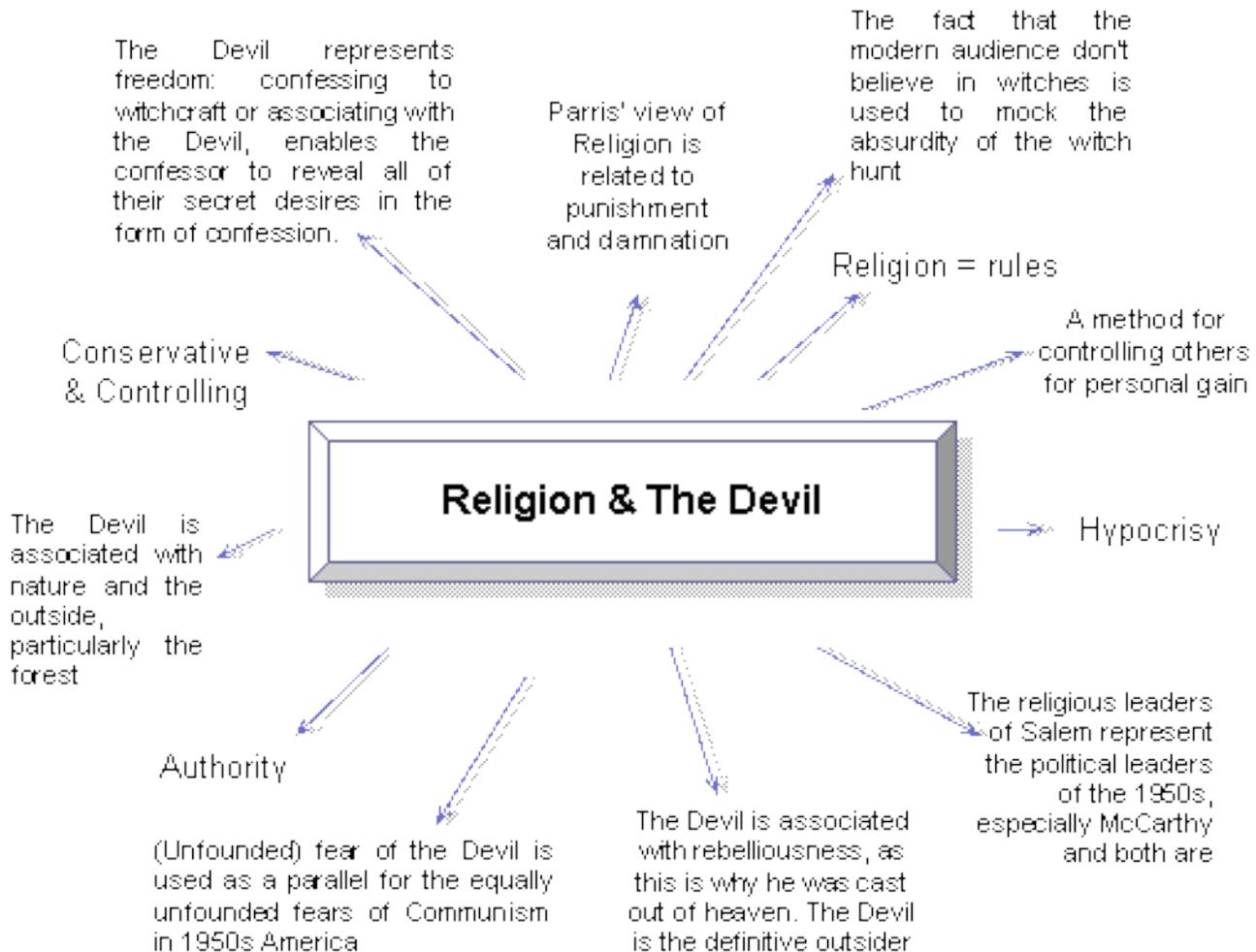


Motif Tracking: The Crucible – Religion & The Devil



Summary:

The motif of the Devil is used to contrast with that of God, to create a binary opposition which symbolizes the struggle between evil and good. The motif of the Devil and Satan appears as a manipulative tool that is used by various characters, for instance Abigail, to accuse people (her enemies) of witchcraft, thus reflecting how people in Miller's own time used accusations of Communism to attack their enemies. Additionally, the motif is a tool to categorise the people of Salem; they are either with God and therefore good, or against Him, by practicing witchcraft. Hence, the motif can be seen as a form of prejudice and suppression.

The belief in witches is evident from the beginning of the play and escalates into hysteria without any clear proof. This absurd situation is intended to reflect the American society of the 1950's and the strong paranoia of Communism due to McCarthyism. Ironically, those who would seem like the most religious characters in the play, are in fact the least pure as firstly they sentence people to death with no proper evidence and secondly, characters such as Hawthorn for instance in the last Act 'praise God' with relief once Proctor confesses, not because his soul will now be saved, but because the court will not be undermined, which reveals how distorted his values have become.

Quotations:

Page	Quotation	Analysis
15	The virgin forest was the Devil's last preserve	The introduction of the motif immediately establishes the association of evil and mysticism with the forest. The forest is therefore a contrast to the strictly religious town of Salem. The contrast between the word "virgin" and "Devil" highlights how evil is pillaging innocence.
17	Old scores could be settled on a plane of heavenly combat between Lucifer and the Lord	This indicates to the audience that the language of the bible and the whole concept of a witchhunt where the followers of the devil were 'rooted out' was adopted by the townspeople in order to elevate their otherwise petty squabbles to the level of an epic battle between good and evil. Hence their petty jealousies and land disputes no longer seemed sordid and instead felt "perfectly justified", indeed they had become a matter of religious duty. Thus although the town of Salem was highly religious (indeed Puritanical), there is a heavy irony and hypocrisy at work here in that they would use the Lord as an excuse to gain back a piece of land.
19	Parris: Abominations are done in the forest.	In this case, Parris is talking about the dances/rituals performed by Abigail and the girls and therefore relating to Tituba's beliefs. Describing this other religion as 'abominations' portrays how conservative and ignorant Parris is of other cultures. Furthermore, it shows how he will not accept any other religion which reflects the conservative manner of the town of Salem, which will therefore lead it to initiate the witch-hunts. This reflects how McCarthy and his followers were so strongly prejudiced against those followers of Communism ... indeed any deviation from Capitalism was deemed an abomination of sorts.
21	Mrs. Putnam: It is a marvel. It is surely a stroke of hell upon you. The Devil's touch is heavier than sick	Here a 'stroke of hell' is spoken in a delighted tone which is echoed by Mrs. Putnam's opening sentence 'It is a marvel.' Mrs. Putnam represents a large number of characters in Salem, as her 'twisted soul' (p.21) and cold heartedness is a result of the heavily repressive society in which she lives which has caused her (and many others) to turn against each other and derive a malicious enjoyment from the persecution and misery of other people.

24	Putnam: Don't you understand it, sir? There is a murdering which among us, bound to keep herself in the dark.	<p>This is the beginning of the accusations of witchcraft, there is no evidence to support this claim however it seems reasonable to the characters, as for instance Mercy subsequently states that Betty gave a 'powerful sneeze'. In retrospect, this paranoia of witches by the characters is utilized in order to ridicule them and further highlight the absurdity of the entire situation. Miller emphasizes this inconceivable situation, in order to clearly reflect the US in the 1950's, when he believed people were acting in a ridiculous manner and making accusations of communism against others based on nothing but rumours presented as facts.</p> <p>Additionally, the idea of darkness indicates secrecy and something sinister. The idea that witches exist is a religious one and hence, shows how religion is ultimately responsible for the fear and hysteria that will sweep through Salem. In the same way it is an equally unfounded political belief, the fear of Communism, that Miller sees as responsible for the fear and hysteria sweeping through America in the 1950s.</p>
26	I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a point reckoning that will shudder you.	This quotation shows Abigail's true nature, she is violent, cruel and oppressive, quite unlike the naïve, religious girl she claims to be in front of the elders.
34	Proctor: There are many others who stay away from church these days because you hardly ever mention God anymore.	In this section we see the contrast between Parris' and Proctor's view on religion in Salem. Parris' conception of religion consists of an obsession with Hell fire and is focused on punishment, conveying a very puritanical and repressive perspective of religion. Miller highlights this in order to represent how he believes these authorities use fear in order to control the people, similar to McCarthyism in the 1950's America. Parris' view contrasts with that of Proctor, as Proctor is here disagreeing with the established form of religion, pointing out that it is used in the wrong manner as it should be a calmer, gentler concept of the form expressed by Rebecca Nurse.
37	'The child she had allegedly been afflicting recovered her normal behaviour'	This once again represents the absurd faith that the people of Salem have in witches, reflecting the belief of the constant threat of communism in

		America.
37	We conceive the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology	This quotation indicates that we generally believe that the Devil is required in order for the universe to function because it is through opposition with evil that goodness gets its meaning. However, Miller may be challenging this fundamental assumption and pointing out that there is no reason why both Communism and Capitalism or Puritan Christianity and Tituba's voodoo cannot both be viewed as holy without an opposition being created between the two.
37	It is impossible for most men to conceive of a morality within sin as of an earth without 'sky.'	This quotation indicates that there cannot be a God without the Devil, as they are reliant upon each other. Within 'The Crucible', this seems to be true as all those that can recite the ten commandments are with God and those that can't are immediately deemed as those that perform witchcraft. This highlights the absurd nature of the 'evidence' used to persecute the witches, as being unable to recite the commandments is not an indication that the person is working for the devil.
37	Positive and negative are attributes of the same force, in which good and evil are relative, ever-changing, and always joined to the same phenomenon	This quotation is an important contribution to the motif, as well as a crucial part of the play in general. This is due to the revelation that God and the Devil stem from the same event and that they are relative to one another, as well as "ever-changing." This highlights that the view that a person is good or evil is a subjective opinion. For instance, Abigail is regarded as an upstanding child by Parris (until she steals from him) but is regarded by those who truly know her (for instance Proctor) as an evil, manipulative person. In the same way there is nothing inherently 'good' about Capitalism or 'bad' about Communism. It all depends on your point of view.
38	'the political inspiration of the devil'	This quotation reflects Miller's belief that the Devil (religion) is a political tool and politically inspired, by which he means that it is used for the control of the people. This escalating fear of witches is used in order to control the people of Salem, by the authorities, in the same way that the fear of communism in America created a strong paranoia, which Miller feels was being used to control the public.

38	The necessity of the Devil may become evident as a weapon, a weapon designed and used time and time again in every age to whip men into a surrender to a particular church or church-state	<p>The idea that the Devil exists to force people to comply with one idea or belief can be seen throughout Miller's play; the girls accuse their enemies of being workers of the Devil and allow them to be persecuted and hanged. Hence, the motif is used by Abigail and others as a weapon in order to achieve personal gains. An implication that the audience may get from the narrator is that religion, or at least the existence of the Devil is not to be feared as many believe; he is merely a cardboard cut out that is used to scare.</p> <p>This parallels America in the 1950s, during McCarthyism, as communism was similarly used as a weapon in order to persecute one's enemies.</p>
39	The Catholic Church is "famous for cultivating Lucifer as the arch-fiend, but the Church's enemies relied no less upon the Old Boy to keep the human mind enthralled."	This quotation shows how, although there are two opposing groups to any situation, they both use images of evil (i.e. the Devil) for personal motives, indicating the necessity of the Devil, both to create an eternal enemy, but also to ensure a sense of curiosity within the minds of people. This is related to the situation in Salem, as people used the Devil to promote individual needs and for others to be intrigued for instance, the situation with Betty and her supposed flying over roofs.
39	The Devil "is a wily one, and, until an hour before he fell, even God thought him beautiful in Heaven."	This quotation seems to be quite fitting of Abigail. The judges and Parris thought that Abigail was a good child, despite the protests of Proctor. They were not proven wrong until it is revealed that Abigail stole from Parris at the end of the play.
39	Sex, sin, and the Devil were early linked, and so they continued to be in Salem	This quotation emphasizes that association between witchcraft, dancing, nudity and in general, individual freedom (of thoughts and actions) and the Devil within Salem. The fact that something as obviously harmless as dancing is linked to Devil worship is used to mock the authorities of Salem which is in turn meant to reflect upon the authorities of Miller's own time who also view something harmless, in this case Communist beliefs, as akin to the worst of evils.
40	Our opposites are always robed in sexual sin, and it is from this unconscious conviction that demonology gains both its	This quotation is related to the actions of the town's people of Salem during Betty's strange behavior: Parris was scared as the girls were dancing naked within the forest, whilst others,

	attractive sensuality and its capacity to infuriate and frighten.	such as Mrs. Putnam were fascinated with the probability that Betty had been flying over roofs and under the Devil's claws.
41	The Devil is precise; the marks of his presence are definite as stone	This quotation by Hale emphasizes the idea of the people of Salem at that time, that it was possible to tell whether someone was good or bad, through tell-tale signs. However, the evidence that was used to convict people was flimsy and there is no precise way to deem someone good or evil. This in turn relates to the 1950s in America where communism was deemed to have specific traits and therefore, people assumed that you could identify Communists in this way, a belief that was equally flimsy.
48	You are God's instrument put in our hands to discover the Devil's agents among us.	This is a possible trigger that causes Abigail to reveal the 'truth' of what happened, early on within the play. Tituba is applauded for revealing the truth and Abigail is cunning enough to realize that by speaking the truth also, she is able to get away with dancing in the forest. Abigail can therefore be seen as a manipulating the elders within Salem. It can be seen that although Tituba talked to the Devil, she was still able to be God's child for she was helping to point out other witches. This implausibly sudden transition from Devil worshipper to tool of God is used to emphasise the absurdity of the witch hunts in Salem and, similarly, the absurd situation that existed in the U.S. where only those who turned confessor against their fellow Communists, would be saved. Clearly this will encourage people to confess regardless of whether or not their confessions are the truth.
49	I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil!	Association of people with the Devil causes them to be seen as evil, and not worthy of God. There is the immediate sense that the people that are named by Abigail have somehow irritated her and hence, she is using the motif of the Devil for personal revenge. Additionally, by confessing that she saw others with the Devil ensures that she is no longer in trouble, like Tituba.
58	Mary Warren: 'the Devil is loose in Salem, Mr. Proctor, we must discover where he's hiding.'	Miller once again uses Mary's conviction of the certainty of witchcraft in order to depict the irrational nature of the situation. Furthermore, he also want us to realize that by looking back in the

		past, we can clearly see through witch-craft, then we should also be able to 'see through' the absurd situation created by the fear and paranoia of communism, which like the witch-hunts, seems so obvious yet no one notices it.
62	Hale: 'this is a strange time, mister. No man may longer doubt the powers of the dark are gathered in monstrous attack upon this village. There is too much evidence now to deny it.'	This once again highlights the absurd situation that the characters are creating for themselves. The fact that Hale uses strong words such as 'may no longer doubt' and 'too much evidence to deny it' reinforces this absurdity as the characters are imposing these views on themselves, believing that there is evidence for this 'invisible crime'. In the same way the fear of Communism is equally strongly believed but equally unjustified.
66	Elizabeth: 'I cannot think the Devil may own a woman's soul, Mr. Hale (...) I do not believe it.'	In this case Elizabeth denies the existence of the Devil in a woman, and at the same time manages to portray herself as innocent, which elevates her as a character. Furthermore, the use of the motif of religion is here used to portray elements of heroism in Elizabeth as she realizes the absurdity of the situation and is willing to speak out against the 'official view' even though it will endanger her.
104	You're the devil's man!	Mary Warren betrays Proctor when she submits to the pressure of Abigail and the other girls and she lies in front of Parris and the judges. This turning point signifies the beginning of Proctor's failure to make the court accept his version of the events and the failure of the hero to convince the court to share his point of view further undermines their credibility.
108	'Oh, it be no Hell in Barbados. Devil, him be pleasure-man in Barbados, him be singin' and dancin' in Barbados. It's you folks – you riles him up 'round here; it be too cold 'round here for that Old Boy.'	<p>When the women are in prison, there are several interpretations of their over-dramatic behavior when they are calling and wanting to meet the Devil.</p> <p>Firstly, this sense of insanity in the beginning of the Act, reflects the madness that is running through Salem.</p> <p>Secondly, the fact that the Devil is portrayed as a fun and the women are having fun with it, by dancing and shouting and thus enjoying a freedom that they did not have before. Now that they have confessed to witchcraft, they are 'allowed' to act in such a bizarre way, a way</p>

		<p>which would not have be considered as acceptable in society before.</p> <p>Finally, portraying the idea of the Devil as fun contrasts with the coldness of Salem, as this town that the people think is pure in fact worst than hell.</p>
114	Hale: I come to do the Devil's work.	This shows how deeply changed Hale is, as he needs to break commandments in order to the save the lives of people. This quotation further reinforces the twisted manner of the justice system in Salem, as the good work that Hale is doing, saving people's lives, is called the 'Devil's work'.
118	Hathorne: <i>(with great relief and gratitude)</i> Praise to God, man, praise to God.'	This quotation reveals the hypocrisy of the Salem court, as the Puritans are in fact not pure and rather shallow, as this quotation represents his desperation for this confession of Proctor, a desperation not born of his desire for the truth (he is presumably partly aware that the confession would be a lie) but rather a desire to prevent people from questioning the judgment of the court.
124	I have given you my soul; leave me my name!	This quotation reflects Proctor's unwillingness to sign the confession and his desire not to dishonor his fellow prisoners, as he would not be able to live with himself knowing that other innocents died whilst he lived. It is ultimately his inability to live with himself if he lies that convinces Proctor that he is a good enough man to die.

Key Moments:

One key moment for the motif of Religion in 'The Crucible' is when Hale states that he has 'Come to do the Devil's work.' This section is important as it firstly highlights the transformation Hale has gone through in the course of the play, by changing from an expert of witches to denouncing the court. The struggle and conversion that Hale encounters suggests elements of heroism as he has come to realize the absurdity of the situation and further sacrifices his name and his job, which depended on his belief in the existence of witches, in order to do the right thing. Furthermore, Hale is possibly a model for what Miller wants the average American to do: they should realize the madness of McCarthyism. Moreover, the twisted and impure practice of religion in Salem is highlighted through this quotation, as the actions of saving people's lives is described as the 'Devil's work' when, clearly, saving the lives of the honest is a good thing.

Another key quotation is 'It is impossible for most men to conceive of a morality within sin as of an earth without 'sky.' Much of the narrator's comments during the introduction of Reverend Hale are

significant, reflecting what happened in Salem, as well as what was happening in the 1950s during the McCarthy witchhunt. This is because the section explains how God and the Devil (and hence, what they represent: good and evil) co-exist as they stem from the same events, and that it is a person's subjective point of view that deems someone good or evil. Despite their similar basis, however, the two concepts of good and evil become split into polar opposites and, Miller believes, they are used to manipulate and control people as fear of what is 'evil' is used to drive them towards what is accepted currently as 'good'.