and fair. M. P. Lynch puts it clearly that: "in court, witnesses swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." (2001: 1). However, lies and accusation are still present and consequently, the innocent is sometimes taken for the guilty. Judges are human beings made of blood and flesh. In other words, they may sometimes make mistakes unconsciously as all human beings may do. So, one wonders how it may be possible for those judges to always tell the authentic truth. Bounding in the same sense, Charles Taylor states: "The wrong stance of reason is that of objectification, and the application of instrumental reason, the right stance is that which brings to authentic expression what we have within us." (1996: 10). This extract clearly means

that emotions are at the core the decisions people make and all that they say The significance of truth is obvious in the following abstract from *The Crucible*: “Proctor addressing to Hale, “Why do you never wonder if Parris be innocent, or Abigail? Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning as clean as God’s fingers?” (TC: 77). From this angle, one cannot deny that human beings are not perfect. Likewise, all that judges say regarding people is not always true. In this case, the victims are taken for the guilty and vice versa. M. Thon Acohin and K. E. Awesso confirm this situation in the following passage: “Suspicion can quickly lead to accusation without passing through the filter of evidence and proofs.” (2022: 14). One wonders if all that the judges utter is actually true. From this angle, it has resulted that certain situations like humor, acquaintance, favoritism, personal interest, social validation, to name but a few, prevent truth from being systematically triumphing. Giles corroborates: “It’s a pity, Ezekiel, that an honest tailor might have gone to Heaven must burn in hell. You’ll burn for this, do you know it? (TC: 72). It means that the one who is supposed to be honest is taken as a victim due to the final decision of the court. Visibly, corruption blocks truth, veils reality and betrays truth in some circumstances. A judge with his or her human flaws is far from revealing a total and absolute truth. In this respect, the guilty may become the innocent and vice versa. The focus of Arthur Miller by making some characters lie and others tell truth is to let his readers know the outcome the liars may have and the advantages people gain when they tell truth. That is to say, Miller lets his readers know that when they get engaged in lying, their dignity is at stake. However, those who tell truth gain honor, dignity and fame. Therefore, Arthur Miller through his play, *The Crucible*, encourages people to tell truth for their own welfare.

Conclusion

This article explored the ethics of truth in Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. First, it has shown that, instinctively, most people are likely to tell lies than truth, especially when their life is jeopardized or their interests are at stake. The paper analyzed the inner thoughts of characters as well as their conscious and the unconscious mind to reveal the reasons that push them to prefer truth to lies. It has shown that celebrity, self-interest, political purposes, self-protection are among the fundamental motives that make lies prevail in our societies nowadays. False confessions and pretense are all included into lies. This paper also extended on the importance of telling truth in the current world.

Thereafter, the study has demonstrated that, most of the time, those who tell truth gain people's confidence, respect and consideration. Unfortunately, only few people would maintain the principle of telling truth whatever the situation. This is the typical example of John Proctor in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. He is the only character among many to totally devote himself to telling truth. Though he dies at the end, he keeps his honor, dignity, bravery and self-esteem. The playwright creates John Proctor as the ideal Puritan man and expands Puritan values through this character. Arthur Miller creates the context of Salem as pretext to infuse in his readership the values of honor, dignity, pride, probity and self-esteem. Miller empowers John Proctor to be stick to truth, because he intends to draw the awareness of the young generation on the advantages of telling truth. Nevertheless, the current article has shown that there are still situations where one cannot totally or entirely give the proofs of truth. For instance, the spiritual and metaphysical aspects. This paper has also raised the issue of the authentic truth at the court trials. It has shown that judges are human beings with both their qualities and flaws. In fact, absolute truth still remains questionable in a relative world and complex human life. This study of the ethics of truth in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* has shown that telling truth is a chore moral value in order to build a faithful, authentic and harmonious world.

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