

8-2011

Into the Fire: My Journey Into the Life of John Proctor

William Dale Grayson
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd>



Part of the [Acting Commons](#)

Citation

Grayson, W. D. (2011). Into the Fire: My Journey Into the Life of John Proctor. *Graduate Theses and Dissertations* Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/114>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact scholar@uark.edu.

Into The Fire:

My Journey Into the Life of John Proctor

Into The Fire:

My Journey Into the Life of John Proctor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Drama

By

William Grayson
West Texas A&M University
Bachelor of Arts in Acting 2006

August 2011
University of Arkansas

Abstract

The following is the record of my time working on the character of John Proctor in Arthur Miller's, *The Crucible*. I will discuss my approach in creating the role as well as my experience in the rehearsal room. The end of the paper contains a retrospective journal where I cover rehearsals and performance.

Into the Fire

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council

Thesis Director:

Amy Herzberg

Thesis Committee:

Mavourneen Dwyer

Kate Frank

Thesis Duplication Release

I hereby authorize the University of Arkansas Libraries to duplicate this thesis when needed for research and/or scholarship.

Agreed _____

William Grayson

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Given Circumstances	2
III. Title and Theme	3
IV. Events of the Play	4
V. John Proctor	5
VI. The Journey	8
VII. Imaginary Work	11
VIII. Journal	16
IX. Conclusion	28
X. Bibliography	29

I. Introduction

“Because it speaks deceit and I am honest!” (Miller, *The Crucible* 62) This statement made by John Proctor during the second act of *The Crucible* stuck with me more than any other in the play. Here we have a man begging his wife not to ask him to lie. To most, this request seems simple enough. However, the poetry used by Arthur Miller flows like shards of ice in the murky water that is John Proctor’s soul. This is a man more tormented by his own guilt than by the cold gaze he receives from his wife, Elizabeth, every time he walks through the door. For me, this piece of text tells us more about the character than any other Miller has in the entire script. The real power of this man is his ability to stay just in an unjust world. During the time that Arthur Miller was writing the play HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) was interrogating people from all walks of life in the United States. Entertainers and artists were being black listed. Common men and women were served with subpoenas and arrested. Good people with decent reputations were being dragged through mud on a daily basis because they had been involved in potentially questionable activities. A nation terrified and divided. What for? The unrealistic threat of communism within America’s borders was being perpetuated by those hungry for power. *The Crucible* is about much more than witches. It is about much more than McCarthyism, greed, and the dilemma of democracy. *The Crucible* is about fear, and how men of power will use fear to advance an agenda to gain their own end by any means necessary. Arthur Miller has given us what I believe to be one of the few horror plays in American Theatre. The play, produced the right way is absolutely terrifying. The journey of creating John Proctor was an endurance test of my mind, heart, soul, and body.

II. Given Circumstances

The action of the play takes place amid circumstances that are very hard for a modern individual to comprehend. These people live in a new world that had only been inhabited by Europeans in some sense for less than two hundred years. Of course, that includes the discovery of the Americas, not the actual colonization that had been taking place for less than a century. It is spring 1692, Salem, Massachusetts. It is still cold. It is still getting dark very early in the day. Indians still live within close proximity of the Puritans. Death is hiding in every corner. To sum up; this is a very frightening time and place to live in. The time span of the play is nearly three months long. We start in early spring when John Proctor is planting his crops and move into early fall when he is executed.

A majority of the characters that we meet in *The Crucible* are land owners. Some of them are very wealthy like Thomas Putnam; others are just hard working farmers like Giles Corey. John Proctor falls in the middle. I understand that Proctor owned a sizeable amount of land and was an influential member of his society; however, Arthur Miller refers to John Proctor as a “peasant”(Miller, *Timebends* 344) in his autobiography *Timebends*. This is not to say that John Proctor is a lowly dirt farmer. He possesses a certain amount of wealth and prestige. He is not, however, one of the upper class members of this society. He is a hard working common man. He reminds me of a modern middle class laborer, such as an electrician or general contractor. For me, making the association was easy. My father was a master electrician who made a very decent wage. We never wanted for much, but he had to work very hard for the income he had. This gives John Proctor a steady mind when it comes to dealing with the people around him. There is an understanding of cause and effect. If I plant crops and there is abundant sunshine and rain

then I will have a good harvest. Bargaining with the town's elite or praying to God will not affect the outcome from my soil. This belief plays into the political and religious factors as well. Since there was no formal government at the time, the people of Salem turned to the church for the rule of law. John Proctor, I believe, never had any use for these kinds of people. Politicians and clergymen were just trying to take what they could from the hard working men and women of the society. Money doesn't dictate power. As Proctor points out, "We vote by name in this society, not by acreage."(Miller, *The Crucible* 28) This tells us everything we need to know about Proctor's political beliefs.

A large number of characters in this play believe that God is out to get them. They also believe that the devil is out to get them. If they pray hard enough and live a pious life, then they will be rewarded and kept safe during their natural lives. Proctor on the other hand believes that honesty and fairness is the only way to salvation. The only people out to get him are the other members of society who may have something to gain by another man's incarceration.

III. Title and Theme

"Crucible" literally means a severe test, or a container for melting metals. I interpret this to mean a purging by fire. The characters in the play (specifically John Proctor), are placed into the burning cauldron and their spiritual strength is tested. The theme of the play ties into this: What are you willing to give up in order to do what is right? In the end, John Proctor gives up his natural life in order to save his own eternal soul. Salvation is the strongest need.

IV. Events of the play

The initial event of the play, what everyone is living with, is that Betty Parris, daughter of Reverend Parris, has taken sick for some unknown reason. Every character is affected by this as it stirs up fears that Lucifer may be running amok in the town of Salem. Proctor is affected by this because he understands how unreasonable the people around him can be. The fear is that this could escalate into something very serious so quickly that if it isn't dealt with immediately, there could be real trouble for the people of Salem. Not only supernatural trouble, but political and religious. The inciting event is the accusation of witchcraft by Tituba, a slave to Parris, and the girls. This changes the stasis of the environment. The play moves from an unknown illness to hysteria over the possibility that the devil is gathering souls for hell's army. To Proctor, this is absolutely ridiculous. Proctor doesn't hold any belief that the devil can take a good person's soul away. It is his stubbornness in not acknowledging the real danger that will eventually be his downfall. There is great power in peoples' superstitions. The central event of the play is Proctor tearing his court confession at the end of Act Four. Here, good tragically defeats evil and Proctor earns his salvation and forgives himself. However this leads to his execution and to an audience wondering why he didn't just lie and walk away with his life intact. Of course to do that would be completely against John Proctor's core values. No matter what the cost, he will not believe himself or his loved ones just to satisfy a few powerful men. The main event of the play is Elizabeth's forgiveness. The final line of the play is, "He have his goodness now, God forbid I take that from him." (Miller, *The Crucible* 145) This has to be one of the most powerful closing lines in American theatre. Proctor gets what he needed the entire time, the forgiveness of the one person who always believed him to be a good man. Despite the tragic ending of the play, there is a feeling of redemption, as John Proctor stood up to the men in control and told them that his

soul was not for sale. This act so moves Elizabeth that she sees his light of goodness shining all around him.

V. John Proctor

In my research I was unable to find an exact quote by Arthur Miller referring to John Proctor as anything but a good, decent man. As I mentioned earlier he did refer to Proctor as a “peasant.” (Miller, *Timebends* 344) In the stage directions, Proctor enters after the following; “... a farmer in his middle thirties. He need not have been a partisan of any faction in the town, but there is evidence to suggest that he had a sharp and biting way with hypocrites. He was the kind of man—powerful of body, even-tempered and not easily led, who cannot refuse support to partisans without drawing out their deepest resentment. In Proctor’s presence a fool felt his foolishness instantly and a Proctor is always marked for calumny therefore.

But as we shall see, the steady manner Proctor displays does not spring from an untroubled soul. He is a sinner, a sinner not only against the moral fashion of the time, but against his own vision of decent conduct... Proctor, respected and even feared in Salem, has come to regard himself as a kind of fraud. But no hint of this has yet appeared on the surface, and as he enters from the crowded parlor below it is a man in his prime we see, with a quiet confidence and an unexpressed, hidden force. Mary Warren, his servant, can barely speak for embarrassment and fear.” (Miller, *The Crucible* 20)

Proctor is rarely referred to when he is not onstage. Other characters speak about him either in his presence or directly to his face. Parris calls him “mischief.” (Miller, *The Crucible* 88) Elizabeth refers to him as a “good man but bewildered.” Abigail tells Proctor how strong he is; and that he “is no wintry man.” Putnam never calls Proctor anything, but does make allusions to

him being rebellious and foolish. Often times Proctor refers to himself as honest and decent. He believes he is a god-fearing man who does good work and repents for his sins.

All of this gives me the impression that Proctor is an everyman. He is level headed and direct. He knows his flaws, but believes the good life he leads makes up for the sins of his past. The disparity in what is said about him shows that there are strong feelings on every side about this man, making him very popular in the town in one way or another.

There is no metaphor or deeper meaning to John Proctor's name other than he was a real person who was accused and hanged during the Salem witch trials. This adds a lot of weight to the creation of the character; trying to pay some respect to the man that actually went through these events. The action of the play is loosely based on reality, the mere fact that this man was real and did lose his life in the event is all the more important.

John Proctor is the catalyst for the entire play. He is the common man fighting against the oppression of the wicked that control government, religion, and economics. His function is to be our hero and our martyr. Proctor's purpose is to give his life so that we may see what happens when government sponsored fear and paranoia takes control if unchecked by the masses.

John Proctor likes hard work, discipline, and whatever he can make with his hands. He dislikes dry weather, greed, selfishness, and too much company. He loves honesty, loyalty, his family and his friends, God, and the feeling of the sun on his back. He hates hypocrisy, dishonesty, political and religious structure, poor moral character and intruders.

For all intents and purposes, John Proctor is a poet. He speaks clearly and to the point on any issue. His use of imagery, such as, "I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face. And it is

my face, and it is your face.” (Miller, *The Crucible* 119) This is quite poetic. Proctor always gets to the heart of the matter as quickly as possible; he doesn't waste any of his words. This at times can be his downfall, as he doesn't think before he speaks. He is a passionate man who struggles with his own emotions, as the society he lives in has no means of self expression. He is expected to behave a certain way at all times, which goes against the fabric of his inner being. He has no time to talk around an issue and feels there is no point in doing so. If you have something to say then you should just say it outright, and damn the devil.

The dialect work for the play was definitely a challenge. I don't think most productions would opt for the dialect of the late 17th century but this one did. I liked it. I think it brought a whole other element to the play that otherwise would not have been there. It put me into a different frame of thinking. The whole, “pretend” aspect got even more real for some strange reason. Not only was I thinking, behaving, and feeling different from myself, but I sounded dramatically different. Some of the dialogue is very modern to the time it was written in, (Early 1950s). This created a closeness for the audience. Even though it was obviously an event that took place a long time ago in a strange place with strange people, there was an eerie familiarity to it.

John Proctor's superobjective is truth, whatever the cost. In the opening quote of this paper, “Because it speaks deceit and I am honest,” (Miller, *The Crucible* 62) Proctor alludes to fact that he loves Abigail. Therefore, he can not run to her and call her whore and forsake her love. In the end he doesn't give his lie to Danforth because the shame from doing so is too much for him to bear. Everything he does in the play goes back to this objective. Truth is the uppermost, no matter whom it hurts or what you have to give up.

VI. The Journey

My journey into the script was as tumultuous as John Proctor's. The process began while I was still in rehearsal for *Death of a Salesman*. This helped me in adopting a lot of the values that Proctor held dear to him. Here we have a man who has better things to do with his time than to chase down spirits and add to the hysteria of the town. He wanted to work in his fields and spend time with his family. I wanted to be working on *The Crucible*.

The great thing about this script is that it is broken down into four acts which essentially work as four very long scenes. Once we are in a certain location, we stay there until the end of the act. For our production, we broke the script into two acts with two scenes within each act, cutting out the superfluous night time scene between Abigail Williams and John Proctor. For the following I will use Arthur Miller's acts; 1, 2, 3, and 4 as that is how I referred to them during rehearsal, instead of the scenes referenced in the program.

The catalyst moment in Act 1 is the initial event for the entire play. The knowledge that I walk into the room with is that the young Betty Parris has fallen ill after an evening in the woods. Being levelheaded and logical about most things, I want to see what is causing the hysteria for myself, as the town is talking about witches and devils. My objective is to crush any sentiment that the townspeople may have about supernatural forces, as such an idea would only lead to trouble. In this, I will not succeed. I am too stubborn and prideful to see the real danger and grow confrontational with the elders of the town.

The most difficult part of this scene is the short segment that I have alone with Abigail. Attempting to find an objective was extremely difficult, as most of what I started out with went against my overall objective. Just "seeing her" was not a strong enough selection, and it had

nothing to do with the rest of the scene. With Abigail, I made the decision that I did care for her and that I was in love with her, but that my value set would not allow me to pursue those feelings. I do want to see her. I do want to check up on her. I want to know that she is safe. However, none of these are strong enough to use as playable objectives, because I get them as soon as I walk in the door and see her standing there. It became more of a test of self discipline. Can I be alone in a room with her and fight my carnal desires? Mary Warren is my first obstacle in achieving this. Her presence makes the guilt and frustration all the more present. Mary replaced Abigail. Mary now knows where I have been and what I have been doing. For Mary, the objective was to frighten her into silence and send her back to her work at my home.

Once Reverend Hale shows up I feel I can leave knowing that this entire mess will be cleaned up quickly. I have heard that Hale is an honest and sensible man who has no desire to create hysteria.

In the beginning of Act 2 I am coming home from working in my fields. I have spent the entire day planting my land and have not seen my wife or children since sunrise this morning. It is nearly night time, I'm tired, and I'm hungry. My objective for the scene is to make Elizabeth pleased with me. Despite recent quarrels I love this woman more than anything else on earth. I know that she has been depressed since I confessed to the affair with Abigail, and I want her to feel loved and needed. The fact that I have been gone all day will surely make her anxious and frightened. I never lie to my wife, but I don't always give all of the facts that she would like. I make every attempt early on to cheer her up. I have encouraging words about the crop and even discuss future purchases. My objective goes through a few changes as new information is given. However, the super objective for the scene remains the same. Obstacles put in place by other

characters such as Mary Warren informing me that she is now working for the prosecution makes my work all the more difficult. Of course, Mary is just one of the many girls in town howling out against my neighbors and friends. The strain begins when I learn that Abigail is leading the prosecution. The eventual arrest of Giles' and Frances' wives leads to the arrest of Elizabeth and forces me into an action that I had been trying to avoid. The need for truth puts me onto an immediate path of destruction, one that had really begun with the affair with Abigail.

I compare my journey in Act 3 to that of a runaway freight train. It starts out slow and on course, but before we reach the finish, it is wild and unstoppable. I have come to this court to free my wife and friends, or so I say. There is something more sinister indeed taking place. I want to dismantle this court from top to bottom. I would love nothing more than to see this fiasco ended and all of the judges sent home and all prisoners set free. The best laid plans of mice and men do not always come to fruition. What brings me here today is the knowledge that this entire trial is a sham and an attempt for some to seize power and land from their neighbors. To say that this case is really about witchcraft is foolish and I know it, and before the end of the act everyone in Salem will know it. Once again I do not succeed in attaining this objective.

Act 4 takes place three months after the end of Act 3 and a great deal has changed in Salem. Elizabeth is very pregnant, Abigail has run away, and there is general disarray in the town over the trials. I have spent the entire time since the trial locked in the dungeon of the jail completely alone. I have recently been chained due to reoccurring attacks on the jailers. The catalyst moment for the Act is Parris' fear of a violent rebellion against the men in charge of the trial, specifically himself. They come to Elizabeth and I in hopes that I will confess my sins before being hanged this very morning. My objective for this act is Elizabeth's approval. I want

to please her, but I want to do it in a way that she can see me for the good and righteous man I believe myself to be. However, in the course of the act my goodness is put to the test when I am asked to be an example of a decent Christian for the entire town, even knowing that the confession that I must sign is false. Am I willing to throw away what little dignity I have left to save my own neck like a coward and let my friends fall from the gallows like stones? Absolutely not. I earn the respect and approval from my wife that I have so desperately needed for so long and give up my own life in the process.

At the beginning of the play I would love nothing more than to stay unaffiliated with the town's fears and go about my business in my own way. Raise my crops, my children, and work to gain Elizabeth's trust and loyalty back. Unfortunately this cannot happen. I am forced into action by the prevailing powers in town and must fight with every fiber of my being in order to restore some kind of balance to the world. The obstacles are tremendous, and my opponents treacherous. Armed with the truth, I feel that there is no way that I can fail. Sadly I learn all too well that the fight against evil is dirty work and punishes the righteous who can't avoid faltering. The real downfall of John Proctor is not his affair with Abigail, his inability to control his emotions, or even his fear of authority. The real downfall of John Proctor, like all tragic heroes, is his pride. Proctor is so consumed with his own life and his own demons that he doesn't understand the real dangers in the world.

VII. Imaginary Work

In creating the role of John Proctor I thought a great deal about my own father. Here was a man who was deeply flawed yet had a huge heart and strong work ethic. He wasn't a bad man necessarily, just someone who was completely lost in the world in which he lived. My father was

a large blue collar worker who found intense value in a day of hard work. He had no time for incompetence or ridiculous superstitions. I feel that John Proctor is very much the same way. In my journey I imagined my father working in the fields in place of John Proctor and considered how he would handle the situations presented by the script. Since my father and I are so similar, it was an easy substitution to make. Discovering the values of Proctor came easily with this work as well. I began to feel the pain in my back and the calluses on my hands. My patience grew incredibly thin with everyone around me and a sense of a job well done overtook my psyche.

Before each scene would begin I would usually lie backstage either on a bench or the floor and create what was happening just before I would enter. Before Act 1, I spent my time in a semi-supine position walking through the streets of Salem, emerging from the woods listening to the clamor of the townspeople talking about witches and demons and rolling my eyes at their idiocy. The discomfort came easy, as did the rage of not knowing where Mary Warren was. I imagined thrashing her for disobeying my commands and the great pleasure that would come from putting myself back on top as the alpha male in my community. The most difficult part of the process was carrying myself as though I was the most important person in the room. Proctor is a highly respected member of the community, much like my father. (Some of the people in our town wanted him to run for Mayor.) This type of status was different for me, as I typically play submissive, troubled characters who kowtow to most authority. I had to remind myself that this was my world and I was calling the shots. It helped tremendously in rehearsal that Kate Frank was continuously open to my ideas and treated me like a leader in the rehearsal room. The one regret however was that I didn't take a stronger leadership position with the other cast members. I got caught up in my own world a bit too much at times and overlooked the possibility that some

may be looking to me as an example. My hope is that my alienation allowed other members of the cast to view me as an outsider who may be holding some type of secret that they all wanted.

The most challenging part of moving into Act 2 was the time between scenes. I spent a lot of time waiting to come onstage trying to forget the script itself and just walk onstage and live. I was struggling with the horror of the play and the knowledge that Proctor actually possessed. I found myself many times trying to control my fears and anxieties instead of just letting go and allowing the energy to flow through me. I was working way too hard to keep myself in check. I was commanding my actions when I should have just lived them. Eventually I allowed Miller's work to take over and I completely let go, which was challenging. In the end it was the right decision, as the scene began to flow and had the right amount of energy and emotion needed without me trying to force the direction of the play.

Act 3 came easy. I had time to set up everything that had happened during intermission and came on with a strong objective and a fire in my belly. I saw the tops of building collapsing around every member of the court and the hypocrisy exposed for the entire world to see. Having a great actress like Molly Carrol who played Mary Warren on my arm to drag around really helped in getting me onstage with a sense of urgency. Knowing Molly personally, and the great work she did in creating her role, I didn't have much time before she backed out all together and left me out to dry. As the act progresses however, I don't need her nearly as much, and instead rely on the real truth behind the masquerade.

The imaginative work for Act 4 was by far the most fun. Here I went offstage to dirty myself up and then find a nice spot offstage to lie on the floor and sink into a personal hell. The cold steel in the metal shop helped my mind in creating a dungeon worthy of a man who some

believed had been overtaken by Lucifer. The anger and frustration came on strong and then subsided into complete and total despair. I wanted out so bad that I physically could not wait to get onstage and play out the ending of the show. However, I had to wait for Caden Worley to come and get me. I allowed him to chain me while I was still on the floor and then pull me up by my shackles to really create that sense of helplessness. Just before entering the stage I had to clear my mind of what was happening and sink into total confusion. I didn't know why I had been summoned. I didn't know that the court had come to bargain with me. The knowledge that I had was that I was going to die today, one way or another. I was either going to confess to a crime I didn't commit, or walk to the gallows with my head held high knowing that in my own way I had managed to beat the men who put me in this position.

Whether she knew it or not, Kate Frank created a terrifying world to live in on stage. It was dark and cold, and served the script very well. I could sense danger at every turn and am still very grateful for the choices she made in her concept of the show. We talked extensively about a world where nothing is what it seems and that your guilt could expose you at any moment, so caution was the key to survival. In our talks we worked to discover the downfall of Proctor, a man who was always so careful at avoiding trouble and hiding himself in plain sight of everyone else. In the end, his downfall was his intense pride and inability to share his emotions. When Proctor would allow his emotions out, they were a storm of uncontrollable fury. When I say fury I don't just mean aggressiveness. I am referring to all of his emotions. Mine are much the same way. When I feel something I feel it to the fullest extent, and struggle to hide it. This was one of the places where I feel that I really got to know John Proctor.

One of the great influences on me during the creative process was Arnold Böcklin's self-portrait. In this painting Böcklin is standing with what appears to be the devil himself directing his actions. This came in handy at the end of the play when Danforth was towering over me coaxing out a confession. As Proctor, I continually wanted the presence of evil all around me and my guilt not far behind. This image created fear, as do many of Böcklin's paintings. He managed to create a variety of horrid images of death and chaos that still to this day haunt me. This is exactly what I wanted; the feeling of helplessness in the face of great evil. Music was another big factor in my process, especially backstage. Music from the time was difficult to come by, and most of it was hymns or psalms. I preferred to use Phillip Glass. His music causes the imagination to run wild with pictures and situations that are at times otherworldly. I would specifically see waves crashing, trees billowing, and buildings decaying as I listened to his repertoire. Finally, the most influential of all the creative influences was that of my animal. I imagined myself as a puma, anthropomorphized, living in a world that was completely out of reach. I prefer the puma because it is on the small side for a "big cat." Pumas live near civilized areas and are not wanted there by the general public. The feeling of isolation was needed in almost every aspect of everything I did. I even went so far as to adapt physical traits from this beast, the most specific being that I would process information with my mouth open, as most cats, large and small, do. This also helped in keeping my vocal chords relaxed during scenes and prevented me from tensing up.

VIII. Journal

September 13, 2009

1st Rehearsal. Tonight we discussed the research that we need to do, Puritans, Indians, Agrarian culture, etc; as well as arranging dialect sessions with Mavourneen. We need to have two sessions with her before October 12, when we kick rehearsals into high gear. We were told to come back on October 12 at least 75% memorized, this is something I have already begun. Kate emphasized personalizing the text for each and every one of us. The book, “The Devil’s Snare” has been recommended to us by Kate, I will purchase this soon.

September 15, 2009

This was a table work session with Kate and Laura(Elizabeth). Personalization is still being pushed very heavily. Tonight we set the ground work for the entire relationship between John and Elizabeth. I need to find the truth in the role. First glimpse leads me to believe that I need Elizabeth’s forgiveness. What stands in my way? I have an inability to lie and I am filled with immense pride. This will be my undoing. We discover and discuss that I am even tempered and wise beyond my years, however, I can get very emotional when my patience has been worn thin. Things to consider: How often do I beat Mary? How often did I beat Abigail, if at all? Do I take my frustrations out on Mary? What is my secret?

September 18, 2009

Table work with Kate and Becky (Abigail). Tonight we went through relationship building exercises. We worked a little on the first and only scene between Abigail and I. The

work went really well, I think we are on the right track to getting a good scene, however short it may be. The question still remains, why do I choose to stay alone in this room with Abby? I still care for her, but the girl is absolute poison and I know it. Becky is going to be fun to work with; she is very aggressive on stage.

September 20, 2009

Tonight we discussed dialects and then watched a terrible PBS movie about the Salem Witch trials. I felt like we could have accomplished more by discussing the script and the symbolism and metaphor within. The discussion did turn to the supernatural. I'm glad that I have very few superstitions about such things as it will make this journey into John's psyche much easier.

September 21, 2009

Dialect session. There are four replacements that need to be made in the text. A, R, I, and O. The dialect will be similar to RPA with a little Irish taste to it. I need to work on a timeline, this will be key in creating the imagined history.

Note: There is a quest for righteousness and truth. I need forgiveness.

September 22, 2009

Table work with Jared Hanlin (Hale), Laura Harrell (Elizabeth), Molly Carroll (Mary) and Kate. The first time through was tough and very weak. It lacked objective and tactics all the way through. Right now the relationships are just sketches that require more specific choices to bring them to life. How do I really feel about these two people? I need to explore the

rollercoaster that is the “Hale Scene.” What is my emotional and physical journey throughout? What are my expectations? What is the danger in his being here? How strong of a motivator is my fear? Do I suspect that there is any real danger for me and mine at all?

September 24, 2009

Tonight we did a read through of Acts 3 and 4. Just the read through alone was exhausting. We made another line change from the Dramatist. I prefer the Penguin version more anyway. There were a few scheduling problems tonight, but nothing that we couldn't work around. This act is going to require a great deal of energy from me. Something to consider; how do I want to influence the room? Not just as John, but as myself.

Act 4 is going to require a slow steady build into the climax. I get the image of a train slowly taking off and picking up speed until there is no stopping it at all. Strong and slow into fast and furious until there is an orchestra like crash. Moment before work is needed.

September 25, 2009

Tonight we worked on Act 2. I came across a little too strong tonight. I was being too intimidating to Hale instead of level headed and crafty. The need to avoid danger must supersede my anger with him being in my home. Some of the actors were frustrating me tonight with their blocking choices. They were sticking to furniture and standing in straight lines. How do I help in fixing this without overstepping my bounds? The violence right now is no good. It needs to be more precise, or rather, it must come from a place of strong need.

October 4, 2009

Design presentations and first full read through. I did the matinee of *Death of a Salesman* today. I'm surprisingly full of energy. The read through was a standing read through, which is my favorite kind. Despite the fact that nothing has been set yet, I felt stagnant the whole night. There is more humor than I expected there to be. I need to be more specific when my intensity and volume rises. My innerlife is going to need work. I don't feel that a lot of these things will begin to blossom until I am off book. I know a decent amount of my lines already, but the road ahead is going to be tough. The most difficult part of the script will be Act 3. This is the trial scene and it is epically long. There are a lot of people onstage and a great deal of action takes place throughout. Kate has the feeling that John is willing to confess to his adultery very early on in the scene. I have yet to come around to that conclusion. I view it more as an ace up the sleeve. I think John would like to avoid that bit of information for as long as possible, and will play it when he has no other choice.

October 12, 2009

Death of a Salesman has finally closed and we have hit the ground running with *The Crucible*! We open in one month. I have a lot of energy and I am ready to get this process started. I picked up a copy of Arthur Miller's *Timebends*. This book is incredible. The information about his journey in creating *The Crucible* is priceless. I discovered that Miller referred to Proctor as a peasant. He also mentions that the play is desperate and hot and a fight against tyranny.

October 13, 2009

Tonight we continued blocking. Memorization is coming along well. It's not exactly where I'd like to be, but *Death of a Salesman* stalled my work a little bit. I'll get it where I want though. This was a good, productive rehearsal. The evening moved a bit slow, but we still got a lot accomplished. Act 1 is almost completely memorized.

October 14, 2009

Finished blocking Act 2. It was a long hard night. I don't have a strong enough emotional build in the action right now. I'm starting too high and not giving myself anywhere to go. I need to get back to the basics. What do I want? How do I get it? How do the circumstances change? What's the story?

We went back and worked the beginning of the scene. I was totally exhausted. However, the exhaustion led to a nice inner life and physical presence. Right now I'm thinking too much. I know that we are just blocking right now, but the foundation still needs to be set. Everything within the text is affecting me. I feel like I am completely putting myself out there, both emotionally and physically.

October 15, 2009

Today I had a dialect session with Mavourneen. This is more challenging than I thought it was going to be. Typically I feel confident in my ability to learn dialects, but this one is tricky. I'm too light in some instances and too heavy in others. I just need to focus on my substitutions

and the place of need. Tonight I had callbacks for *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*.
I'm tired.

October 16, 2009

More Callbacks.

October 17, 2009

This is the third consecutive day that I have been in callbacks instead of working on *The Crucible*. I have a mountain of work to do and precious little time to do it in. I realized today that I may be the only person in this building that does not like callbacks.

October 18, 2009

Finally back in the rehearsal room. Tonight we ran and then worked Act 2. It was a little rough, but this was the first time that we tried putting everything together. I'm working too hard right now. I need to allow John to live and not force anything, especially in this scene. This is where the audience is to fall in love with John and Elizabeth and they can't do that if I am a raving lunatic. The inner struggle needs to be stronger and the outer a bit more controlled.

October 19, 2009

We began work on Act 3. This was a long and tiresome night. There are way too many people in this scene. The night was tedious but absolutely essential. The work is clunky right now and has no through-line at all. This scene is going to require more of my attention.

October 20, 2009

Continue work on Act 3. Another long night with too many people on stage. I'm worried about the energy that it is going to take to get all the way through the journey of this scene. Kate is worried about my stakes not being high enough at times and too low at others. My biggest concern right now is moving forward with action.

October 21, 2009

Begin work on Act 4. I'm excited because I'm going to be shackled throughout the scene. This is going to add a nice element to my work; the restriction that I will be feeling, the horror, the desperate need to break free from this backwards society and run. The night was a little trying. Kate and I had a few communication problems and I did not do a good job of hiding any frustrations. I'm trying to just find my way around the story right now.

October 22, 2009

Continue work on Act 4. Another rough night. We finished blocking and then we ran the Act. I got a few notes from Kate that I think are good and easily addressed. My biggest problem right now is that I am too much in my own head. I'm thinking about what is supposed to happen next instead of living in every moment and fighting for what I want. I think the problem is that my objective for the scene is still a little fuzzy. I am weakening myself for some reason, which usually isn't my style. I need to get out of my own head and trust the text. Miller will show me the way.

October 23, 2009

Tonight we ran Act 1. It went surprisingly well for not having visited it in over a week. Things are still a little rough, but it is in a good spot all things considered. My scene with Abigail isn't where it needs to be yet. It lacks sex right now. I would like the scene to be a little hotter and dirty. My objective was a bit off and disingenuous at times. I need to focus more on what is really going on inside me when I see her for the first time and how that will lead to the rest of the scene. Right now it's too slow. Most of my performance right now is too slow. My stakes are too low.

October 25, 2009

Tonight we worked Acts 3 and 4. It was rough. These are the two biggest scenes in the show with the most people onstage at once. I struggled with a great deal of my lines tonight for some reason. I felt a little useless to the cast tonight. I'm working too hard on all the wrong things. I need to simplify the work and focus on what is really important.

October 26, 2009

Tonight we ran Acts 1 and 2 together. I feel like I'm digressing a little bit. My mind is blanking on me and my knowledge and work so far is betraying me. Once again I am too much in my own head and I need to get out. There were some staging problems tonight that Kate wants to address. We may end up flipping all of Act 2. My stakes with Hale aren't nearly big enough right now. I need to falter a bit more and struggle with what is happening. I'm fighting to keep control when it isn't needed.

October 27, 2009

Tonight we ran Acts 3 and 4 together. My lines were rough. I need to get back into an earlier mindset and quit worrying about the end. I need to get back to the basics and learn what I need to learn and answer the appropriate questions. My life tonight was forced, objective shaky, and actions were unclear. There is no specificity right now from me.

I had Caden Worley hold me down tonight backstage to physically create exhaustion and frustration. It worked. It made me hate Caden.

October 28, 2009

Another night of hard work. I'm still trying to hit my stride. I'm afraid that it won't happen until after I get into costume and make up and finally see John Proctor right there in front of me.

October 29, 2009

Tonight we worked to prepare for the run tomorrow night. Things are a little sluggish but I'm starting to see it all come together. I'm excited to see what the overall experience of the show is going to be like. I'm trying to wear the character's skin right and find my way into his life. The fundamentals are coming along rather nicely, but the circumstances of his life are still very elusive. I'm hoping that moving through the journey will open my eyes to possibilities that have been out of the realm of my comprehension.

October 30, 2009

Tonight we did a full run through of the show. Considering that we still have two weeks left I think it went pretty well. I have hit the zenith of my frustrations and know that a turnaround

is coming soon. This happens to me during every show I do. I start off strong with a lot of confidence, then I being trying different things that may or may not work. Soon I get angry at myself for not having my act together, and then, magically everything turns around. I am confident that will be the case very soon. Now that we have a solid base to work from I can really start getting things done.

November 1, 2009

A breakthrough. Tonight we worked on Act 1 with just Abigail and I and something new happened. While working with her I felt the tremendous amount of guilt just wash over me all of a sudden. I think this is going to lead to a lot of new discoveries. This completely changes everything. Now I have a real pinch that needs to be alleviated. I need this guilt to go away. I always knew that there would be guilt, but this is the first time that I really felt it and it made me sick. I love it. I need to tear down the entire structure of what I have done and start over again from scratch. There is precious little time but I know that this can be done before we open. With what we already have and what I felt tonight I know that I can go in the direction that I've wanted to go in from the beginning.

November 2, 2009

A minor setback. We worked on Act 4 tonight and it was rough. This is a tough scene to get through. I think what I need for this scene is a running start into it. I'm struggling whenever we just jump right in it. I felt lost tonight. I'm thinking too much about how I sound and not enough about what I want and how I feel.

November 3, 2009

Tonight we worked Acts 1 and 3. It was a long night with little rest. Opening night is approaching very rapidly and I need to get back on track. I know where I want to be, but I'm spending too much time in my own head trying to figure out the puzzle. The puzzle will solve itself if I just step back from the pieces.

November 4, 2009

A full run through and an absolutely wonderful experience. I was on fire tonight. I was firing on all cylinders. I felt connected. I felt exhausted. I actually wept and I actually laughed. It was amazing. I haven't felt like that onstage in years. After the run I was shaking. I had to run to Josh Kellman for a hug because I had so much pent up energy. Later in the evening I received some critical feedback from Mavourneen. It was a bit discouraging but I understand her concerns. She is worried that I am damaging my voice in the final act. I disagree, but will take the notes and meet with her one on one before we open.

November 5, 2009

Tonight we did spot work. It was tedious yet productive. The fact that we are focusing on very minor details must mean that Kate is fairly pleased with where we are right now in the process. I'm looking forward to more run-throughs and then getting my peers in here to see our work. The work with Abigail tonight was great.

November 6, 2009

Only our second full run through of the show. Tonight was a tech watch and this weekend we go into tech. I wasn't nearly as satisfied with tonight's run as I was with the last one. I got in my own head and disconnected from the work. I need to slow down and focus before we open. The excitement of an audience is great. I am really looking forward to this production.

Note: This will be final journey entry until after we open the show. I do not want to get stuck in self-evaluation before we present this to an audience. I feel that doing so at this juncture would do more harm than good.

November 8 – 22, 2009

We opened on Friday November 13, 2009. Very fitting, I think, for launching a show like this. Overall I think the last three weeks went well. It was tough and exhausting but everyone got through it and I think we ended up with a product that we can be proud of. It was incredible watching everything come together. From the actors, to the lights, to the set, and especially the costumes. I always seem to get really comfortable once I get into costume and make up. My costume was awesome. I had this huge leather coat that made me look like a Puritan bounty hunter. For the final act of the play I covered myself in dirt and muck to show that I had been locked away for quite a long time. I would have to shower every night at the end of the show to wash everything off of me. Everyone received the show very well. It was great to know that my colleagues enjoyed the show as much as they did. During tech and photo call I got a little frustrated with our stage manager and her lack of professionalism. I don't need to be directed on how to perform a cue to cue from someone who has only been involved in one. It's insulting

when a stage manager stops a scene to explain to you how things are going to run. Photo was another debacle all together. Overall though, I think things went very well. I'm glad that we did it, but a little sad to put this one away. There so many more things that I want to do with it. Well, maybe next time.

IX. Conclusion

How would I rate the overall success of my work in the play compared to any other that I have done? I can't say for sure. I gave up on perfection a long time ago. I realized that it doesn't exist. Creating John Proctor really helped me to understand that. Instead, I strove for completion. To give everything you have to a role and allow that character to live in their world their own way through your mind, soul, and body. In that regard I would consider my work successful. It was nowhere near perfect; in fact the final product was deeply flawed. Too many times I was over thinking everything I was doing. This I can live with. I learned more about myself as an actor during this process than in any other production I have ever done. I feel that at the end of the process I was just scratching the surface of what I am truly capable of. These days I constantly think of what I would do if ever given the opportunity to play this role again, or any role for that matter. I found that my biggest flaw was self-observation. Overcoming this is going to take a great deal of discipline and concentration on my part. I think that every role I will approach in the future will need to be treated with a higher priority level then what I have done in the past. I want the work to be great, but I don't want to spend all of my time working towards that. Instead, I want to spend my time giving everything I have at all times to make the best, most complete product possible.

X. Bibliography

Miller, Arthur *The Crucible, Text and Criticism*, New York, New York Viking Penguin, Inc., 1977

Miller, Arthur *Timebends*, New York, New York Grove Press, 1987