

# Sartre and the Movies – *The Witches of Salem (Les Sorcières de Salem)* as A Screenplay about Oppression and Resistance

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Sartre and the Movies

Sartre is well known as philosopher and writer of literary texts, but only few know him as the author of screenplays, although the French scenarist Nino Frank, who worked with Sartre on the scenario *Typhus*, attested him a sensibility closer to the cinema than to the theater. Sartre himself was very well aware of the fact that his relationship to the cinema was one of deplorable failures, as he himself expressed it. However, it was also a love story. As a child, he went to the movies together with his mother. Already in 1924, he analyzed the phenomenological character of cinema in the *Carnet Midy* and he wrote an essay entitled *Apology for the Cinema: Defense and illustration of an International Art*, in which he defended cinema against the views of Henri Bergson and Alain. In her biographies, Simone de Beauvoir gave account of Sartre and his friends at the ENS enthusing about films and even shooting their own movies. When Sartre as a teacher had to give a speech at the yearend ceremony at his high school in Le Havre in 1931, he chose as a subject *The Cinematographic Art*. Differently from Anatole France who saw in the movies the end of civilization, Sartre praised them as a new art that can teach the students. This happened all at a time when movies were considered as a kind of entertainment for servants, but not as a form of art for the educated bourgeois élite.

When Sartre described his relationship as one of deplorable failures, he most probably referred to the eleven scenarios he wrote. In 1943, Sartre signed a contract with the French film production company Pathé. This contract allowed him in September 1944 to take indefinite leave from his duties as a teacher at the Lycée Condorcet and to make his living as a writer. Between 1943 and 1946, Sartre delivered eight screenplays. Two of them were filmed:

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<sup>1</sup> This is an extended version of a presentation given at the conference of the North American Sartre Society at the Mary Washington University in Fredericksburg on Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

- *Les Jeux sont faits/The Chips Are Down*: by Jean Delannoy in 1947, scenario written by Jacques-Laurent Bost, Sartre and Delannoy; actors: Micheline Presle as Eva Charlier, Marcel Pagliero as Pierre Dumaine, Mouloudji as Lucien Derjeu (the traitor), Marguerite Moreno as the lady of the other world, and Charles Dullin as the marquis; this film entered into the 1947 Cannes Film Festival; the screenplay was published in 1947.
- *Typhus*: this screenplay was produced as a Franco-Mexican production by Yves Allégret under the title *Les Orgueilleux/The Proud and the Beautiful* in 1953; Sartre even got a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Story in the U.S., although he had withdrawn his name from this film, since Jean Aurenche and Jean Clouzot had considerably revised the scenario and its dialogues; this film entered the 1953 film Festival of Venice; scenario by Yves Allégret, Pierre Bost, Jean Aurenche; Michèle Morgan as Nellie, Gérard Philipe as Georges, Carlos López Moctezuma as Doctor and Víctor Manuel Mendoza as Don Rodrigo. The film earned a lot of acclaim due to its use of two languages (Spanish and French) and the omnipresence of Mexican music. The screenplay was published in 2007.

Two of the screenplays were only published:

- *L'Engrenage/In the Mesh*: the screenplay was published in 1948 and saw its premiere as a theater in Paris in 1969. The theme of *In the Mesh* was used by Sartre again in *Les Mains Sales/Dirty Hands* (1948). *L'Engrenage* originally even bore the title *Les Mains sales*.
- *Les Faux Nez/False Noses*: the screenplay was published in 1947, saw its premiere as a theater in Switzerland in 1948 and was produced as a TV film in Germany in 1955.

The other four scenarios were not released during Sartre's lifetime:

- *L'Apprenti Sorcier/The Sorcerer's Apprentice*: a fantastic tale about the incurables at Berck-Plage.
- *La Grande Peur/The Great Fear*: a scenario about the collision between Saturn and the Earth.
- *Résistance*: a screenplay about the complicated circumstances around the French résistance; published in 2000.
- *Histoire de nègre*: of this screenplay, we do not know anything. However, it could have become a part of *The Respectful Prostitute*.

In 1946/47, Sartre intended to publish the scenarios, he however failed due to the fact that he did not get the rights from Pathé. During this second period of close involvement with the film, Sartre also wrote several articles about the film industry. Two were published in the *Lettres*

*Françaises* in 1944 before the liberation (*Un film pour l'après-guerre; Puissance du cinéma*), five in the French newspaper *Combat* during his first trip to the U.S. in 1945 where Sartre gave a good account of the American film industry (*Hollywood 1945; Comment les Américains font leur films; Hollywood évolue; Un Film sur Wilson a apporté des voix à Roosevelt; Hollywood aura demain un concurrent de plus : Le Mexique*). In the same year, Sartre wrote a critique of Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (*Quand Hollywood veut faire penser... „Citizen Kane" d'Orson Welles*), and two years later he gave a lecture about cinematographic language at the French congress of film studies.

Sartre's third and last period of great interest in the movies started in 1955 when he began to work on a scenario called

- *Joseph Le Bon*: a scenario about an activist of the French revolution and friend of Robespierre; Sartre started to write it in 1955; fragments of this screenplay were published in 2005 and 2006.

The most probable reason for not finishing this scenario is that at the end of 1955 Sartre began to work on the scenario for

- *Les Sorcières de Salem/The Witches of Salem*: Sartre finished this screenplay within six months. The film was produced, the screenplay however never published although Sartre once had a project to publish the text together with *Typhus*.

Two other projects failed:

- *Germinal*, a drama about a strike in the mining industry, which Émile Zola published in 1885; it did not go beyond some initial talks in 1956/57.
- *Freud*: Sartre had written this scenario upon John Huston's request in 1958/59; since Sartre submitted a screenplay for a film of five to seven hours, Huston gave Sartre's draft to Charles Kaufmann and Wolfgang Reinhart for revision; thereupon Sartre had his name removed from the credits. Huston's *Freud: the Secret Passion* was first shown in cinema in 1962.

Thereafter, Sartre never worked on a screenplay again, but he remained interested in what was happening in the world of the movies. In 1962, he actively defended Andrei Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood*, which was under fire from the Italian communists. They regarded this film, which had won the Golden Lion of the Venice film festival, as decadent since it condemned war by showing its negative effects on the boy Ivan. In 1963 Sartre criticized the Cannes film festival for not admitting Nico Papatakis's *Les Abysses*, a sociocritical movie based on Jean Genet's *Les Bonnes/The Maids*. And for a last time, Sartre got involved in a discussion about a film when Marcel Ophüls's *Le Chagrin et la Pitié/The Sorrow and the Pity* was

shown in Paris in 1971. The film documented the widespread collaboration between French and Germans during the time of the occupation 1940 to 1944, which was quite in line with Sartre's own description of the situation in his essay *Paris sous l'occupation*, published in London in November 1944. The film was produced in 1969, but was shown in France only in 1971. At the discussion about the film which was published in *La Cause du Peuple-J'accuse* in May 1971, Sartre held off and mostly left the room to two workers and former members of the communist resistance who criticized the film for neglecting the workers'=communist resistance.

None of Sartre's scenarios and essays about movies left any significant trace, even not among Sartreans. Partly this may have been the case, because the scenarios, together with Sartre's *La Nausée* and the other novels, stand more in the tradition of Sartre's philosophy of contingency, influenced by Henri Bergson. One rarely finds in the screenplays elements of Sartre's philosophy of liberation and commitment, for which Sartre mainly earned his reputation in the twenty-five years following the end of World War II, a philosophy that, by the way, was more influenced by André Malraux than by Husserl and Heidegger. Only since the turn of the millennium, we can observe a stronger interest in the works in the Bergsonian line of philosophy, among them also the scenarios.

This neglect of Sartre's opus in the field of the movies is regrettable since it prevents an adequate view on Sartre's aesthetics. Well known is Sartre's differentiation between prose and poetry in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?/What is literature?* of 1947. If we combine this work with the ideas he wrote down in 1924, we obtain a theory covering a broad array of artistic work. Poem is the field where form dominates over content. Whereas theater serves to express abstract ideas, film is the ideal medium to express contingency and totality. Only the film can show the human being's psyche in all its depths. The novel is somewhere between the theater and the film. Sartre indeed adhered to this theory in his artistic work: his dramas are dominated by philosophical ideas, whereas his philosophy is largely missing in his scenarios, which are dominated by the phenomenological description of contingency.

Of all the scenarios Sartre wrote, *The Witches of Salem* was the most successful one. Its three main actors, Yves Montand as John Proctor, Simone Signoret as Elisabeth Proctor, and Mylène Demongeot as Abigail Williams, won a prize at the International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary (Czechoslovakia) in 1957 for the best collective acting and Signoret won additionally the reward of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts in 1958 as the best foreign actress. The film was produced by Raymond Rouleau as director. It was a co-production between France and the former German Democratic Republic. The film was mainly shot in Germany—Babelsberg in Potsdam near Berlin, today the oldest large-scale film studio in the world which produces films since 1912—, whereas almost all speaking parts were cast by French actors. The German side bore about twenty percent of the cost. The major production work had already finished when the Soviets crushed the Hungarian rebellion in October/November 1956. Sartre's criticism of these events almost led to the film's stillbirth. Albert Wilkening, the director of DEFA, the East-German film production company, could however get the approval to finish the film against opposition by the ideological bureaucrats in the ministry of culture.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The time between the XX Congress of the CPSU in February 1956 with Khrushchev's secret speech about Stalin's personality cult and dictatorship and the 35<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Central Committee of the East German SED in February 1958 when Walter Ulbricht regained a majority for his Stalinist course was a time of uncertainty and a lot of infighting within the SED. Those under Ulbricht's leadership wanted to continue the course of before 1952 with only limited mitigations whereas a few men like Wolfgang Harich and his collaborators strove for a deeper destalinization. At the 33<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Central Committee in October 1957, its secretary Paul Wandel in charge of culture and education was forced to step down. In his self-criticism, he conceded to have admitted "petit-bourgeois anarchy" at DEFA (Guntolf Herzberg, *Anpassung und Aufbegehren* (Christoph Links: Berlin 2006) 295).

DEFA and Sartre, this was a story basically determined by the policy of the SED. In the film *Story of a Young Couple* (*Roman einer jungen Ehe*, 1952, directed by Kurt Maetzig, one of the most respected filmmakers of the GDR), a young couple decides to divorce, since the husband accepts to play a role in *Dirty Hands* considered as a shameless, disgusting play by his young wife. Thereafter, the period of thaw started, which ended in the co-production of *The Witches of Salem*. There were plans to turn *Nekrassov* as a movie in 1956. Heinar Kipphardt should have written the scenario for a film to be directed by Erich Engel. In November 1956, the premiere of *Nekrassov* as a drama took place at the People's Theater (Volksbühne) in the presence of Wilhelm Pieck, the president of the GDR. However, Sartre's criticism of the Soviet intervention in Hungary in

That the film was a success is not only shown by the fact that the film won the two prizes mentioned before, but also by the releases in various countries. In France it was released in April 57. The East-Germans followed half a year later with a version which was shortened by about 32 minutes. The cuts they made showed hardly any ideological reasons, but served rather the target to cut it down from the 145 minutes—Sartre's strong point was certainly not to be short—to a length better suitable for cinemas. In Western Germany, Italy, and the United States, the film was released in 1958. More countries such as Brazil, three Scandinavian countries, Portugal, Greece, and some countries in Communist Eastern Europe followed. Partly the title was changed into "The Virgins of Salem".

This most successful of the scenarios written by Sartre has however been neglected by almost all Sartre scholars. The scenario is still unpublished. Partly this may have been caused by Arthur Miller who prohibited the film to be shown if one is to believe Mylène Demongeot, the actress who played Abigail in the film. After many years, Pathé was finally allowed to restore the film and to bring a copy to the market in 2017. But even Beauvoir was reticent and devoted just a line to this important work of Sartre in her autobiography *Force of Circumstance*. There she simply stated that Sartre had finally written a scenario to Miller's play *The Crucible* and that Raymond Rouleau was supposed to be the director of the film.

She did not give any further information about the background. This astonishes very much since McCarthyism, which was the motive behind *The Crucible*, was a hot issue at that time, also for Beauvoir. Nelson Algren, her lover, was denied a passport to travel to Paris to see her between 1953 and 1960. Beauvoir's own difficulties with obtaining a visa for the U.S. and Fernando Gerassi's problems—Gerassi was a close friend of Sartre and Beauvoir—in getting American citizenship would have been reasons enough to give this scenario a more prominent status. Already in 1954, Sartre started a project to write an anti-anticommunist drama about a Jewish lawyer at the U.N. who was threatened to be exposed as a former supporter of communism. The piece of which only a few pages were published posthumously is known under the name *La Part du feu*. Like Willy Loman, the hero of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* of 1949, Sartre's principal figure commits suicide. Shortly thereafter, in 1955, Sartre wrote his farce *Nekrassov*, a piece against the French press of the 1950s hyperventilating about the Red Scare. A meeting between Sartre and Miller, who had written *The Crucible* in 1953 and was already an author of international reputation, was in discussion, but did not materialize, most probably due to Miller's problems in getting a passport.

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November 1956 brought the collaboration with DEFA to an end. The film *Nekrassov* was never produced.

As to the content of *The Witches of Salem*, no immediate reason can be recognized that could explain the neglect this piece experienced by the Sartreans. *The Witches of Salem* as a piece against McCarthyism and the persecution of dissenters should have always been very popular amongst them. And this should be even more the case today in a time of a rising tide of populism, when *Nekrassov* is changing its character of a farce to a reality show.

The Witches of Salem – a piece about oppression and resistance

At a first glance, *The Witches of Salem* fall like *Nekrassov* into the category of the politically motivated works. Both are obvious pieces against the McCarthyism of that time. The political fight against McCarthyism was something that united Miller and Sartre. Miller wrote in the comments that form an integral part of the play:

MILLER: THE CRUCIBLE (PLAY)

At this writing, only England has held back before the temptations of contemporary diabolism. In the countries of the Communist ideology, all resistance of any import is linked to the totally malign capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell. [...] while there were no witches then, there are Communists and capitalists now, and in each camp there is certain proof that spies of each side are at work undermining the other.

And in a similar tone Sartre had Deputy Governor Danforth saying in the scenario:

SARTRE: THE WITCHES OF SALEM

DANFORTH: You know our country is in grave danger? The enemy is within, sir, in our own homes. The woe that befalls you is part of a vast conspiracy, stretching to Boston.

Until recently, when Brexit, Trump, and fake news became topics high on the political agenda, works against McCarthyism were not of great political relevance anymore. This has definitely altered by today. Maybe the changed political circumstances will bring back *Nekrassov* and *The Witches of Salem* into today's people's mind.

However, it would be wrong to understand *The Witches of Salem* only as a piece against McCarthyism and the persecution of dissenters, *The Witches of Salem* are a film about oppression and resistance in a more general way. The religious and political leaders of oppression in the movie are all male members of the white Anglo-Saxon protestant élite. Most prominent among them are Deputy Governor Thomas Danforth, Thomas Putnam, the richest man in the area and Sartre's typical *salaud* ("I'm the richest man in Salem. God has blessed my work."), and Reverend Parris. On the other side, we have the accused, farmers like John Proctor, Giles Corey, and Francis Nurse. The majority of the accused were women, particularly old and economically weak women like Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. And additionally to these political, religious, socioeconomic, and gender-related conflicts, *The Witches of Salem* have a racial dimension due to Tituba, the slave Reverend Parris had brought from Barbados to Massachusetts.

Already in Miller's drama *The Crucible*, we can find this unique blend of various kinds of oppression. Apart from the topic of McCarthyism, it most probably was this "attractive" blend of different conflicts that intrigued Sartre to write the scenario. Accordingly, Sartre even increased the tensions in the Salem society in his scenario and also the resistance by the local heroes. He did it to such an extent that Miller described Sartre's screenplay in his essay *Arthur Miller on The Crucible* of 1972 as 'overly Marxist screenplay'. To rate Miller's judgment, we will compare the various versions about the events in Salem in 1692. First, we have the facts as they are seen by the historians today, secondly we have Miller's play *The Crucible* of 1953, then we have the film *Les Sorcières de Salem* by Rouleau and Sartre of 1957, and finally there is the film *The Crucible* of 1996 by Nicholas Hytner as director and Miller as the author of the screenplay.

As to the political and socioeconomic circumstances, we have to note that it was already Miller in his play who made the most important changes. Deputy Governor Danforth of history was not involved in the sentences that led to the execution of twenty people, because he was released from his duties by the new Governor Phips in May 1692. In Miller's play, he was the uncompromising, strict judge who ordered the execution of John Proctor and others. In fact, it was rather his successor, Deputy Governor Stoughton, who was the driving force behind the executions. The name of a third judge, Samuel Sewall, who was sceptic about spectral evidence, on which particularly Stoughton relied, is only mentioned shortly by Miller, but neither he nor Stoughton appear in the play. Miller frankly admits historical inaccuracies in an introductory note to his play, but writes that they were required by dramatic purposes. There are already twenty-one actors and actresses in four acts in Miller's play. A higher historical accuracy would have required far more actors. For the movie of 1996, Miller indeed included many new roles, among them also those of Stoughton and Sewall and he showed a larger variety of behavior among the members of the political and socioeconomic élite in the film than in the play.

It was also Miller who set up the plot of the Putnams, a family of the first generation of settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, against members of the second generation like the Nurses and the Proctors. Already in Miller's play, we can find the Putnams' craving for more land as the major motive behind the witch trials.

#### MILLER: THE CRUCIBLE (PLAY)

COMMENT BY MILLER: Land-lust which had been expressed before by constant bickering over boundaries and deeds, could now be elevated to the arena of morality.

[...]

GILES: My proof is there! (*Pointing to the paper*) If Jacobs hangs for a witch he forfeit up his property — that's law! And there is none but Putnam with the coin to buy so great a piece. This man is killing his neighbors for their land!

DANFORTH: But proof, sir, proof.

GILES: (*pointing at his deposition*) The proof is there! I have it from an honest man who heard Putnam say it! The day his daughter cried out on Jacobs, he said she'd given him a fair gift of land.

And Miller supports this idea still in his film version:

MILLER: THE CRUCIBLE (FILM)

SEWALL: And Mr Putnam – I learn that he is in constant disputation with his neighbors over his boundaries.

[...]

DANFORTH: Mr Putnam, we have an accusation by Mr Corey against you. He states that you prompted your daughter to cry witchery upon George Jacobs so that you might buy up his forfeited land.

PUTNAM: It is a lie.

COREY: This man is killing his neighbors for their land!

Sartre, who—unlike Miller—did not study the history of the Salem witch trials, kept Miller's changes in his scenario. However, he introduced a new element into the Salem story by giving John Proctor the role of the leader of the poor and by stressing a social conflict between rich and poor.

SARTRE: THE WITCHES OF SALEM

PETER COREY (to JOHN PROCTOR): John. But you are our only representative against the rich.

FRANCIS NURSE: If they hear you worked during the holy service, they will exclude you and we shall be represented no more.

In Sartre's scenario, John Proctor becomes the leader of the poorer farmers with their small and medium-sized farms. Sartre portrays him as their only competent speaker against the rich. With Arthur Miller, John Proctor however is rather a wealthy farmer, who he with his 700 acres farm indeed really was in history. The historical Elizabeth Proctor even ran a tavern, a fact not mentioned by Miller who shows Elizabeth as a rather weak person. John and Elizabeth were like the Coreys and the Nurses respectable members of the second generation of settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who had interests not only in farming, but also in trade and services.

That there was a social element in the witch trials was stressed by Arthur Miller, too. Miller has John Proctor saying to Thomas Putnam that "We

vote by name in this society, not by acreage." Important roles in Miller's play are taken by social outcasts like the beggar Sarah Good, whom Miller describes as a drunkard and a vagrant, but who in history was impoverished due to the debt of her first husband. Another outcast is Sarah Osborne. Miller calls her drunk and half-witted, whereas it seems that the historical person was rather independently minded and wealthy.

This socioeconomic conflict was certainly in line with Marxist expectations. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to call Sartre's screenplay a Marxist one because of this divide. Of course, Sartre can be blamed for not giving Judge Sewall a role in the play. In history, Sewall had doubts already during the trial. Later Sewall excused himself for the participation in the trial and he was one of the early adversaries of slavery. But in giving no role to Judge Sewall, Sartre only followed Miller's version in the play. Judge Sewall as a character by itself appears for the first time only in Miller's film version of 1996. That Sartre was indeed not thinking in strict Marxist terms of the good poor vs. the evil rich is shown by the fact that Sartre introduced into the play the figure of James Putnam, Thomas Putnam's brother. James sides rather sides with Thomas's adversaries, the masses led by the young Coreys, than with his own brother. Sartre also borrows Reverend Hale as a character antagonistic to the fanatic Reverend Parris from Miller. Hale tries to fathom the reasons of the alleged sorcery by a more scientific approach and slowly begins to have doubts about the whole trial.

If there is a significant difference between Sartre and Miller in terms of oppression, it can most probably be seen with regard to the political institution. Deputy Governor Danforth is a likeable person neither with Miller nor with Sartre. However, whereas Miller never attacks the political institutions and shows a Governor Danforth who occasionally is doubting, Sartre's Danforth never shows signs of uncertainty, he is the incarnation of self-righteousness and the conviction that law has to be enforced under any circumstances.

SARTRE: THE WITCHES OF SALEM

DANFORTH: They had four months to confess, Reverend Parris. Are they guilty or not?

PARRIS: They are.

DANFORTH: Then they must be hanged. ... You think I enjoy shedding blood? ... I haven't slept for six months. But God chose us. We are the instruments of His wrath. And we will fulfill our mandate. Are you afraid? ... I'm afraid, at times. I know we're hated, what can I do? If not strike harder? Woe to he who God has chosen to spread terror. But woe to he who ceases before the allotted time.

Danforth is showing an attitude the anarchist Sartre did definitely not share. For Sartre the individual always was more important than abstract rules.

An important additional dimension to the political and socioeconomic conflict is the one of religious repression. The major figure in this respect is Reverend Parris, who with Miller as well as with Sartre, is a very dislikeable person. He likes to preach hellfire and bloody damnation and otherwise is mainly interested in increasing his personal income—a way of preaching which resembles very much modern fundamentalist preachers.

#### SARTRE: THE WITCHES OF SALEM

PARRIS: If your souls were as visible as your faces, you would be horrified. They are covered with scabs, they stink. Each sin opens a new wound flowing with defiled black blood. Have you never seen spiders writhing in a flame? They try to flee but their legs buckle under. They blacken and shrivel up, then turn into a ball of fire. That is what awaits you. The human beast is ferocious. Only fear can keep him down. If you fear the Almighty, whom your minister represents, if your terror of Hell overcomes your base appetites, ...

Parris had brought Tituba as his slave from Barbados where he had earned his money as a merchant. Parris and Thomas Putnam as leaders of the religious and socioeconomic élite in the village appear as the originators of the witch trials.

#### SARTRE: THE WITCHES OF SALEM

THOMAS PUTNAM: Are you mad to speak of witchcraft?

PARRIS: God bade me speak.

THOMAS PUTNAM: God? More like the Devil.

PARRIS: So be it, the Devil. We'll play him a trick. 'Tis the occasion to distinguish fair from foul.

THOMAS PUTNAM: My daughter was in the forest and yours too. We are in this up to our necks.

PARRIS: Up? Who will strike us? We are the inquisitors of God, not the accused. You are afraid? Come see.

PARRIS *leads* THOMAS PUTNAM *to the window. They look onto the villagers.*

PARRIS: Never have they so loved me. Witches walk in their midst. They know it. The good shall denounce the evil. Under our guiding hands, the village will cleanse itself. Salem will be purified.

In Miller's play, too, Thomas Putnam and Parris speak of a faction in the village that is against 'Parris and all authority'.

MILLER: THE CRUCIBLE (PLAY)

PARRIS: There is a party in this church. I am not blind; there is a faction and a party.

PROCTOR: Against you?

THOMAS PUTANM: Against him and all authority!

Only towards the end, Parris changes his persecutory attitude.

Also with regard to religion and its relationship to sorcery and sexual repression, Miller and Sartre follow very similar lines. Miller praises the end of theocracy and the combination of state and religion, an end that was brought to Salem by the witch trials. Sartre certainly supported this view. The same applies to Miller's view that sex, sin, and the Devil were early linked. In the works of both Miller and Sartre, Abigail aged seventeen is older than the historical Abigail who was about twelve years old. This allows them to write about an adulterous relationship between John Proctor and Abigail that did not exist in history. With both authors, the girls' dancing in the nude—not a historical scene, but rather a scene invented by Miller—is shocking in the eyes of the true Salemites.

Nevertheless, there are notable differences between Miller and Sartre. In Sartre's scenario, the central theme is the relationship between John and Elizabeth Proctor; with Miller, the focus is on the girls who started the whole thing about witchery in Salem—a difference which explains why in Sartre's version the legal proceedings at the court are much shorter than with Miller. Elizabeth's religiously motivated prudery and sexual frigidity is much more prominent in Sartre's film than in Miller's. Sartre is definitely more critical of religion than Miller, particularly with regard to its mercilessness and its opposition to any kind of pleasure: kids are forbidden to play with puppets on Sundays; pains are God's punishment for our sins. Not astonishingly, Sartre's version shows a lot of sympathy towards Tituba's voodoo practices, an aspect that is missing with Miller. As we know, Sartre was very much interested in voodoo practices when he was on Haiti in 1949 and later in Brazil in 1960. Baron Samedi, the Loa of the dead, about whom Sartre had learnt when he was on Haiti, can therefore be found in Sartre's scenario.

Two more areas of oppression Miller as well as Sartre touched are related to gender and race. The latter is represented by Tituba, reverend Parris's slave. Miller and Sartre assume her to be of African descent, whereas the historical Tituba most probably was of indigenous origin. Both authors describe the harsh way Parris treated her. To underline the settlers' status as colonialists, Sartre additionally adds a Native American as governor Danforth's butler. By the way, it is interesting to note that Sartre renounced on mentioning the Indians who smashed Abigail's parents' heads as Miller did it in the theater and the film version.

Very obvious is the gender-related dimension of the witch trials. Fourteen of the twenty accused were women. Many of them were elderly women showing independent behavior. Core persons in Miller's as well as Sartre's version were Martha Corey, Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and Elizabeth Proctor. In this regard, there is little difference between Miller and Sartre. However, Sartre describes the women generally with more empathy, whereas Miller's treatment of them and particularly the accusers is slightly sexist. Since Miller focuses very much on the young girls who instigated the witch trials with their accusations, their negative role is very prominent. In Sartre's version, Abigail is just a young woman madly in love with Proctor for which even Elizabeth forgives her at the end of the film; in Miller's theater version, Abigail is not just in love, but seriously insane, for example when she shows to Proctor and the court her wounds Elizabeth should have inflicted on her body:

MILLER: THE CRUCIBLE (PLAY)

ABIGAIL: (*pulls up dress*) Why, look at my leg. I'm holes all over from their damned needles and pins. (*Touching her stomach.*) The jab your wife gave me's not healed yet, y'know.

In contrast to the crazy girls, Miller shows the young Proctor boys as positive examples. Sartre on the contrary did not focus on the girls as much as Miller and with Francy—the Proctors have a girl instead of boys—there is also a girl not participating in these persecutions. Sartre generally avoids Miller's contrast of crazy girls vs. reasonable boys. Remarkable is also the very negative picture Miller presents about Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne, which is justified rather by his gender prejudices than history.

Summarizing these different kinds of oppression, we can say that when it comes to oppression the difference between Miller and Sartre is rather one of quantity than of quality. All the kinds of oppression, whether political, religious, socioeconomic, gender-related or racial, we can find with both authors. This is even valid for the socioeconomic conflict. However, whatever kind of oppression, Sartre puts more emphasis on them than Miller. This is particularly true for the socioeconomic dimension of oppression, as also the scene with the pillory confirms that Sartre added. Finally according to the interview Sartre gave in *Théâtre populaire* in fall 1955 (published in English as *Jean-Paul Sartre on Theater*), his main criticism of Marcel Aymé's staging of *The Crucible*—already then with Montand and Signoret in the principal roles—was that Aymé had completely removed the socioeconomic background of the story.

The major difference between Miller and Sartre does not refer to the kind or strength of oppression, but rather to kind and amount of resistance against oppression. According to Miller, the solution to oppression seems to lie in having more people of the kind of Reverend Hale and Judge Sewall, i.e. more critical members of the élite. Hale could even stand as a

prototype of the critical intellectual. The masses who welcome the first hangings appear in a rather negative way with Miller. Sartre's rendering of the story differs here in important details, especially when it comes to the role of John Proctor and the masses.

Regardless these differences, the similarities should not be forgotten. With both Miller and Sartre, John Proctor is not a very religious man, with Miller even more than with Sartre. Both have him saying that God is dead and with both Proctor is plowing the field on a Sunday. Miller depicts John as a person that seldom goes to church and did not have his third child baptized. He is not able to render all the Ten Commandments. Both writers describe John as a person of influence in the meeting. In Miller's play, John Corey asks John to come to the meeting house because "the folk will be looking to your judgement". And finally, in the play as well as in both films, John is a courageous man as he goes to court to save his wife Elizabeth and confesses there to be an adulterer.

However, Sartre's John is much more rebellious than Miller's figure in the play. Sartre has John standing up in church and speaking out against Rev. Parris's sermons. Whereas Miller has John, Martha Corey, and Rebecca Nurse saying the Lord's Prayer under the gallows, Sartre has them refusing to kiss the cross. In Sartre's film, John defends his wife with his rifle in his hand. There is even a brawl between John and the Coreys on the one side and those who detain Elizabeth on the other side— interestingly an element that Miller adopts from the Sartrean version in his film version. While Miller's John Proctor hands in a deposition with 91 signatures at the court, Sartre's John refuses to sign the deposition. John does not believe anymore in the justice and fairness of the authorities. It is obvious that already in 1956 Sartre critically reflected on his own attitude of signing appeals and depositions *à gogo*. Miller has John refusing to sign the confession in jail because John does not want to damage his name in the community, which is quite a selfish reason. Sartre's John, on the contrary, refuses to sign the confession because of Elizabeth and particularly because he sees his friends waiting with weapons at the gallows outside the prison. He hopes that his death will not be useless, that there will be a riot that will sweep away the current authority in Salem so that his kids can finally live in freedom.

#### SARTRE: THE WITCHES OF SALEM

PROCTOR: Do you still say I die for nothing? If I agree to lie, they'll slink off in shame, believing you are right. But when I feel the noose, their rage will strike Salem and sweep you away. My children will leave in freedom.

John is ready to die as a martyr for freedom. And in the final scene we are given the impression that the people indeed try to storm the prison into which Danforth retreats:

SARTRE: THE WITCHES OF SALEM

JOHN PROCTOR, REBECCA NURSE *and* MARTHA COREY *are hanged. Their feet tremble.*

ABIGAIL: Help! Help!

DANFORTH: Seize her! Quick!

*ABIGAIL opens the prison gate. The people enter the prison yard. They take the three from the gallows.*

[...]

*They are all staring at DANFORTH.*

DANFORTH: Kill me, cowards! Other judges will come, and they will be without pity.

*They move towards DANFORTH. Suddenly ELISABETH appears.*

DANFORTH: Do I frighten you?

ELISABETH (*walking towards PROCTOR, to DANFORTH*): Murderer.

*DANFORTH retreats quickly, the people are following him.*

When Miller described Sartre's screenplay as 'overly Marxist', he most probably had these scenes in mind. The masses turn against their rulers. However, Miller must have had forgotten when writing his essay "Arthur Miller on The Crucible" that it was him who had Rev. Parris speaking about a rebellion in Andover.

MILLER: THE CRUCIBLE (PLAY)

PARRIS: I tell you what is said here, sir. Andover have thrown out the court, they say, and will have no part of witchcraft. There be a faction here, feeding on that news, and I tell you true, sir, I fear there will be riot here.

Sartre just integrated this remark into his scenario, a remark that is missing in Miller's screenplay of 1996. The remark about a rebellion in Andover is reduced to Parris's feeling of a threat of resistance.

Miller had been a communist in the 1930s and still had joint projects with pro-communist organizations in the second half of the 1940s, which were the reason for his persecution during the time of McCarthyism. Although he was still critical about many political stances of the U.S. government in the 1960s, he had fundamentally changed his attitude in favor of the American system of society and politics by 1972 when he wrote his essay. He had started to change his attitude latest in the first half of the sixties. Otherwise, the CIA, who financed the writers' association PEN-International to a significant degree, would have never agreed to have him elected as its president, who Miller was from 1966 to 1969. This

explains the change in his attitude. That Miller did not allow anymore the showing of *The Witches of Salem* has—in my opinion—a lot to do with his wish not to be reminded anymore of his rebellious Communist past. It is the better explanation than fear of competition to his own film project or that he wanted to punish Montand for having an affair with Miller's wife Marilyn Monroe during the shooting of *Let's Make Love* in 1960. Finally, Miller and Monroe had already divorced in 1961.

But why did Beauvoir—and with her most of the Sartreans—neglect Sartre's screenplay *The Witches of Salem*? The time when Beauvoir wrote *Force of Circumstance*, which was published in 1963, was a time heavily influenced by the various colonial and postcolonial wars and war-like events in Algeria, Congo, Cuba, and Vietnam. It seemed that the former colonies could become independent only by means of violence or at least the threat of violence. Nothing confirms this attitude of the early 1960s better than Sartre's preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* of 1961. The 1960s were the time of the most violent Sartre. This certainly conflicted with Sartre's scenario *The Witches of Salem* where the masses only threaten to overturn the government, but don't do it and where their hero, John Proctor, does not take up arms, but is rather willing to die for his conviction. John Proctor seems to be closer to Kaliayev of Camus's *The Just Assassins* than to the heroes of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. In 1963, it must have seemed to Beauvoir to be inopportune to praise the example of John Proctor. However, John Proctor is very much in line with Sartre's earlier and later attitude to violence before and after Fanon.

In his *Introduction to Les Temps Modernes* of 1945 Sartre asked the writers only to stand up and write a line against injustices and oppression. There was never the question of writers taking to arms. In his *Notebook for an Ethics* of 1947/48, Sartre differentiated between offensive violence, defensive violence and counterviolence. At that time, his view obviously was that violence in its proper sense can only be a measure of last resort. And indeed, in the 1970s, when there were the actions of the RAF, an armed left wing group in Germany, the Brigade Rosse in Italy, and guerillas in Latin America, he voiced his concerns about and partly even opposed their actions. However, this late Sartre, who distanced himself from violence and showed more leanings towards an almost Camusian anarchism, is not the one liked by most Sartreans.

As understandable as it might appear that Sartre's screenplay *The Witches of Salem* were met with reluctance in the 1960s, today in a time of a rising tide of populism it is worthwhile to watch *The Witches of Salem* again. It is not only a piece against the rebirth of McCarthyism with its persecution of dissenters and the continuous production of fake news, but it is also a piece that teaches us how to resist. Sartre's double message is

still valid today: 1. stand up and speak out, even if the consequences are difficult to bear, 2. watch out that the masses are behind you.

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