

Centering the Supporting Character:
Potency and Primacy of the Tritagonist in
Tragedy

by

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INTRODUCTION

What is a tragedy? Tragedy finds its roots in the Greek theater. The literal meaning of tragedy is “goat song,” perhaps because the first tragic choruses competed for the prize of a goat (Wiles 34). Although both goats and theatermakers tend to be fairly ruminant creatures, the birth of tragedy emerged from the improvisation of dithyrambs, which were ritualistic choral songs in honor of Dionysus (Wiles 30). Dithyrambs were performed in the annual festival of Dionysia, a ritual honoring the god Dionysus, which was held each spring in Athens. All Athenian citizens and visitors attended the festival of Dionysia, which included processions and competitive performances of dithyrambs and plays over the course of five days ("Great Dionysia"). The early Greek tragedies centered on retelling contemporary history, and myth as a subject matter only developed over time as a “means of generating critical distance, so issues of the moment could be turned into issues of principle” (Wiles 11). These mythical tragic plays allowed the audience of citizens to assess the ideological stances of tragic characters, which became a useful tool in their evaluation of their own real society.

Tragedy afforded the playwright the freedom to grapple with the “moral void, where right meets right and there are no right answers,” as a means to prompt critical thinking within the audience (Wiles 35). The establishment of the struggle between competing truths became crucial for tragedy’s function. For Aristotle, tragedy operated through a combination of pity and fear that engendered catharsis, which was best achieved not through a plot depicting a “virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity,” nor a “bad man passing from adversity to

prosperity,” but rather through a “character between these two extremes” (Aristotle 43). Later theorists, such as Hegel, similarly argued that conflict was not between “good and evil, but between goods that are each making too exclusive a claim” (Conversi). Both accounts point us to tragedy’s foregrounding of moral complexity rather than moral clarity.

In order to support the evolution of tragedy from historical retellings to wrestling with conflicting principles and ideologies, the dramatic vocabulary of early Greek theater similarly progressed over time in the festival of Dionysus. In its beginnings, only a single person was considered to be the “actor,” known as the protagonist, who worked in combination with the playwright as the leader of a fairly static chorus (Wiles 34). The one-actor system is useful to establish fiction, as a performer can step outside of themselves to play a character and interact with the chorus. However, only one character and perspective can exist at a time, and so the focus of the plays centers more on narrative than conflict, since there could be no direct confrontation or dialogue.

As stated in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, “Aeschylus first introduced a second actor” known as a deuteragonist (Aristotle 19). A second actor allows a shift towards a heavier use of dialogue in place of recitation from the chorus, more freedom in the construction of the plot, and the possibility for a raised dramatic tension. Rather than relying on a chorus, foregrounding actors creates a space for more than one perspective. The deuteragonist’s presence, second in importance to the protagonist, creates a relationship between the two characters that lives and evolves on stage. The audience experience expands to include watching the

dynamics unfold before them, allowing for subjective interpretation of the events rather than being told facts mediated by the chorus or a single actor.

As theater continued to develop as an art form, Sophocles "raised the number of actors to three," creating the role of the tritagonist (Aristotle 19). In addition to the possibility of triangulated dialogue, a three-actor theatrical work can deepen the audience's understanding of the moral conflict. Rather than two individuals in a head-to-head confrontation, having a third adds a perspective that lives somewhere between the two sides of the conflict. There is room for nuance, variation, and changing of alliances. A third actor often serves as an audience surrogate witnessing the others in dialogue. Therefore, the tritagonist, although simply defined as "the third actor in a Greek tragedy," physically manifests the liminal moral space between the first two actors ("Tritagonist"). The third character does not diminish the fundamental viewpoints of the primary characters, but allows for a deeper understanding by processing both "rights" in the moral void (Wiles 35).

Aristotle proposes in *Poetics* that moral ambiguity is essential to tragedy, which is only revealed in the tragic hero's hamartia (tragic fault) through the objectives of the tritagonist. The "right meets right" moral void, as Wiles reminds us, is not located in the conflict between central characters who remain rooted in the conviction of their rightness, but rather in the mobility of the characters in between (Wiles 35). The gradual addition of the tritagonist ultimately provided theatermakers the capacity to stage additional "supporting" figures who complicate systems of power, ideology, or belief; deepening the moral ambiguity

vital to tragedy. As theater has continued to evolve into plays that include larger casts and find more complex structures, the tritagonist role has remained present and expanded over time. In fact, there may be more than one tritagonist in a play depending upon how a theatermaker understands the structure of the conflict and their placement of protagonist and antagonist.

This thesis explores the necessity of the roles that tritagonist characters play in tragedies, challenging their relegation to secondary or minor importance. Tritagonists navigate the liminal space between the two opposing principles of a tragic conflict, ultimately deepening its moral complexity and illuminating the plays' most profound questions. I will argue that by redefining our understanding of the role of the tritagonist character, whether a play incorporates one or several, we better understand the blueprint of a tragedy and therefore glean the intention of the playwright. In my findings within the scope of Western theater, the tritagonist is present in many tragedies, although not all tragic plays include the role due to their structure. In the following sections, I will examine two characters I understand as tritagonists: Haemon in *Antigone*, and Reverend Hale in *The Crucible*. In each section, I will place the play within the larger social and political context of the time, exploring the stakes and importance of the tritagonist's role through the potential goals of the playwright. As part of my analysis, I will specifically address Sophocles and Arthur Miller's treatment of tritagonists as intentionally developed characters meant to deepen the conflict in the play. Then, I shall undertake close readings with the aim of demonstrating the potency of each tritagonist in the tragic narrative and their role as a catalyst in

unlocking the questions at the heart of a tragic play. Part of my close readings will entail the incorporation of theorists Richard Schechner, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Simone Weil. Within my close readings of *Antigone*, because it is a translated text, I will use three versions in order to extract the immutable core of the character that otherwise changes through the aesthetic choices of each translator. I will conclude this paper arguing for an expanded definition of the tritagonist not merely as the third most important character, but as a key structural figure functioning as a triangulating and contrasting point between binary forces that serves the playwright's dramatic purpose. Ultimately, my exploration of the tritagonist will serve as useful theoretical underpinning for theatermakers approaching these roles that hopefully can serve as a model to inform the reading of other tragic plays.

SECTION 1: HAEMON IN *ANTIGONE*

Sophocles sets up Haemon as a representation of the struggle when faced with difficult decisions between two moral rights, which for Haemon lives as the decision between two moral wrongs: betraying his father or his beloved. It is his positioning between these two rights that make him the tritagonist. As a playwright, Sophocles crafts a character where societal good comes into conflict with personal good, and the inextricable emotions that are attached lead to fatal consequences. We can infer that Sophocles' greater possible intent in writing *Antigone* is to bring forth greater discussion in support of democracy. The play was performed as a part of the festival of Dionysus, which served as a place of

gathering that simultaneously nurtured theater and democracy (Wiles 48). Tragic theater “flourished alongside Periclean democracy,” because audiences could evaluate ideologies, faults in rulers, and the importance of holding dialogue within the framework of a fictional play (Barker 1). Sophocles’ potential motive lies in the “deep and difficult question of political and of ethical science—the relation of the individual citizen to the state,” as he poses the question “what shall a man do if the duty of obedience to the government of his country conflicts with other duties?” (Bury 389). Democracy relied on, and still does rely on, critical discourse and questioning in order to form healthy communication and exchange of ideas. As we will see in Section 2 in *The Crucible*, Judge Danforth echoes King Creon’s desire to inhibit critical thinking and communication, while Reverend Hale serves a similar function to Haemon: providing a channel of proper speaking and listening in an attempt to maintain the health of the community. I will return to the concept of speaking and listening in more depth later in this section, weaving in the work of Ursula K. Le Guin.

Antigone is a figure who embodies a moral conviction to uphold familial and religious duty over civil obligation. The play’s conflict lies in her act of defiance in burying her brother Polynices, despite Creon’s edict that Polynices remain unburied under penalty of death; Antigone’s devotion to divine law stands on one side of the binary, while Creon’s absolute belief in human civil law stands on the other. Haemon is an important figure triangulating Creon and Antigone’s binary: a figure caught between his love for his father and his love for his fiancée, otherwise understood as filial and marital duty. Haemon’s loyalty is further

complicated as a citizen having to choose which law to advocate rightness. As a tritagonist, we see Haemon caught between two poles of rightness, moving between his father and lover, each serving as protagonist and antagonist to each other.

Haemon's successful function as a tritagonist is rooted in the intersection of his multiple roles. Haemon exists in the play because of and through his relationships, whereas Antigone and Creon exist as individuals with beliefs. Arthur Miller, who will frame Section 2, proposes that "there really are no characters in plays; there are relationships" (Miller, *Collected Essays* 368). The mythology of Haemon was expertly complicated by Sophocles in that the playwright became the first to make Haemon the fiancé to Antigone, setting up that relationship, which then generated the conflict between father and son (Dräger). If an audience only considers the play as a conflict between Antigone and Creon, "it would have been dramatically unnecessary to develop Haemon," but he is intentionally developed to serve as the illuminating force to provide insight into the conflict (Barker 12). The emotional core Haemon embodies lies in his capacity for understanding the validity of both sides because of his interpersonal relationships, which is vital for an audience to understand in order to form their own stance on the conflicting principles in the play. Whereas Antigone and Creon are rigid in their declared absolutes, the truth of divine and civil law, Haemon processes the information and finds his grounding in emotional relationality.

Haemon is alive in only one scene of the play, in which he speaks to his father, before he commits suicide off stage, an inevitably tragic ending to the impossibility of acting simultaneously in his duties as son, fiancé, and citizen. Through a close reading of his scene with Creon, we can witness Haemon's attempt to do so. The differences in the translations only further emphasize the conflict of his multiple identities, which begins in the opening of the scene when the chorus and Creon inquire about Haemon's status as a lover:

Wyckoff:

(Haemon enters from the side.)

CHORUS. Here is your one surviving son.

Does he come in grief at the fate of his bride,
in pain that he's tricked of his wedding?

CREON. Soon we shall know more than a seer could tell us.

Son, have you heard the vote condemned your bride? And are you
here, maddened against your father,
or are we friends, whatever I may do? (pg. 22; lines 25-35)

Carson:

CHORUS. oh here's Haimon

here's Haimon in pain and rage cheated of his future bride

KREON. in a rage about your future bride
or are we still friends (23-24)

Brecht:

CHORUS. Hamon is coming, your youngest
son, dismayed

At the loss of Antigone.

His young bride lies stricken
on her dread bride bed

KREON. Son, there's a rumor you've come
to speak of that young woman, not to your ruler (pg. 38; lines
572-579)

Immediately upon entering, before the audience even hears him speak, Haemon is questioned about the state of his relationships, with the implication that coming as

a groom would mean arriving in opposition. In response, for all three translations, Haemon declares that he appears instead as a son before his father, not an enraged lover:

Carson:

HAIMON. father, I'm yours
CREON. good attitude, son
good heart in your chest
I need you like that (24)

Wyckoff:

HAEMON. My father, I am yours. You keep me straight
with your good judgment, which I shall ever follow.
Nor shall a marriage count for more with me
than your kind leading.
CREON. There's my good boy. So should you hold at heart
and stand behind your father all the way. (pg. 22; line 38)

Brecht's Haemon speaks of himself in both the first and the third person, signaling his split understanding of himself:

Brecht:

HAMON. Nevertheless, I come to you
about this thing and hope that my father
will not listen with anger when his son's voice
is the one that must bring
bad news to the ruler (pg. 39; line 586-590)

Haemon's strategy is a manifestation of the collision between oikos (household) and polis (city-state) that centers the conflict in the tragedy. Haemon establishes himself as a loyal son to his father. As a part of his filial obligation, Haemon is invested in the city respecting Creon and that his father makes the best decisions, which he later explains in the line "because I am your son I must keep watch" (Wyckoff pg 24; line 15). Creon is pleased to hear the declaration of filial relationship, and affirms the singularity in that role in lines such as "I need you

like that” (Carson 24) and “should you hold at heart and stand behind your father all the way” (Wyckoff pg 22; line 38). However, Haemon is just as obligated to his duty as a citizen of Thebes to correct the mistake of the king. Although the initial agreement may appear contradictory, the deferential treatment in the lines above can be understood as Haemon’s attempt to use his role as a son to access the role of the citizen in order to persuade Creon to change his decision. Because of Creon’s unyielding nature, Haemon’s proximity as a trusted relationship becomes a potential advantage in persuasion compared to a typical citizen.

As Haemon builds a logical argument to reason with his father in response, he attempts to fulfill his duty as a citizen while still upholding his filial role. Here he lays out an understanding that human knowledge is imperfect and mistakes are inevitable, speaking simultaneously as a loyal son and citizen:

Carson:

HAIMON. father, the gods grow minds in men
as the most precious equipment they have (24)

Wyckoff:

HAEMON. Father, the gods have given men good sense,
the only sure possession that we have.
that there was error in your late remarks.
Yet someone else might bring some further light (pg. 24; lines
11-15)

Haemon’s use of the word father before offering a logical argument as a citizen is significant because it both serves as a reminder of their strong relationship and provides a framework for Creon to hear a dissenting opinion. However, because of Haemon’s initial declaration as a son and their parent-child exchange, the following argument as a citizen contradicts his status as a son, and Creon, as a father, does not listen because his son should do nothing but obey (P. Miller 167).

If the role of the tritagonist is meant to complicate binary positions, Carson's translation reveals how much Haemon is struggling in that complication of fulfilling multiple roles:

Carson:

HAIMON. yet I could not would not do not know how to
say you are wrong
it may be
some other way
I don't know
might turn out
I delete this line (24)

Carson's translation names the intent and hesitancy of Haemon's words as he attempts to maintain composure in this high-stakes circumstance, in which his personal relationships and identity are being challenged, thereby generating a great need for resolution. The grand ideological battle between Antigone and Creon becomes more relatable in this scene of a father and son failing to communicate. As evinced in this portion of his dialogue, Haemon's role as a tritagonist is crucial for enabling the audience to cathect, meaning to "charge with mental energy" or "to give ideas an emotional loading" ("Cathect"). The tritagonist is the distinct source of cathecting because Haemon is the figure that must live within the contradiction of power between Antigone and Creon, and transforms the ideological to an embodied feeling. Haemon is subject to suffer the consequences regardless of which character claims victory. However, even given his difficulty, Haemon finds the words to declare as the city's spokesman that the people are dissatisfied with Creon's decision to sentence Antigone to death:

Wyckoff:

HAIMON. But in dark corners I have heard them say

how the whole town is grieving for this girl,
unjustly doomed, if ever woman was,
to die in shame for glorious action done.
She would not leave her fallen, slaughtered brother
there, as he lay, unburied, for the birds
and hungry dogs to make an end of him.
Isn't her real desert a golden prize?
This is the undercover speech in town. (pg. 24; lines 20-28)

Performance theorist Richard Schechner would say the "dark corners" and "undercover" speech Haemon refers to are the "crease spaces" in Thebes (Schechner 164). In his book *Performance Theory*, Schechner states that "creases are not marginal on the edge, but liminal, in between," and that "they run through the actual and conceptual centers of society" (Schechner 164). Although Schechner is discussing how theaters function as a scenographic representation of a society's values and morals, his theory proves useful in a broader understanding of liminal spaces within society. In relation to the city of Thebes in *Antigone*, his idea that creases serve as a "place to hide" and signify areas of "instability, disturbance, and potentially radical changes in the social topography" is certainly relevant to Creon's decision to sentence Antigone to death (Schechner 164). Haemon has "heard them say" this information in the "shadows" and "dark corners," implying a fear of the ruler. This compression of space for free discourse generates a potency for the people of Thebes. Citizens are afraid to speak against their king, and thus dissent is relegated to the creases of society. Creon's desire for power over listening to the will of the people is a mark of his tyrannical nature, and the anchored nature of his position within the play's ideological binary.

In contrast to Creon's fixed positionality, Haemon demonstrates “the most complete account of citizenship as a practice of speaking and listening” in accessing his society's creases, hearing of the city’s response, and then telling the information to Creon (Barker 3). Ursula K. Le Guin, in her essay “Telling is Listening,” propounds that communication is an interdependent mutual exchange between speaker and listener, in which both telling and listening are active and equally essential acts (Le Guin 156). Le Guin’s argument echoes our understanding of the early development of Athenian Democracy, where citizenship existed as a practice of speaking and listening. A key element of democracy is the voice of the people, and an individual’s ability to perform and attend an oration is equally important. In Haemon, Sophocles has engendered the creation of “practical wisdom” with the goal “to learn (manthano) by speaking with (lego) and listening to (kluo) others” that is vital for the playwright’s intent of the work (Barker 4). Haemon continues on putting forth his argument to his father, encouraging the act of learning that occurs when actively speaking or listening:

Wyckoff:

HAEMON. A man, though wise, should never be ashamed
of learning more, and must unbend his mind. (pg. 24; lines 38-39)

There are two metaphors near the end of Haemon’s long speech that attempt to persuade the stubborn ruler to listen to the wisdom of the citizens. The first metaphor encourages Creon to understand that “trees bend” (Carson 25).

And the similar phrasing toward Creon:

Wyckoff:

HAEMON. Have you not seen the trees beside the torrent,
the ones that bend them saving every leaf,
while the resistant perish root and branch? (pgs. 24-25; lines
40-1)

With the same metaphor from Brecht:

Brecht:

HAMON. Look, when the rain-swollen brook gushes
past the trees, how all those that bend
are spared, but the unyielding
are broken” (pg. 41; lines 657-660).

The second metaphor proposes that a ship must loosen its stiff sails in order to avoid sinking, phrased by Carson that “ships loosen the rigging” (Carson 25), by Wyckoff that “the ship that will not slacken sail...ends the voyage with her keel on top,” and Brecht’s translation that “a laden ship spreads out her sails and won’t slacken...how it must end in shipwreck (42).

In both metaphors, there is an emphasis on flexibility and keeping an open mind. Haemon’s use of these metaphors is crucial in his attempt to penetrate through Creon’s hamartia, his hubris, that will not allow the ruler to listen. To finish the monologue, Haemon again returns to the idea that humans are fallible and that an external person identifying a mistake is not a personal attack on Creon but a necessary and beneficial act. Carson writes Haemon’s line as “no single human being has perfect knowledge” (25). Wyckoff’s more dense version includes:

Wyckoff:

HAEMON. Young as I am, if I may give advice,
I'd say it would be best if men were born
perfect in wisdom, but that failing this
(which often fails) it can be no dishonor
to learn from others when they speak good sense (pg. 25; lines

6-10)

Despite Haemon's best efforts he does not persuade Creon to change his mind. In fact, Creon directly takes issue with the very identities that Haemon is upholding. First, as a father, he cannot accept learning from his own son:

Wyckoff:

CREON. At my age I'm to school my mind by his?
This boy instructor is my master, then? (pg. 26; lines 36-41)

Creon and Haemon differ on their understanding on the role of a son, a role Haemon is ardently trying to fulfill. In opposition to Creon's desire for unwavering and blind loyalty, demonstrated previously with the line "stand behind your father all the way," (Wyckoff pg. 22; line 38). Haemon believes that his father's "welfare" is his "greatest good" (Wyckoff pg. 24; line 29). For Haemon, supporting the greatest welfare for his father means correcting his mistake as a trusted loved one, but because Creon's issue is a point of pride and honor, he will not listen to a son he desires pure obedience from. Then, moving from a parent-child divide, Creon asserts a binary of gender that Haemon must move between:

Carson:

KREON. (to the Chorus) this fellow it seems is the woman's toy
HAEMON. if you are the woman
it's you I care for (26)

Wyckoff:

CREON. (to the Chorus) It seems he's firmly on the woman's side.
HAEMON. If you're a woman. It is you I care for. (pg. 26; lines 13-17)

Haemon's response conditionally flips the binary and places the identity of the woman on Creon, which underlines the fact that a binary is inadequate because

both sides are valid and therefore interchangeable. Soon after, Creon firmly states his belief that Haemon is solely siding with Antigone:

Carson:

KREON. all thy words plead for her

HAIMON. and for you and me and the gods below (26)

Wyckoff:

CREON. Your whole long argument is but for her.

HAEMON. And you, and me, and for the gods below. (pg. 26; lines 36-41)

Haemon's rebuttal emphasizes the collective good he is arguing for in sparing Antigone's life, which would successfully uphold all of his multiple identities: correcting his father, and standing by his lover¹ who is following divine law, which is all in accordance with the will of the citizens. Additionally, the agon² between Creon and Antigone is not equal in terms of what victory would mean for each side. Because Creon is the one in utmost governmental power as king, a victory for him has fatal consequences whereas Antigone winning the conflict would be understood as a stain of pride for Creon, not death. However, Creon responds with a finality, closing the door to this solution:

Carson:

KREON. thou canst never marry her this side the grave

HAIMON. then she'll die and take another with her (26)

Wyckoff:

CREON. You shall not marry her while she's alive.

HAEMON. Then she shall die. Her death will bring another. (pg. 27; lines

¹ In response to his son's love relationship with Antigone earlier in the scene, Creon made pointed misogynistic remarks (Carson, 24; Wyckoff, pg. 23 lines 15-21), which was surely an affront for Haemon to listen to. While outside the scope of this section, which focuses on the inner experience of Haemon, it is worth noting how the role of tritagonist also serves as a structural strategy for Sophocles to reveal different sides of Creon as antagonist, and further clarify the moral complexity of the play.

² Defined as a "verbal contest or dispute between two characters in an ancient Greek play ("Agon, N.")

1-5)

The final function of a tritagonist is to provide a “window of opportunity” in which Creon can change his mind before it is too late. The tritagonist questions the tragic inevitability of the disaster within the play, and the neglecting of a solution to the conflict ultimately provides the audience a deeper emotional experience. Haemon shares the knowledge he has learned from listening to the citizens, and passes along his wisdom to his father in hopes of generating a moment of anagnorisis³ prior to the fatal consequences. Returning to Sophocles’ intention of strengthening the importance of democracy at the time of the play, there is a foundational element of speaking and listening that Haemon embodies that is necessary for a healthy society. Sophocles posits the necessity of speaking truth in the face of power through Haemon, which has a clear parallel to the possible intentions of Arthur Miller and the character of Reverend Hale in *The Crucible*. The tragedy lies then in the failure to listen: Creon is only broadcasting information, but not receiving. There is a clear danger of not being listened to, particularly when in Haemon’s case it is not about the validity of the points so much as it is about who is saying them.

Haemon has been attempting to uphold the multiplicities of his identity, which is divided in the agon between Antigone and Creon. Having exhausted his argument with Creon who will not reconsider his judgement, Haemon, as a tritagonist, has no alternative solution or way out of the entanglement of his

³ Defined as “the startling discovery that produces a change from ignorance to knowledge,” which was “discussed by Aristotle in the *Poetics* as an essential part of the plot of a tragedy” (“Anagnorisis”).

deepest personal relationships. The role of the tritagonist is to elucidate the moral complexity of the conflict, showing the simultaneous validity of stances and the consequences of inflexibility that are entangled with the emotional difficulty of the character. Creon's rejection of complexity reemphasizes his tragic failing because he forces his own will over the consideration of Haemon's, which will in turn lead to the tragic realization after the suicide. In this way, the father-son conflict encapsulates the blueprint of the entire tragic play. Simone Weil writes about the power of force in her essay "The Iliad, Or the Poem of Force," which has a clear transferable linkage as she states that "attic tragedy, or at any rate the tragedy of Aeschylus and Sophocles, is the true continuation of the epic" (Weil 34). In her writing, she establishes that force has the power to turn "anybody who is subjected to it into a thing. Exercised to the limit, it turns man into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him" (Weil 3). Creon's resolute desire to kill Antigone as a punishment for breaking the edict can be thought of as force, which for him is literally a desire to make a corpse out of her. Creon's edict, part of his authoritarian law, is a declaration of force that he unyielding stands behind. Weil further describes force as having:

the ability to turn a human being into a thing while he is still alive. He is alive; he has a soul; and yet—he is a thing... Who can say what it costs, moment by moment, to accommodate itself to this residence, how much writhing and bending, folding and pleating are required of it? (Weil 5).

I believe this secondary ability of force that Weil describes perfectly encapsulates Haemon's experience by the end of the scene after being subjected to the force of

his father: he is alive, with a soul bending and folding to try and find a solution, and denied one, his only option is to become a corpse as well.

SECTION 2: REVEREND HALE IN *THE CRUCIBLE*

There is a clear connection to draw from the tragic plays of the ancient Greek playwrights to the works of Arthur Miller that allows the sustained presence of the tritagonist to prove equally useful in unlocking the tragedy of *The Crucible*. Centuries after Aristotle and Sophocles, far into the development of theater as an art form, the origins of Greek tragedy found a new resonance, and heavily influenced the American theater of the 1900s. Playwrights returned to the foundation of Western theater both in the adaptation of Greek myths and in how theater functions in relation to society. Just as the ancient Greeks sought to use tragedy as a cultural, religious, and civic tool in the formation of their emerging democratic society, American playwrights sought to employ theater in rebuilding the “cultural fabric of civilization after the devastation of World War II” (Rea, "Western theatre"). Arthur Miller had a particular focus on writing about “social and political issues” amidst the fraught political environment (Wilmeth 13). He first adapted Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People* before writing *The Crucible* in 1953 as a response to the rise in McCarthyism (Wilmeth 13). The direct comparison to draw in the function of theater, then, is Sophocles’s creation of *Antigone* as a civic and social force to strengthen democracy, and Miller’s writing of *The Crucible* as a means to generate critical discourse and questioning in a time of fear, suspicion, censorship, blacklisting, and a suppression of political dissent. In other words,

Miller utilized theater within the ancient Greek tradition of providing the audience with a “moral void,” allowing them to assess the ideological stances of tragic characters (Wiles 35).

Though Arthur Miller is only a singular writer and *The Crucible* is only one play within this time period of American theater that of course included other playwrights (such as Eugene O’Neill or Tennessee Williams who also found inspiration from Greek tragedy), he is particularly useful as a point of comparison within the scope of this paper. Certainly not all of Miller’s plays contain a tritagonist, but *The Crucible* does structurally align with *Antigone* in the presence of a tritagonist that functions as a moral lens, triangulating the space between two opposing forces.

As an essayist, Arthur Miller clearly articulated his viewpoint on tragedy at large, which is useful in understanding how he structures his work as a playwright. He understood tragedy as the “consequence of a man’s total compulsion to evaluate himself justly” and that “his destruction in the attempt posits a wrong or an evil in his environment” (Miller, *Collected Essays* 9). The evaluation of self produces the enlightenment of the “moral law,” or a “tragic right” that is learned at a fatal cost (Miller, *Collected Essays* 9). The purpose of tragedy for Miller was rooted in the insight provided to the audience, as a play “points the heroic finger at the enemy of man’s freedom,” embodied by characters such as Creon in *Antigone* or Judge Danforth in *The Crucible* (Miller, *Collected Essays* 9). Miller’s focus on tragic theater was unique in his belief in the “common man” as the subject of tragedy, rather than solely royal figures like

Hamlet (Miller, *Collected Essays* 9). Miller justified his belief in the average man because there is a universal understanding of the disaster “in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world” (Miller, *Collected Essays* 9). Reverend Hale is a model example of the loss of a chosen image as he loses his perception of himself as a powerful, knowledgeable expert in witchcraft.

Beyond his thinking on tragedy in general, Miller wrote at length specifically about the creation and intent of *The Crucible*. The play, inspired by the Salem witch trials, depicts a Puritan community enveloped by hysteria and fear as accusations of witchcraft start to spread following the arrival of Reverend Hale, an expert in witchcraft. The court then takes over the town under Judge Danforth’s authority, thrusting Salem into chaos as power struggles and personal vengeance generate unjust convictions. The conflict shifts from the initial question about the presence of witchcraft to a wider struggle of personal integrity versus authority as the accused, such as John Proctor, fight to prove their innocence within a flawed theocratic court system. Miller’s desire to write the play came out of the “far Right’s” ability to create a “new subjective reality” in the moral panic known as the Second Red Scare, which sought to remove left-wing ideologies from the United States in the name of defending democracy, although the methods used blatantly undermined it (Miller, “Why I Wrote ‘The Crucible,’” 39). The Red Scare was closely associated with McCarthyism, named after Senator Joseph McCarthy, who rose to prominence for claiming in a speech to know of “205 communists [that] had infiltrated the State Department,” although he ultimately produced no legitimate names (“Joseph McCarthy”).

Miller observed the similarities in the investigations of the U.S. government's House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and the Puritans seeking out witches in Salem, as both groups demanded the accused provide names of other communists or witches. In the introduction to his *Collected Plays*, Miller wrote that he "wished for a way to write a play that would be sharp, that would lift out of the morass of subjectivism the squirming, single, defined process which would show that the sin of public terror is that it divests man of conscience" (Miller, *Collected Plays* 40). While John Proctor does fulfill the role of a figure unwilling to divest his conscience, Reverend Hale adds another layer to Miller's intent as he is an outsider that arrives and enacts the "defined process," only to learn of the "sin of public terror" that he has caused (Miller, *Collected Essays* 187). Hale's role as a religious leader grappling with this sin is particularly powerful in demonstrating Miller's potential aim for the play as Hale has an understanding of both sides. Hale begins as the perpetrator of the terror, and his penitent transformation later emerges as he realizes that his decision to divest judgement to Danforth has entangled him in devastating injustice. Miller's desire to write the play came directly from the need to express his "opposition to McCarthyism," because when "irrational terror takes to itself the fiat of moral goodness somebody has to die," which is resonant for McCarthy and Hale as figures with a fiat, an arbitrary decree, of either a self-proclaimed knowledge of communists or an expertise in witchcraft (Miller, *Collected Essays* 187). Each man engenders public terror and attempts to take people's conscience, since their presumed knowledge provides them with an elevated status. The fearful

sociopolitical environments surrounding both McCarthy and Hale allow both figures to use their sense of knowledge to accuse innocent people, under the guise of cleansing the democracy or village, although causing fatal consequences. The inferred goal for Miller then with the play, as it is intertwined with McCarthyism, is also about democracy and the importance of retaining one's individual conscience. Tracking the allegory of McCarthyism within the play, and given that the play was written in 1953 before the McCarthy Era ended and certainly before Joseph McCarthy lost credibility, Reverend Hale's transformation could in some ways serve as Miller's ideal trajectory for McCarthy, or for an intellectual with similarly anti-communist views: an "expert" who continues to seek and comprehend the truth through critical thinking skills, rather than intentionally continuing to stoke hysteria for personal gain. Hale's ability to retain his conscience and eventually change his mind to choose "moral law" over the stubborn arrogance of pride and authority, as opposed to figures like Creon or Judge Danforth, make him vital for Miller's message to the audience.

Miller's representation of Reverend Hale is not completely fictional, as the real man did undergo a transformation as he moved from a participant to critic of the trials, but the details of his emotional devastation and moral awakening are a creative expansion from the actual history. In reality, Hale "only started voicing his disapproval after his wife was accused," although his wife is not present nor ever mentioned in the play (Estey 14). Additionally, "he did not hold the magistrates or others managing the trials (or even himself) accountable for what they had done and instead blamed their poor judgment on satanic forces" (Estey

14). In comparison, the character in the play understands that “there is blood on [his] head” for his part in the deaths (Miller, *The Crucible* 78). Miller’s crafting of Hale in the play, by excluding the connection to his wife, supports the dramatic realization of John Proctor’s innocence as an act of moral conscience rather than a transformation influenced by a personal relationship.

Though the modern theatrical vocabulary has expanded beyond three actors into a larger ensemble cast, Reverend Hale still functions as a tritagonist because the fundamental idea remains of having two opposing sides or competing truths that a tritagonist triangulates. As the third figure, Hale elucidates the complexity of the moral conflict, serving as a point moving along the gradient scale as he undergoes a moral transformation over time. His identities are not simultaneous like Haemon, who seeks to uphold multiple roles, but rather Hale’s arc unfolds more sequentially as he functions as a bridge between the court and the accused, shifting from alignment with the court to alignment with the accused. Although similarly to Haemon, Hale ultimately does not have the power to alter the tragic consequences of the play’s ending. Therefore, in a traditional reading, the main conflict lies between the protagonist John Proctor as the figure upholding the truth of individual conscience on one side, and the antagonist Judge Danforth representing the intertwined religious and civil truth on the other. Hale, then, serves “as a kind of balance between Danforth and Proctor,” (Nelson 170) as he finds the truth of individual morality because of the difficulty moving from “theological truth to legal truth” (Marino 493). There are other figures in the large cast representing each side, such as Elizabeth Proctor siding with her husband and

Abigail providing the accusatory evidence for Danforth, but reading Hale as the tritagonist remains valid in that he is the only character that moves between the opposing truths.

Miller's later writing on *Incident At Vichy* in a 1965 essay titled "Our Guilty for the World's Evil" expounds the relationship between guilt and injustice, and helps uncover Hale's intentional trajectory between sides as a tritagonist. The playwright wrote that he "cannot conceive of guilt as having an existence without the existence of injustice," and that "injustice—like death itself, creates two opposing interests—one more or less profits from it, the other more or less is diminished by it" (Miller, "Our Guilt"). Hale's guilt is a direct result of the injustice he has helped create, despite his intention to uncover truth, and the reverend is diminished by the process. Danforth and the other characters in power, on the other hand, benefit from the trials by placing guilt upon others rather than themselves feeling guilty. Miller believed that it is "immensely difficult to be human precisely because we cannot detect our own hostility in our actions," because of a "tragic, fatal blindness" that we can possess as humans (Miller, "Our Guilt"). This blindness is reflected in Hale's early confidence, as he names his understanding of his work with the devil as "precise" (Miller, *The Crucible* 19), an ironic claim for the audience as hysteria in the search for witches quickly spirals out of control into fatal consequences. Miller was concerned with injustice, and found Reverend Hale as a vessel for the guilt, ultimately teaching the audience a lesson about the tragic consequences that can occur even with the best intentions.

Another lens to understand Hale's role as tritagonist is rooted in Simone Weil's previously mentioned concept of force, which turns back upon the reverend as he realizes he cannot relinquish his morality and critical thinking, reinforcing Miller's aim in critiquing the flawed system that Hale exists within. Although functionally different from *Antigone*, the hysteria within Salem similarly turns the victims "into a thing," since the accusations of a contaminated soul that has dealt with the Devil essentially make "a corpse out" of the accused unless they also confess (Weil 3). As Reverend Hale learns of the injustice of the court over the course of the play, he transforms "into a thing while he is still alive" (Weil 5) because he understands that he is guilty in helping sentence innocent people to death. Like Haemon, the audience witnesses the "writhing and bending" and "folding and pleating" that occur in the final scene because of the tarnish on Hale's soul, which he desperately tries to erase by averting the deaths of the convicted citizens (Weil 5). He is stuck in a space where his "days hold no pastimes, no free spaces," (Weil 8). As he himself states, he has gone "like our Lord into the wilderness" (Miller, *The Crucible* 79). Hale's moral awakening fixes him in a liminal state "between man and corpse," and this "contradiction lodged within the soul tears it to shreds" (Weil 8). Hale names his awareness of the contradiction as he says "damnation's doubled on a minister who counsels men to lie," recognizing that the only way to redeem himself by getting others to falsely confess to witchcraft is also a damnable action (Miller, *The Crucible* 79). Weil recognizes this contradiction as the loss of "inner life," which may be partially returned if Hale "sees the possibility of changing his fate, but this is only hope,"

which clearly tracks to the reverend's failed efforts to avert the executions of John Proctor and others (Weil 10). By the end of the show, he has turned into one of the "more unfortunate creatures who have become things for the rest of their lives" because he cannot undo his complicity in the unjust deaths of many citizens of Salem. Rather than the message of resistance from John Proctor, Miller's crafting of Hale's character serves as a warning for the audience as his realization comes tragically late.

As previously outlined in Haemon's section, the function of Hale as tritagonist is essential in the presentation of a window of opportunity to avert tragic deaths. In Act I Scene II, Hale speaks with John and Elizabeth Proctor about Abigail Williams, and the Proctors first introduce the idea that the witchcraft is fraudulent:

PROCTOR. I have no witness and cannot prove it, except my word be taken. But I know the children's sickness had naught to do with witchcraft.

HALE. (*Stopped, struck.*) Naught to do...? (Miller, *The Crucible* 37)

This conversation sows a crucial doubt into Hale about the validity of the Devil's presence, and he asks John Proctor if he would "testify to this in court," which is essential in his later creation of a window of opportunity. Although, Hale remains resolute in his belief in the court's justice at the end of the scene. Later in Act II Scene II, Hale's objective to find the truth about the witchcraft continues to inform his desire to be impartial and receive more information. Faced with Danforth's corrupt use of power and John Proctor's presentation of evidence

arguing against the authenticity of the witchcraft, Hale voices his concerns in hopes of creating a more just ruling:

HALE. I cannot say he is an honest man, I know him little. But in all justice, sir, a claim so weighty cannot be argued by a farmer. In God's name, sir, stop here; send him home and let him come again with a lawyer...

DANFORTH. Now look you, Mister Hale...

HALE. Excellency, I have signed seventy-two death warrants; I am a minister of the Lord, and I dare not take a life without there be a proof so immaculate, no slightest qualm of conscience may doubt it.

DANFORTH: Mister Hale, you surely do not doubt my justice?

HALE: I have this morning signed away the soul of Rebecca Nurse, Your Honor. I'll not conceal it—I tell you true, sir, my hand shakes yet as with a wound! I pray you, sir, *this* argument let lawyers present to you.

(Miller, *The Crucible* 59)

Danforth understands Hale's argument as a personal attack, and Hale cannot speak outright against the judge as his doubts have not been confirmed one way or another, so Danforth continues his proceedings. Hale's dialogue with Danforth, although unsuccessful, is a window of opportunity to hear alternative evidence about the trials and avoid an unjust conviction. Later in the scene, when Elizabeth Proctor is caught lying about John Proctor and Abigail Williams, Hale again speaks up to Danforth, insisting that he consider an alternative non-witchcraft explanation, although Danforth rejects the reverend's idea:

HALE. Excellency, it is a natural lie to tell; I beg you, stop now; before another is condemned! I may shut my conscience to it no more. Private vengeance is working through this testimony! From the beginning this man has struck me true. I believe him now! By my oath to heaven, I believe him, and I pray you call back his wife before we...

DANFORTH. She spoke nothing of lechery, and this man lies!

HALE. I believe him! I cannot turn my face

from it no more. This girl has always struck me
false! (Miller, *The Crucible* 68)

After not being listened to again by Danforth when John Proctor is arrested, Hale quits the court. In Act II Scene III, three months later, he returns the Salem to plead with Danforth to avert further harm and prevent the death of John Proctor and the other convicted prisoners:

HALE. You must pardon them. They will not budge.

DANFORTH. You misunderstand, sir; I cannot pardon these when twelve are already hanged for the same crime. It is not just.

PARRIS. Rebecca will not confess?

HALE. The sun will rise in a few minutes. Excellency, I must have more time.

DANFORTH. Now hear me, and beguile yourselves no more. I will not receive a single plea for pardon or postponement. Them that will not confess will hang. Twelve are already executed; the names of these seven are given out, and the village expects to see them die at dawn. Postponement, now, speaks a... a floundering on my part; reprieve or pardon must cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now. While I speak God's law, I will not crack its voice with whimpering. If retaliation is your fear, know this I should hang ten thousand that dared to rise against the law, and an ocean of salt tears could not melt the resolution of the statutes. (Miller, *The Crucible* 77)

Much like Haemon, Reverend Hale provides a dissenting voice to the adjudicator to forgo an unjust ruling, which are stances aligned with the audience. Both characters act as a vehicle for the audience to feel heard in their sympathy for what they believe is right, which makes the rejection of the solution all the more heartbreaking. Danforth does not want to pardon the prisoners, presenting the thought that their pardons would be unjust to the previously convicted citizens, which Hale refutes:

HALE. Excellency, if you postpone a week, and publish to the town that

you are striving for their confessions, that speak mercy on your part, not faltering. (Miller, *The Crucible* 78)

Hale understands that the dead cannot be resurrected, but offers the opportunity to save the lives that are still at stake. His strategy to persuade Danforth is calculated in his framing of the confessions as a way to avert deaths without weakening the court's ruling. In his desire to produce confessions, Hale is attempting to function within the moral space between John Proctor and Danforth, although it is a flawed solution for both sides. More confessions would mean more people need to be tried, and Danforth would have to alter his course of judgement to avoid further convictions. Essentially, there would be more citizens convicted and more people named until there was no one left in Salem, which is not a suitable solution for the religious and legal system. For John Proctor and the individual conscience, confessing to a crime you did not commit is untenable, which is a point clearly made in John Proctor's stand at the play's end when he refuses to confess. Having exhausted his argument to Danforth, Hale turns his efforts to Elizabeth as a way to convince her husband to confess. Hale's stance is clear in his plea that "life is God's most precious gift; no principle however glorious may justify the taking of it" (Miller, *The Crucible* 79). His efforts to generate confessions are a practical solution that would keep the farmer present to support his family.

Reverend Hale keeps the window of opportunity of John Proctor's confession open for as long as possible in the hopes that he will avoid death, even after John rips up his confession. Up until his last line, Hale is pleading with Elizabeth, although she closes the window:

HALE. Woman, plead with him! It is pride, it is vanity. Be his helper!—what profit him to bleed? Shall the dust praise him? Shall the worms declare his truth? Go to him, take his shame away.
ELIZABETH. He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him.
(Miller, *The Crucible* 87)

Although the reverend does not understand the power of the moral victory John Proctor is fighting for, his effort to stop the executions is essential to the play's weight and Miller's intent. If John Proctor's decision to die with integrity can be understood as a triumph of conscience, then Hale's failure to save a single life is a tragedy of conscience, as "the churchman lives in the comprehension of his unworthiness; the farmer dies in the awareness of his value" (Nelson 170-171). Hale's only consolation is the awareness of his mistake in participating in the sin of public terror.

These windows of opportunity are critical to both plays because, without Haemon's and Hale's dissenting voices opening the possibility of happier endings, the weight of the tragic deaths does not land. The fault of Creon and Danforth lies in their inflexibility: they are unable to admit their incorrect ruling, and cannot find the ability within themselves to change because their eternal rightness is integral to their identity. This deficiency of personal growth within these strong figures of power delivers fatal consequences, which prompt questions and critical thought for the audience about the characteristics of those we want in power. An unbending desire for power in political leaders has been a relevant subject for playwrights to address for both ancient Greek society and recent American history. The failure of Haemon and Hale to convince those in power is not the

lesson to be learned for the audience, but rather the recognition of the failings of those who we invest our trust and responsibility in.

CONCLUSION

In examining *Antigone* and *The Crucible*, this thesis aims to demonstrate that the moral complexity of these tritagonist figures allow them to reveal core questions of the tragedies posed by the playwrights. More than supporting characters, Haemon and Reverend Hale function as necessary interpretive guides between the two opposing sides of conflict. Rather than holding a steadfast position over the course of the play, both figures struggle to live within the question of choosing a moral side and thereby further ensnare the audience into the central dilemma that Sophocles and Miller are prompting for consideration.

We must not simply understand the tritagonist as “the third actor in a Greek tragedy,” but include in our thinking the potency of their role in illuminating the conflict and holding the playwright’s intent (“Tritagonist”). By revealing the space between competing truths, the tritagonist does not merely support the action of the play, but makes its tragic moral stakes legible. Without the figures like Haemon and Reverend Hale, tragedy risks a system of opposition without understanding, or a conflict without reflection.

As theatermakers, it is essential that in order to generate robust performances of social and tragic plays, we must not discredit the value and complexity of the tritagonist role, and I invite the reading of the expanded definition of tritagonist as a guide for other tragedies both new and old. The

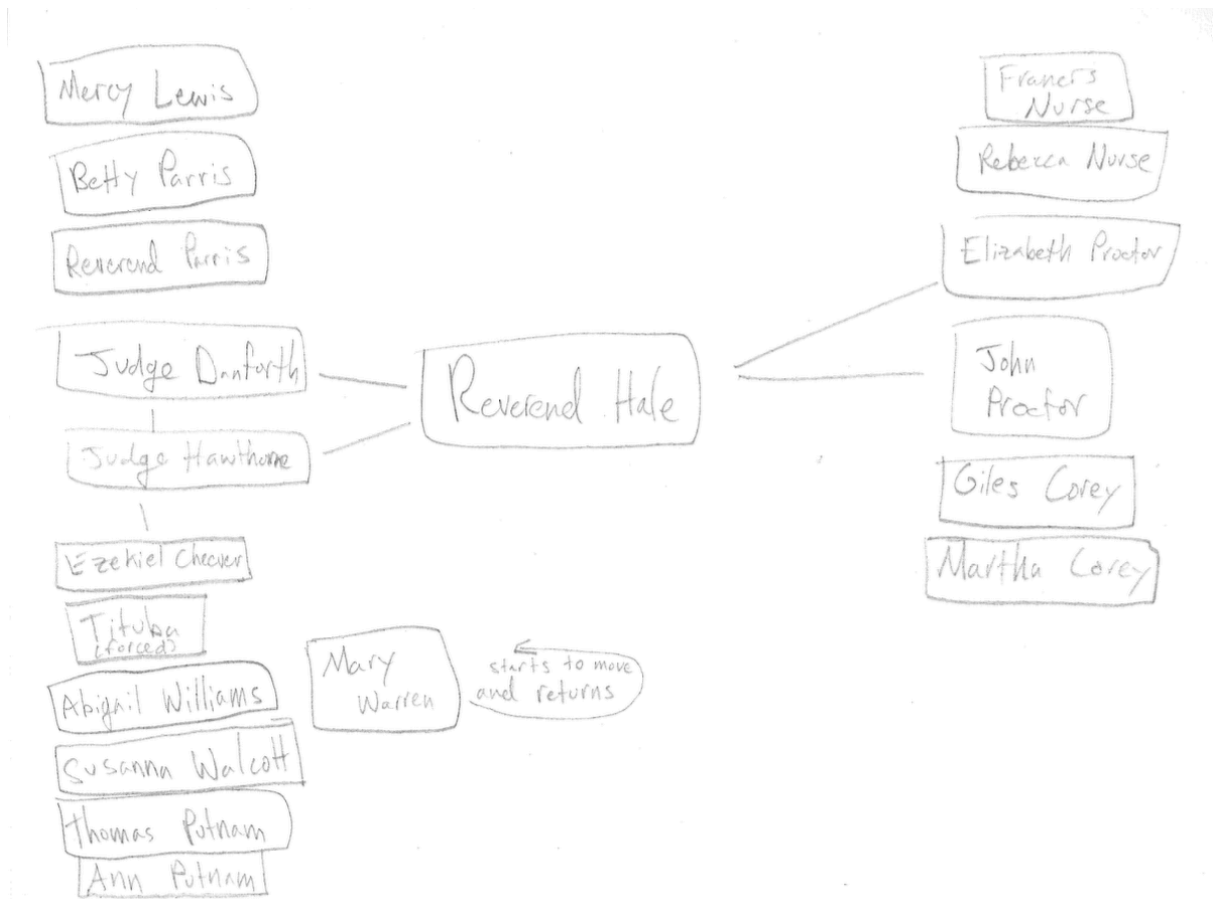
tritagonist is not present in all plays, but retaining a lens for the role is useful in finding the moral center of a play, and considering the intent of the playwright. Whether a play is from or inspired by an ancient Greek author, there are many works with a triangulated or gradient structure that allow for the tritagonist. For example, within other Miller plays, Linda Loman in *Death of a Salesman* could potentially fit within the role as a character moving between her husband, Willy, and their children, Biff and Happy. Her efforts to convince her sons to help their father provides a window of opportunity for Willy to make peace and avert tragedy. Although adding to the moral complexity, her protective love and avoidance in confronting her husband's illusions enable his decision to take his own life. Her inability to properly support her husband is not a character flaw but rather is useful in Miller's potential larger critique of the American dream. Returning to the idea of a play having several tritagonists, Happy could also be considered a tritagonist in his movement between Biff and Willy, as Happy attempts to help Biff heal his relationship with their father. Ultimately, Happy fails to repair the relationship, but his efforts to make amends sets up a window of opportunity for Willy and Biff. Happy serves as an embodiment of Miller's possible intent as he is unhappy with his life after internalizing the false belief of the American dream from his father, and even at the end of the play remains resolute in his dangerous desire to achieve what his father could not. Beyond Miller, I believe the framework can prove useful in Shakespearean work, such as Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*. The friar finds a liminal position in his relationships between the Montague and Capulet families and attempts to craft a

window of opportunity that would avert conflict or tragedy, as the marriage between Romeo and Juliet could have potentially reconciled the families. Ultimately, his plan fails and adds a tragic weight in the deaths of the two lovers. Shakespeare's goals in writing *Romeo and Juliet* are perhaps more complex due to the fact that the story is adapted from previous works, although Friar Lawrence is useful in the playwright's investigation of social conflict and the question of fate versus free will. Another example is Paul Lebedev in Anton Chekhov's *Ivanov*, as a character who is caught in the middle of the financial conflict between his wife Zinaida and Ivanov, and later the tension between his daughter Sasha and Ivanov. Lebedev struggles to find a solution to the conflicts, offering money from his own wallet for Ivanov to use to repay a debt to Zinaida, and attempts to convince his daughter she does not need to marry Ivanov if she does not want to, although neither Ivanov nor Sasha accept his help. Lebedev is important in fulfilling Chekhov's potential goals for the play as the playwright sought to have "the last word" about "the whining, miserable people" that were frequently written about in Russian literature in the 1800s, otherwise known as the concept of the superfluous man (Chekhov 143). Near the end of the play, Lebedev's proposal to give Ivanov money if he wants to marry Sasha is a practical way to help the protagonist, and Ivanov's rejection of the idea highlights his miserable characteristics.

In conclusion, the tritagonist is a potent role worthy of our attention as we analyze tragedy. Both in the history of tragedy and still today, the middle ground of moral ambiguity is a pivotal place that mitigates what would otherwise be two

extremes. Returning to the origins of tragedy and its didactic element, I invite consideration of the importance of a tritagonist not just in a play, but in society. There is a distinct need for liminal figures who work to resolve issues in their practice of speaking and listening, and we would do well to learn what happens when we do not heed the advice of the tritagonist when they present a window of opportunity.

ADDENDUM: *The Crucible* Production Materials



As the creative portion of my thesis, I will perform as Reverend Hale in Wesleyan's mainstage production of *The Crucible*. As I have entered the rehearsal process, moving from analysis to embodying Reverend Hale, I have used my research to inform how I am physically and emotionally mapping the character's transformation. Included above is a diagram I have made to help me visually map out the liminal space between the moral divide in Salem. This drawing is particularly focused on Act II Scene II and Act II Scene III to help support Hale's movement away from the court in his realization of John Proctor's innocence.

I have positioned Hale as a point in the middle as a gradient, although he functions just as well as a triangulating third point between the two figures. Understanding my role in the space between Judge Danforth and John Proctor is useful for my awareness of my physical positioning, as I find points throughout the show to exist either directly between the two characters or as the third point between them to make a triangle. For example, at the end of Act II Scene II, Judge Danforth accuses John Proctor of being “combined with anti-Christ,” to which Hale replies “You condemn an honest man” (Miller, *The Crucible* 71). As a performer I physically move between Judge Danforth and John Proctor in an effort to act as the mediator between the two opposing forces as Hale has a stronger tie to the judges. His position as a reverend and trusted source of knowledge in the community provides a stronger relationship to the court, although Judge Danforth still does not respect Hale’s opinions, which leads Hale to quit in response to his failure to mediate between Danforth and the Proctors. Using the diagram, I can visually track Hale’s movement from left to right over the course of the play, to eventually side only with the right side as Hale explains to Elizabeth Proctor that he “has no connection with the court” (Miller, *The Crucible* 79).

As I incorporate the theorists from my writing into my process as a performer, I have found that Schechner’s “crease phenomena” is informative as I define Hale’s possible super-objective in uncovering what dark actions have occurred in the crease spaces in Salem (Schechner 164). Hale has been called specifically to search for signs of witchcraft after Betty Parris has fallen ill, and

Reverend Parris tells him that he found “ten or twelve” local girls “dancing in the forest last night” (Miller, *The Crucible* 19). The inciting incident occurred in a liminal space at the edge of town, which is a crease space in Salem. The quest for Hale is to uncover the truth, and following confessions of dealing with the Devil, he initially believes witchcraft is to blame. Tracking Hale’s trajectory from the end of Act I Scene I to his entrance into the Proctor’s home in Act I Scene II, he explains that he has been going from “house to house” to speak to those that are accused of witchcraft (Miller, *The Crucible* 35). By searching many households in Salem, Hale is working to find the creases that would be “a place” for witchcraft “to hide,” in order to cleanse the village of such a “disturbance” (Schechner 164). The fact of a crease hiding dark powers is clear to Hale, even if he is unsure of exactly what is hidden, as he explains to John Proctor in the phrase “we must look to cause proportionate” (Miller, *The Crucible* 44). Because of the clarity Hale has in his knowledge of the crease space, I retain a confidence as Hale when delivering the line to John Proctor. The transformation for Hale comes in the realization that the crease is not witchcraft, but rather “private vengeance” (Miller, *The Crucible* 68). Hale’s continued desire to uncover the truth of the crease spaces in Salem pushes his arc throughout the play, which inadvertently serves as his downfall in producing his guilt in the trials, and sends him into his own liminal space. In Act II Scene III, Hale tells Elizabeth Proctor that he has “gone like our Lord into the wilderness,” which I understand as literally living in nature (Miller, *The Crucible* 79). His desire to find a liminal crease space for himself signals his internal sense of “instability,” which is tied to Simone Weil’s writing on force

(Schechner 164). He lives in the liminal state “between man and corpse” both within himself and externally in the wilderness (Weil 8). Practically, this awareness of Hale’s liminal states imbues my physicality and mental state, shaping my portrayal of an exhausted man at the end of his rope who sees one possible solution to save himself: preventing the death of others. His return to Salem in the final scene of the play is a final window of opportunity for both himself and John Proctor after the initial failed attempts to correct the court proceedings in the previous scene. Hale’s request for postponement to Danforth and his pleading to Elizabeth Proctor for her husband to confess is motivated by his desire to move out of his state of being “a thing,” a corpse, “while he is still alive” (Weil 5). His “only hope” to redeem himself would be to save more lives from being taken, and when Proctor dies, so does Hale’s possibility of becoming human again. In performance, Elizabeth’s refusal to plead with her husband in the final lines of the play lands as a devastating blow, as Hale dies internally. Hale’s tragedy is that the same force he enacted, by generating confessions and accusations of witchcraft, comes back to turn him into a corpse as well.

Lastly, my knowledge of Miller intentionally crafting Hale’s character arc has shaped how I embody the role. Without Hale’s wife being involved in the trial, as was the case in the real history, his realization of the truth and his moral awakening occur solely through his ability to speak and listen with the townspeople, particularly John and Elizabeth Proctor. I note for myself as a performer that I must pick up on the tension between John and Elizabeth when he speaks to them in their home, and although he does not realize John’s adulterous

behavior until later in the courtroom, his awareness of their strained relationship proves to him the personal vengeance occurring with Abigail Williams. Hale, as a tritagonist, is a complex character, and I hope to use the framework presented in this paper to support my performances of future tritagonist characters.

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