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Scapegoat Hysteria: A Comparison of the Salem Witch Trials and the Red Scare

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The worries of many U.S. citizens currently revolve around safety and security risks. The threats that are of the most concern are Islamic terrorist groups such as ISIS whose actions have been in the news for several years. Closer to home, the events of the Boston bombing in April 2013, the Paris attacks in November 2015, and the San Bernardino shootings in December 2015 all caused further alarm. Such actions by Islamic extremists have worried some fearful U.S. citizens that all Muslims are terrorists. At the same time, some U.S. citizens are troubled by border security and the loss of jobs that are being filled by Mexican immigrants who enter the United States illegally. The mindset of fear is influencing powerful people within the United States to use it to their advantage. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump is doing just that in winning the support of many U.S. citizens. Weeks before the Iowa caucus, the leading Republican candidate made several proposals that he will enforce if elected President. Not surprisingly, these promises are driven by the fears of U.S. citizens, thus giving him more leeway to be as reactionary as he chooses. Trump has proposed two reactionary ideas that stem from what he views as two supposedly dangerous cultural populations: providing an expensive wall between southern states and Mexico “to prevent immigrants from illegally crossing over the US border [from] Mexico,”¹ registering every Muslim citizen with clothing identification, and a “total and complete

¹ Amanda Holpuch, “Trump re-ups Controversial Muslim ban and Mexico Wall in First Campaign Ad,” *theguardian*, January 4, 2016, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/04/donald-trump-great-again-first-campaign-ad-isis-mexico-wall-muslim-ban>.

shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.”² These ideas are being more accepted throughout the United States based on the fear that Mexicans and Muslims are intervening with the nation’s way of life. Trump’s running slogan of “Making America Great Again” gives U.S. voters the impression that by driving the Muslim and Mexican populations out of the United States, the country will be in fact great again since it currently is not.

This type of fear and the incentive of blame without proof has consumed U.S. citizens two prior times in history. A connection can be drawn between the striking similarities of Donald Trump and Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. In a way, Trump is channeling the Senator by pushing the blame for the problems within the United States on others – in this case Muslim and Mexican communities. Then as now, many U.S. citizens looked to a guiding leader who promised a method of keeping out an exterior threat. Senator McCarthy was able to draw in millions of people with his lists of alleged Communists and Communist sympathizers, and through his use of guilt by association or insinuation of Communist relations. Trump is making similar claims about Mexicans and Muslims by easing the anxieties of U.S. citizens through his various promises.

Prior to the dismay that enveloped U.S. citizens with Communism, fear erupted in the town of Salem, Massachusetts with witches. The instigators of the Salem witch crisis were not male political figures; rather they were young girls who were very much aware of the social hierarchy upon which their community was based. How is Donald

² Igor Bobic, “Donald Trump Calls For ‘Complete Shutdown’ of Muslims Entering the U.S.,” *Huffington Post*, December 8, 2015, accessed February 4, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-muslim-immigration-us_us_5665f75de4b072e9d1c7252b.

Trump similar to a group of seventeenth century adolescent girls who claimed to suffer from the wrath of witches? The young girls used their presumed innocence to push out individuals who were seen as threats to the social order through their interactions with others, differing ways of dress, and going against their defined gender roles of the time period. Similarly, Trump is using his newly found political power to scapegoat those who are seen as threats based on fear. Salem residents feared witches within their Puritan society while citizens today have transferred that fear of damaging social security on to Mexicans taking United States jobs and radical Muslim groups harming the United States. -

Fear within a community with strict societal norms can view any differing variation from that norm as a threat to the continuation of the societal security. The fear is then transferred over to vulnerable individuals who are being blamed within a bigger picture, and can be defined as a scapegoat. A scapegoat would bear the blame of the larger events at hand. They were chosen by figures who had the power to distinguish their differences from the rest of society as a threat. Scapegoats are usually outsiders who do not fit in with society and became a familiar and unfair practice during the 1692 Salem witch trials and the 1950s Red Scare. The men and especially women of the Salem witch trials were vulnerable to persecution for not following the proper Puritan lifestyle. Puritan women were meant to be married and bear children while living a modest and plain lifestyle, where men were meant to be the protector from heathens and temptation of the devil, while also ensuring of Puritan values being taught within the

home.³ Then the later victims of the Red Scare were also persecuted for supposedly questionable behavior, such as having limited knowledge of Communist information as a teacher, unwilling to share secrets from a husband or wife, and the meaning of a literary work, and most importantly for their sexual identity.

The following essay compares and contrasts the scapegoats persecuted during the 1692 Salem witch trials and the 1950s Red Scare. Scapegoats of each time period were cast out of society for their alleged differences and abnormalities that went against societal norms. The allegations made reflect emerging strains within each community and time period where scapegoats were sought out to blame for the danger at hand. Often these scapegoating incidents were based on social roles and differences in sexuality which made them vulnerable to accusations. Such social roles defined what was viewed as normal for a U.S. citizen to share with the government to ensure the safety of the nation, whereas the norms of sexuality designated men and women to act a specific way to be viewed as innocent. By going against the perceived social and gender roles, the powerful members of society could conclude that the individuals were threats.

By scapegoating individuals accused of being witches and Communists, powerful figures in Salem and 1950s United States demonstrated that violating social roles was extremely threatening to the continuation of normalcy. Every individual had a specific role to fulfill, but not in the same way. The scapegoats of the Salem witch trials included men but primarily women who went against the proper gender role of a Puritan. The charges of witchcraft were a way of exerting power and expelling individuals who went against their labeled social role and the instability that caused within society. The Red

³ Carol F. Karlsen, "Handmaidens of the Lord," in *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1998), 71.

Scare, meanwhile, enveloped U.S. citizens during the Cold War with their fear of Communist spies infiltrating the U.S. government. African Americans, men, and women were all suspected because of their actions, whereas homosexuals were viewed as threats because of their identity. Those who did not act the part of their specific social roles were viewed as a threat to the continuation of normalcy within the United States by acting out and aiding the crumbling of the government through their social differences.

Sources:

The primary sources used here only scratch the surface of the available documents. I focused on sources that would emphasize the interactions between the accused and the accusers. Such sources included the five volumes of transcripts of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations, and the intricately worded Salem witch trial transcripts. The Red Scare transcripts are extensive, with each volume being over a thousand pages each, so naturally I only analyzed a small handful of the available hearings since a full analysis could take a lifetime. When it came down to decide which hearings I would use, I came to the conclusion that I needed to look at an everyday Caucasian male professor then an African American poet to see if there was racial or occupation discrimination. I then did the same thing for two women, one being an African American writer and the other being a Caucasian professor. I then chose to look at a known homosexual man to see if he was treated differently throughout his hearing.

Secondary sources on the Red Scare and the witch trials are extensive and always changing. Below I focus on landmark books on the Red Scare and Salem witch trials by

Richard M. Fried and Carol Karlsen, and compare them to recent works by David Johnson and Mary Beth Norton that challenge previous accounts.

The practice of blaming those who defied societal guidelines can be seen in the studies of the Salem witch trials. Carol Karlsen's *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* describes the typical woman persecuted during the Salem witch trials. The life of a Puritan woman consisted of "only one employment, the work of a wife," which included marrying a fellow Puritan, raising children, and tending to the home while going to church.⁴ Women who "took charge of domestic affairs might easily overstep the bounds of her authority by transgressing the line between female and male worlds," meaning that the women had to maintain their normal role otherwise there could be repercussions.⁵ Karlsen shows that the majority of accusations in colonial New England were against women because of the threat to the hierarchical structure that women posed.

New standings in society brought attention to the woman who was now viewed as a threat. Once a woman was given a new standing in society due to inheritance, such as from the untimely death of male family members, she now had power. It was not acceptable for women during that time period to receive ample inheritance from their husbands, which was the case for accused witches Susanna Martin and Katherine Harrison. That power was created from the riches of their deceased male relatives. Men during the time period were the heirs to their father's land and wealth once they died. Karlsen shows that women were entitled to that land and wealth only if the last male heir within the family had died.

⁴ Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 165.

⁵ Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 170.

Women were not only limited to what social standing they had within society, but also to the accusations of witchcraft placed upon them. Women had little control over the accusations of witchcraft since “the idea that witches were women seems to have been more strongly held by local authorities, magistrates, and juries –men who had the power to decide the fates of the accused- than it was by accusers as a whole,” claiming that men in a position of power had the knowledge to accuse women.⁶ Gender played a large role according to Karlsen: “the repercussions of an accusation were likely to be far graver and longer lasting for a woman than a man, even when their personal circumstances and the evidence was strikingly similar.”⁷ In 1652, John Bradstreet confessed to “having familiarity with Satan” and was reprimanded by the Essex County with whippings and fines “for telling a lie” of having familiarity with the devil and again two years later Christopher Brown confessed to doing the devil’s bidding but his confession was “inconsistent with the truth,” where he seemed innocent, resulting in a minor punishment of paying for the time spent in jail.⁸ The magistrates of the trials of both Bradstreet and Brown did not collect evidence or see their confessions as truthful, rather they were punished for telling a lie. Both Bradstreet and Brown had confessed to their committed sins, but both were punished less severely than women who would face hanging if they confessed to witchcraft.

In contrast to Karlsen’s focus on gender, Mary Beth Norton’s book *In the Devil’s Snare* uses the events of the Indian wars on the Massachusetts frontier to broaden our understanding of why the Salem witch crisis began as the central theme. Gender is

⁶ Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 48.

⁷ Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 52.

⁸ Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, 52.

nevertheless present in the book, as Norton describes the female suspects and their role in society. Some of the girls, such as victims Sarah Churchwell and Abigail Hobbs, worked as servants within the more powerful families within the community who had first-hand experience with the Wabanaki Indian tribe during the Indian wars.⁹ The girls working as servants could have wanted to gain more power within their community. As Norton argues, Hobbs and Churchwell could have used their guilt of surviving the Indian wars to lash out at the powerful men in society. Those men could have been seen as held responsible for the pain and suffering the girls endured. Norton interweaves gender throughout her argument that the Indian wars led to the witch crisis by describing the emotional trauma the surviving vulnerable girls could have felt towards the powerful men in society who could have saved the girls families.

The use of scapegoats in Karlsen's book focuses on women who were deemed a threat to the Puritan social hierarchy, while Norton emphasizes individuals who had varying experiences on the frontier and as a result led to the vulnerable girls who lost their families and their standing in society to seek out revenge and gain power through manipulation and accusations of witchcraft. Those experiences included Indian wars where Puritans were attacked where they lived and witnessed the Indian killings first hand. George Burroughs, who had survived the Wabanaki Indian attacks, was accused of witchcraft following his arrival to Salem due to the belief that if he had treated the Wabanaki fairly in trade relations then the Indians would not have attacked.¹⁰ Burroughs had unintentionally brought death and destruction to the communities by cheating the

⁹ Mary Beth Norton, "Gospel Women," in *In the Devil's Snare*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 80.

¹⁰ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 131.

Wabanaki through trade deals, thus paving the way for revenge to be sought out. According to Norton the prosecution of Burroughs for witchcraft and his execution was a way of punishing him for trying and failing to outsmart the Wabanaki.¹¹ Burroughs conviction was founded on the cause of revenge, while most Puritans, according to Karlsen particularly women, had to endure conviction and even death due to a challenge of going against the defined gender roles of Puritan women.¹²

The witch crisis is famous for the legal proceedings and trials that ensued, whether because of fear or revenge. The trials themselves are comparable to the hearings during the Red Scare because the decisions from the trials were supposed to rid the community of danger, although they actually increased paranoia. Fears of witches and communists thrived on the belief that a group of people could interrupt the usual and safe way of life and go against what was deemed normal within society.

The social norms of the 1950s is demonstrated through Richard M. Fried's discussion throughout *Nightmare in Red* as classified by Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI). Fried does admit that there were more individuals who were a part of the Red Scare than just McCarthy. Fried does admit that McCarthy holds a special, terrifying place in the history of the Red Scare by giving McCarthy and his involvement with anti-Communist movements their own chapter within the text. But Fried focuses on the importance of other anti-Communists because previous histories of the Red Scare usually revolved around the infamous McCarthy. Well before McCarthy came into the spotlight in February 1950, there were other anti-Communist groups already at work at universities

¹¹ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 131.

¹² Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, 72.

around the country. Emphasizing these early anti-Communist actions helps the reader see the so-called McCarthy era as something that began earlier in the Cold War.

McCarthy is still an important figure within the Red Scare even though there were other anti-Communist leaders. As in the Salem witch trials, McCarthy attacked individuals without justification who were seen as threats for not revealing Communist secrets and embodying the role of a proper U.S. citizen. Individuals became more vulnerable if they refused to answer McCarthy's persistent questioning and were deemed supporters of the crumbling of the government. One such instance in the Red Scare where a group of individuals were viewed as threats was on March 8, 1948, during McCarthy's congressional subcommittee hearing to discuss the validity of the "Lee list."¹³ McCarthy was naming eighty-one individuals who he said were a threat to the United States through their connection to suspicious activities at the State Department and intelligence services, but the names he produced did not meet the standard of a threat to national security because not all of them had worked in the State Department.¹⁴ The premise of a threat according to McCarthy was any worker within the State Department who was suspicious of Communist affiliations. McCarthy had pointed fingers at individuals whom he believed were corrupting U.S. society without ample proof, which became his trademark. His lack of such evidence reemphasizes the connection to the Salem witch trials with the addition of a new term revived during the Red Scare as a "witch-hunt!"¹⁵ The connection between the two eras is enhanced by Fried's descriptions of United States values in

¹³ Richard M. Fried, "'Bitter Days': The Heyday of Anti-Communism," in *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 125.

¹⁴ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 125.

¹⁵ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 3.

society, most specifically the issue of security.¹⁶ Safety within the Salem community and the United States during the Red Scare was so important because each society was fearful of inside and outside forces infiltrating their ways of life and corrupting them.

Nightmare in Red is an informative source for grasping the main themes of the Red Scare, but it does not analyze specific groups as scapegoats. Fried does not specifically point out the differences men and women faced throughout the Red Scare. Gender is not a special topic in Fried's book, which emphasizes instead how all people, from political figures, to entertainers, to everyday working class U.S. citizens, were not immune from being suspected as Communists. Fried does mention one instance where "those who fought to enforce traditional roles for women used redbaiting as a weapon" because some women were going against society's view as a normal lifestyle for women during the time period, which included the promotion of a loyal U.S. family and aiding the government through their search for possible Communists.¹⁷ In 1949 Justice Department employee Judith Coplon was one such woman who went against the societal norms through her romantic relationship with Soviet Valentin Gubitchev during the Cold War.¹⁸ Coplon had already been under the watchful eye of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) because of the suspicion for societal norm by dating a Soviet Union citizen which was viewed as highly questionable since it was presumed she would be sharing State Department secrets with Gubitchev who could then pass it along to the Soviets. The suspicion surrounding their relationship reached new heights when the two were caught exchanging classified information with the revelation that Coplon was

¹⁶ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 9.

¹⁷ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 26.

¹⁸ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 91.

working as a Soviet spy in the United States. Although Coplon was working for the Communist cause and was prosecuted for it, she was also going against the societal norms within the United States. Even though Fried mentions a case involving Communism and a woman, sexuality and gender does not play a large role in this book.

The Lavender Scare by David Johnson, in contrast, puts sexuality front and center in our understanding of the Red Scare. Johnson views the Red Scare from the perspective of sexual identity, as he argues that fear of Communism rose from homophobia in U.S. society during the 1940s and 1950s. The fear of Communism left U.S. citizens searching for someone to blame, which Johnson argued ended up being gay communities across the United States because they were vulnerable and already viewed as aberrant.

Johnson's approach differs other from Red Scare texts in this approach of homosexuality. Prior to the homophobia of the 1940s and 50s, the gay communities were a little more open, especially in 1930s Washington, D.C., which Johnson focused on. Following the Great Depression and the New Deal, there were expectations created within Washington D.C. that the government would provide for single, young men and women who needed jobs, and federal government jobs fulfilled just that.¹⁹ In the 1950s the homosexual community became "more prevalent, or at least more visible" due to the "growing sense that the country's moral codes were loosening," meaning the nation was accepting social roles that would bring a breakdown of the government.²⁰ McCarthy even argued, "Homosexuality...was the psychological maladjustment that led people toward

¹⁹ David K. Johnson, "'This Used to Be a Very Gay City'," in *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 44.

²⁰ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 53.

communism.”²¹ McCarthy was not the only politician to connect homosexuality to Communism; Deputy Undersecretary for Administration John Peurifoy had created an entire list of ninety-one “security risks” within the State Department. On February 28, 1950, Peurifoy’s list revealed homosexuals who he believed to be security risks, and they were fired. This was not the first instance where the State Department had lost a number of employees due to extensive security checks: previous investigations removed thirty-one homosexuals in 1947, twenty-eight in 1948, and thirty-one in 1949.²² Although these security checks did not create as much publicity as the 1950s findings, the number of Communists fired during the Red Scare was far smaller and could conclude that there were other factors such as homosexuality that played a role in the firing of State Department employees.

By focusing on the Red Scare in the gay community, Johnson emphasizes those who suffered the most. The legal system did not support those who were questioned because they differed in sexual preference. Instead, those differences were used to make the individual stand out more and be viewed as a target for suspicion. The legal system instead used those traits to help the individual stand out more. In April 1958 Madeleine Tress was one such individual who wore “‘sexy’ feminine clothes, which, she thought, offered some protection from any immediate association with lesbianism” when interacting with her homosexual friends at parties, but her tomboyish attire inhibited her at work in the Department of Commerce.²³ At work, she was viewed as “‘mannish,’ ‘a tom boy,’ or had ‘personality problems’” because she had “a telltale defect – two buttons

²¹ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 16.

²² Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 21.

²³ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 148.

missing from the front of her dress” thus granting suspicion of homosexual behavior because she was not like other women within the work place whereas other women would have mended the missing buttons.²⁴ A fearful coworker was worried that Tress’ differences made her a threat to the confidentiality within the Department of Commerce and drew the conclusion that Tress was a homosexual because of her differences in dress and character as compared to other female coworkers.²⁵ The differing lifestyle of an individual in the 1950s introduced fear to everyday life because societal norms were changing through homosexuality.

The Salem Witch Crisis: A Brief History

During the winter months of 1691, Salem Village became the epicenter of a wave of unknown afflictions visited upon some of the adolescent girls of the town. In November 1691 Reverend Parris began to preach about the “spiritual warfare between the saved and the damned,” which was the last sermon that Reverend Parris’ daughter Betty and her cousin Abigail Williams heard before their strange afflictions began.²⁶ The afflicted girls suffered fits and nightmares in their homes, stating that residents of Salem and others were harming them. The accused, who were named by the afflicted girls, were put on trial for the crime of witchcraft, resulting in fourteen women and five men being hanged and one man being pressed to death all under the crime of witchcraft. The trials themselves did not have ample evidence to support such claims by modern judicial

²⁴ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 147.

²⁵ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 148

²⁶ Seth Ragosta, “Important Persons in the Salem Court Records: Samuel Parris,” *Salem Witch Trials: Documentary Archive and Transcript Project*, last modified 2002, <http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/people?group.num=G06&mbio.num=mb39>.

standards, but the victims were typically vulnerable individuals who “were women beyond childbearing age, who were outspoken, economically independent, estranged from their husbands, or in other ways violated traditional gender norms.”²⁷ The women, and some men, were used as scapegoats not only for the benefit of the afflicted girls to gain control, but also as a source for blame towards the Indian wars on the frontier and natural misfortunes. The prosecution of witches ceased in 1693 with the governor of the colony issuing a proclamation of peace even though there were still issues at hand. The witch crisis distracted the Puritans from the larger indigenous and natural threats that they could not control, similar to what the Red Scare hearings did with homosexuals and suspected Communists.

Such causes of fear in colonial New England included the ever-present worry of illnesses, such as small pox and the danger of Wabanaki Indians invading the small religious communities. Indians were a common threat to the colonial citizens because they associated Indians with the devil. Religious tensions also arose within the Salem Village congregation. Such tensions included the arrival of Reverend Samuel Parris whose demands for his placement within the town, including paying his dues and bringing in his firewood, placed strains on the villagers who were financially struggling and were not accustomed to a newcomer.²⁸ Other tensions within a growing religious community also included family feuds over trade, land disputes, and the inheritance of property and money following the death of a male relative that could change the social

²⁷ Eric Foner, “Chapter 3, Crisis and Expansion: North American Colonies,” in *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, vol. 1. (New York: Norton & Company Inc., 2005), 100.

²⁸ Ragosta, *Salem Witch Trials*.

norms of the community. All these aspects of colonial life amplified the growing fear following the first accusations of witchcraft by the afflicted girls in Salem Village.

The Witch Trials:

The fear of witches was evident throughout the town of Salem following the hysterical fits of the adolescent girls. The Reverend Samuel Parris made sure that his Puritan followers were very much aware of the dangers that the devil brought upon those who caused the girls such pain through the power of his sermons. In his September 19, 1689, sermon, Parris went to great lengths to describe the power of God who “hath graciously brought” to the citizens of Salem that “he will roll away the Reproach of Egypt from off you.”²⁹ Parris used the beginning of his sermon to compare Egypt to Salem and God’s “Reproach” as witches. His comparison of biblical Egypt to how the witch crisis consumed Salem justified the witch trials as God’s will. Parris continued to draw conclusions that there were individuals within Salem who were guilty of witchcraft who still had not confessed.

During the witch crisis, Parris’ sermons only grew more blunt with multiple accusations of witchcraft within the Puritan church. His March 27, 1692, sermon directly accused members of his parish that “one of you is a Devil i.e. a Devil for quality & disposition: not a Devil for Nature, for he was a man but a Devil for likeness & operation.”³⁰ He was claiming that individuals turned to witchcraft by using herbs for

²⁹ Samuel Parris, “Sermon September 19, 1689,” in *The Sermon Notebook of Samuel Parris*, (1689), 1.

³⁰ Parris, “Sermon March, 27, 1692,” 148.

unrighteous reasons, and then the accused became “such Devils in the Church: Not only sinners but notorious sinners; sinners more like to the Devil than others,” again raising the fear that witchcraft had infiltrated the church.³¹ Through the sermons, Parris was growing more powerful and gaining respect of guiding the fearful residents on the proper path to righteousness and exploiting accused witches. Witches were to blame for the trouble within Massachusetts, which paved the way for the use of scapegoating specific individuals as witches.

The witches accused were those who were seen as abnormal. Women seen as abnormal included those who inherited large sums of money or land, resulting in power above other male members of the community. On a personal level, unfriendly behavior of scolding a husband in public or voicing one’s opinion, or extravagant dress, such as colorful clothes, separated women from others. Men were also at risk for witchcraft accusations if they appeared as too little or too much of a Puritan man with having the ability to lift a heavy gun, as well as having suspicious intimate relationships with the Indian populations that could result in illegitimate mixed race children.

Church officials and the afflicted girls spread fear by pointing out the abnormalities throughout members of Salem Village. During the various witchcraft trials, the accused witches exposed the afflicted girls to various pains that the girls either suffered from in the presence of the accused witch or being visited by the witch when the girl was alone. Each witch was accused of general similarities, including pinching, biting, and forcing the afflicted girls to sign the “Devil’s book,” but some made obscure

³¹ Parris, “Sermon March 27, 1692,” 148.

accusations involving the death of children, the loss of animals or crops, and strange behaviors of family members.

On April 10, 1692, the first casualty of the Salem witch crisis, the widow Bridget Bishop, was accused and tried of witchcraft. Bishop stood out because it was strange that she had had three previous husbands, which led to accusations by Salem villagers that she had bewitched her husbands to death. Subsequent accusations labeled Bishop as witch, and accusers emphasized her interaction with neighboring children. William Stacy accused Bishop of the death of his daughter two years prior to her 1692 trial, but he also brought up the use of witchcraft based on the fast healing of his smallpox, which he accused Bishop of curing even though she was not known for being a healer. Stacy could have been grateful for the coincidence of Bishop visiting him and curing his smallpox, but he used it to accuse her of witchcraft. In addition, he accused Bishop of using a “strange force” to fling his cart in the air, destroying it.

To her neighbors, Bishop was unkind by speaking ill of others, leading them to suspect her of witchcraft because she acted differently than other polite women. For Samuel Shattuck and his family, the health of his eldest son would decline whenever Bishop would come into or near the house, which led Shattuck to conclude that his son was being bewitched. The child in question would continuously have fits acting so strange with “such uneasie and restles frame almost allways running too & fro soe Strange that [Shattuck] cannot judge otherwise but that he is bewitched.”³² Samuel Gray also accused Bishop of witchcraft after she visited his household, after which his son

³² “Bridget Bishop,” in *The Salem Witchcraft Papers: Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692, Vol. 1*, ed. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 99.

suffered various fits and died a few months later. Not only were Bishop's actions towards her neighbors seen as questionable, but so were her unusual dress and festivity by Puritan standards, thus giving way to blame a woman for witchcraft. The suspicious activities of a woman in Puritan society caused concern for the others as a threat to the normal way of life.

In Puritan society, a respectable woman was an individual who lived a modest lifestyle. According to the witness accusers published in the *Salem Witch Papers*, Bridget Bishop dressed "more artistically than women of the village," which made her stand out more, giving her more vulnerability to be an easy target of witchcraft accusations. Her "black cap, and a black hat, and a red paragon bodice bordered and looped with different colors" suggest she did not conform to societal norms because her clothes were not the typical black and brown colored attire. Bishop also did not fulfill the Puritan societal norm of maintaining a modest life, according to the testimonies of Reverend John Hale. He stated that the festivities to which Bishop would invite various "young people [who] were in danger to be corrupted" because of the events that occurred at the parties.³³ He also stated that some of the events included "shovelboard," which was a game that was viewed as inappropriate to play because it created tension among neighbors and risked tempting the devil. Reverend Hale was also concerned with the continuation of drinking at "unseasonable hours in the night."³⁴ And finally at the end of Reverend Hale's testimony, he stated that one night he "had taken the pieces they played with & thrown them into the fryer & had reproved the said Bishop for promoting such disorders...[he] received no satisfaction from her about it," giving the impression that Bishop was not

³³ *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1, 95.*

³⁴ *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1, 95.*

ashamed of her actions.³⁵ Bishop's lack of remorse for her actions gave the accusations more weight because her defiance of male authority suggested she was a witch promoting devilish behavior.

Rebecca Nurse was another victim of the Salem Witch trials whose arrest on March 24, 1692, shocked the residents of Salem due to her religious zeal. The accusations against Nurse were first made by Ann Putnam Jr. who launched into "grievous fits" whenever Nurse was near her. Such a reaction to the elderly Rebecca Nurse could have been caused by a long-standing feud over land borders and between the Nurse and Putnam families. The accusations that Nurse beat the afflicted girls were similar to the accusations against other witches. The wife of Thomas Putnam accused Nurse of bringing "the Black man with [her]...bid tempt God" to follow the practices of the "Black man," meaning the devil.³⁶ The afflicted girls were also shrieking and crying in pain during Nurse's trial whenever she would move her hands and touch her neck; it was as if Nurse had the ability to harm the girls without touching them.

Such evidence might have been inconclusive, but Nurse's vulnerable relationship to the afflicted girls created more reasons to see her as a witch. As Reverend Samuel Parris stated, Nurse "had several times severely rebuked the accusing girls for their folly and wickedness [and] when meeting in their circles."³⁷ Nurse made her own accusation that the afflicted girls were in fact lying about the pain they were suffering from even before the trial. Nurse had been susceptible to an accusation of witchcraft because of her

³⁵ *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, 95.

³⁶ Rebecca Beatrice Brooks, "The Trials of Rebecca Nurse," *History of Massachusetts: A History Blog About the Bay State*, November 5, 2012, <http://historyofmassachusetts.org/the-trial-of-rebecca-nurse/>.

³⁷ Brooks, "The Trials of Rebecca Nurse."

directing of power to herself rather than the afflicted girls. The afflicted girls had taken the power away from Nurse by accusing her and taking her claim of the girls lying as evidence for working with the devil.

Another member of Salem Village who was accused and executed on the charges of witchcraft was Martha Corey. Corey had witnessed the previous hearings before she herself was accused of witchcraft, and Corey then began to question the legitimacy of the afflicted girls' accusations against members of the Salem community. Such statements against the afflicted girls had not been previously recorded. Corey's suspicion of witchcraft could have stemmed from her own belief that the afflicted girls were also lying, and that community members could have started listening to her rather than the complaints of the young girls. If Corey had gained the support of the other villagers, then the afflicted girls would have lost their power and have made Corey the strong individual.

On March 19, 1692, the initial complaint was made against Corey under the suspicion of having "Comitted sundry acts of Witchcraft" upon Ann Putnam, her daughter Ann Putnam Jr., Mercy Lewis, Abigail Williams, and Elizabeth Hubert. Under examination, Corey proclaimed her innocence against the accusations, even asking the magistrate conducting the trial "do you think I can have to do with witchcraft too?"³⁸ Corey questioned the validity of the accusations against her, thus taking herself out of her obedient position as a woman in Salem.

Corey also challenged authoritarian power during her trial by questioning the truthfulness of the afflicted girls, stating, "we must not believe all that these distracted

³⁸ "Martha Corey," in *Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), accessed February 23, 2016, http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/texts/tei/swp?div_id=n38.

children say.”³⁹ Throughout her trial, Corey accused the afflicted girls of lying, which only hindered her case more since she spoke out against the young girls who had mesmerized the individuals within Salem who believed in witches. Corey also had laughed throughout her testimony when asked various questions pertaining to witchcraft because she “did not know that there [were] any” witches in Essex County.⁴⁰ Corey could have gained support for her claims of the afflicted girls lying from the other members of Salem, which changed the sway of power back to Corey. The trial continued as Corey denied the claims of witchcraft, while the afflicted girls “cried there was a yellow bird with her”⁴¹ and that there “was a man whispering in her ears” to direct the attention back to the afflictions of the girls rather than Corey questioning the legitimacy of the trial.⁴²

The women accused during the witch trials had similarities in that they were each going against their prescribed gender roles within colonial Puritan society, making them vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft. The claims of witchcraft as connected to the way women such as Bridget Bishop presented themselves tells a lot about the way a proper woman was supposed to be modest and plain. Bishop’s various parties and her dress point her out as compared to other women who conformed to the societal norms. Other accused witches, such as Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse, had their verbal opinions and relationships with residents put on the spot for why they could be connected to witchcraft. By speaking out against the validity of the afflicted girls’ pains, tensions developed. If an individual, especially a woman, brought unwanted conflict between

³⁹ “Martha Corey,” *Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1.*

⁴⁰ “Martha Corey,” *Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1.*

⁴¹ “Martha Corey,” *Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1.*

⁴² “Martha Corey,” *Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1.*

residents through various opinions, that could be reason to label her a witch like Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse had dealt with.

For men to be accused of witchcraft, different standards needed to be met. A man accused of witchcraft meant that he had gone against his role as the protector or exerting proper Puritan male behavior. Setting a good example of how a man was supposed to act within Puritan society created a precedent for others to live up to. Although there were only seven male deaths in comparison to the thirteen women who were executed for witchcraft, gender still played a role in male trials. The accused men of Massachusetts were not accused of witchcraft based on their general appearance and attitudes towards other residents, but rather evidence that displayed they had departed their societal roles as proper Puritan men.

Afflicted girls first accused sailor and tradesman John Alden of harming them on March 2, 1692. The claims of suspicious activity surrounding Alden involved his relationship with the French and Wabanaki Indians on the frontier where the Indian Wars were occurring. Tensions were already rising due to the Wabanaki invading frontier towns with the help of the French military, and any connection to the enemy forces would be seen as a threat against the innocent Puritans. As a tradesman, John Alden had previously traded “Powder and Shot” with the Indians, instead of using the ammunition to fight them.⁴³ His trade business from a Puritan perspective included having a relationship with the Indians through his trade, who were viewed as equals to the devil. Through his close proximity to the Indians Alden became vulnerable to assumptions by the Puritans that “he lies with the Indian Squaes... [and had] Indian Papooses,” that

⁴³ “John Alden,” *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, 52.

referencing to a sexual relationship resulting in the birth of a bastard child by an Indian. John Alden's reputation within the Puritan community was now tarnished following those rumors that led to his witchcraft trial.

In contrast to other accusations, the afflicted girls had never met Alden, but they alleged that he "did pinch them," throughout the trials.⁴⁴ Alden was quick to respond to their fits by questioning the trial system with "why they [the Magistrates] should think that he should come to that Village to afflict those persons that he never knew or saw before?"⁴⁵ His claim did not receive an answer from the Magistrates in charge because the afflicted girls were throwing fits, claiming that the sound of his voice bewitched them. The afflicted girls also fell to the ground in pain when Alden was near them just as they had done with other witches. His trade relations with Indians and the French would have been viewed as attacking the Puritan way of life by helping their enemies on the frontier by harming and killing their New England counterparts. Alden's trial did not culminate in his execution, but he served as a scapegoat for the current issues that Salem had been having with the Wabanaki.

George Burroughs was another victim of the Salem witch trials whose actions mirror that of John Alden. Burroughs was charged with "detestable arts called witchcraft & sorceries – wickedly and feloniously hath used and practiced & exercised at and within the township of Salem."⁴⁶ The complaint against Burroughs began on April 30, 1692 due to his previous history with the Wabanaki Indians where he suspiciously avoided the massacres of various villages in Northern Maine when there was limited chance of

⁴⁴ "John Alden," *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, 53.

⁴⁵ "John Alden," *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, 53.

⁴⁶ "George Burroughs," *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, 155.

survival. Prior to the massacres in Northern Maine, Burroughs was living in the same village as Mercy Lewis, who would later accuse him of witchcraft following the Wabanaki massacring her family. When the Wabanaki arrived and attacked the villagers, Burroughs was nowhere to be found and Mercy Lewis an orphan. The terror from the frontier wars left Lewis orphaned and under the care of George Burroughs which could have been a contributing factor in her lashing out at him. Mercy Lewis could have then blamed Burroughs for not doing enough to save her family during the Wabanaki attacks, and viewing him as leader, saw to it that he be punished. When Mercy Lewis was under Burroughs care she would have seen the intimate details of his personal life, including the treatment of his wives and learning how he cheated the Wabanaki through trade.⁴⁷ If Mercy Lewis had learned of Burroughs cheating the Wabanaki then she could have wanted to cast revenge on him and accuse him of a witch.

Other afflicted girls gave testimonies similar to Mercy Lewis. Lewis joined Mary Walcot and Elizabeth Hubbard during the trial, claiming they were each reading from their Bibles when Burroughs looked upon them, causing them to fall down in terrible fits. Burroughs was also accused of forcing women such as Ann Putnam Jr. and Susannah Sheldon to write in the devil's book, along with Sheldon accusing him of murdering his previous two wives.⁴⁸ In regard to his family, it was claimed that Burroughs "owned that none of his children, but the eldest was Baptized," which was questionable in an extremely religious community.⁴⁹ Burroughs also could have been accused of witchcraft because of the political strife within the community. Burroughs, a respectable man on the

⁴⁷ "George Burroughs," *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, 153.

⁴⁸ "George Burroughs," *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, 153.

⁴⁹ "George Burroughs," *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, 153.

frontier prior to the acknowledgement of his actions towards to the Indians, had to follow a certain lifestyle as a man by setting a good example. Women were already being accused of going outside of their societal roles within Puritan society, but to have the men going against it as well could have meant the collapse of the Puritan society. As a man who did not protect innocent colonial peoples, Burroughs was not fulfilling his male duty of ensuring safety.

Burroughs was not only accused of not being enough of a man, but also for his being too much of a man. For George Burroughs, his bodily structure and strength drew the attention of other Puritan men because he was too manly. Burroughs was able to “lift and hold Out a gunn of Six foot barrel or thereabouts putting the forefinger of his right hand into the Muzle of s’d gunn” and hold it straight, which was seen as something the average man could not do.⁵⁰ The strength that Burroughs had to hold the gun was viewed as an act of witchcraft because no one else in the village could succeed in such a task. Other men within the village were possibly jealous of Burroughs extraordinary strength, and through that jealous caused reason to accuse him of witchcraft.

Governor William Phips was away from Salem leading a campaign of the Indian Wars during the witch trials. As the acting executive power, Governor Phips was made aware of the twenty more people convicted of witchcraft in an October 1692 letter. The end of the Salem witch trials occurred when Governor Phips noticed the insufficient evidence that was being used to condemn individuals. He wrote “the Devill might afflict in the shape of an innocent person and that the look and touch of the suspected persons was not sufficient prooffe against them” thus referring to the examination process of

⁵⁰ “George Burroughs,” *The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Vol. 1*, 160.

looking for abnormalities on the accused.⁵¹ Governor Phips also cast doubt on the reactions of the afflicted girls as evidence.

Men and women were used as scapegoats for the larger issues of the perceived threats from Indian frontier wars and the threat of breaking down the Puritan system of society. Certain men and women could have been targeted for any reason but often it was because the individuals were vulnerable from going against their gender roles in society. Women were viewed as individuals who promoted a modest life through Puritan standards of dress, limited currency power and standing, and cordial behavior, and if they did not follow suit themselves, accusations arose. The importance of being a strong and humble man led to accusations being made regarding those who had unsolicited relationships with Indians, too much or too little strength than the average man, as well as helping the enemy in the Frontier Wars. Any sort of abnormality made the accused defenseless against the religious power of Samuel Parris and the innocence of the afflicted girls.

Scapegoating consumed the Red Scare. The experiences of accused men and women during the Salem witch trials depended on part of their gender roles within society, whereas the roles of 1950s men and women were defined by the concept of a loyal citizenship. Through the times of the witch trials, remaining loyal to other Puritans was defined by fulfilling the dutiful gender roles of each member of colonial society. For men and women living through the Red Scare, more was at stake if a writer, professor, wife, husband, or most importantly a homosexual did not conform. The hearings of the

⁵¹ William Phips, "Letter No. 2," *Two Letters of Gov. William Phips (1692-1693)*, accessed on March 12, 2016, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/ASA_LETT.HTM.

Red Scare focus on the validity of the social roles rather than the gender roles because it was more important to be loyal to the United States rather than one's own identity.

The Red Scare:

More than 250 years after witch trials, the use of fear still existed and had the power to fuel individuals to take drastic measures to protect and enforce social norms. Following the creation of the Soviet atomic bomb in August of 1949, on October 1, 1949, Communists under Mao Zedong won the Chinese Civil War thus spreading the fear in the United States that Communism was taking over the world. U.S. citizens were consumed with fear that Communist spies had obtained information from the U.S. government to give to the Soviets and paranoia that State Department officials had aided Communists in China as well. One notable individual who was targeted and accused of espionage was Alger Hiss, who, due to his association with the New Deal and Yalta Conference where , was accused of promoting Communism and found guilty of espionage.⁵² Hiss was not the only individual who was being watched; others included Manhattan Project scientist Klaus Fuchs, who confessed to passing on atomic secrets to the Soviets. Fuchs' capture led to the trials of David and Ruth Greenglass and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.⁵³ These large scale hearings led to the numerous documented hearings that would follow for years to come under the direction of Joseph McCarthy.

Following these events, domestic attacks on loyalty became common, with U.S. citizens pointing fingers and accusing coworkers and neighbors of Communist

⁵² Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 92.

⁵³ Doug Linder, *Trial of the Rosenbergs: An Account*, accessed on March 12, 2016, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/rosenb/ROS_ACCT.HTM.

sympathies. The House Un-American Activities Committee, created in 1938 to look for possible Nazis, strived in the late 1940s to uncover possible Communist sympathizers, most notoriously with its investigation of Hollywood screenwriters and actors. In 1950 Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-WI) announced that over 100 Communists had infiltrated the State Department. McCarthy instilled even more fear in U.S. citizens with his infamous hearings where he viciously questioned individuals and tried deviously to link them to Communism. McCarthy's gaze of individuals to question ranged from poets, teachers, to the military. McCarthy's power came to an end when he began to investigate the U.S. Army in April 1953. By investigating the army, McCarthy was looking into the largest security net of the United States, and questioning its validity was questioning to a new extent. The tipping point in the hearings was when Army attorney Joseph Welch exclaimed to McCarthy, "have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last?" because of McCarthy's relentless attacks.⁵⁴ U.S. citizens eventually saw McCarthy as a bully following his televised hearing of the Army. His downfall escalated in June when his public support decreased from 50 percent to 34 percent.⁵⁵ In the summer of 1955, the Senate censured McCarthy, deeming him "disruptive [in] behavior and [in] violation of decorum" of a proper senator for his attacks on President Eisenhower when McCarthy scolded the President for his timid actions against Communism.⁵⁶ McCarthy died from alcoholism and liver complications on May 2, 1957.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 139.

⁵⁵ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 138.

⁵⁶ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 141.

⁵⁷ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 142.

Loyalty on Trial:

Individuals during the Red Scare were already living in a tumultuous time period where specific social roles had to be fulfilled because of the fear of the Cold War. Those roles could be filled by anyone and were not primarily focused on women as the Salem witch trials had. The accused Communists included men, women, African Americans, and homosexuals who were all vulnerable in the hands of government investigators who viewed them as a threat. The accused were vulnerable to the power of the committee since the committee had an image of innocence that the accused needed to conform to. The hearings themselves were a tool for the committee to weed out those who were innocent; the committee defined innocence as giving answers to questions and naming names pertaining to Communism through the hearing. Before an individual gave any information, it was assumed by the committee that that person was guilty and would remain under that suspicious pretense unless they demonstrated the actions of a loyal citizen of the United States. In contrast to others accused, homosexuals faced extra scrutiny because of spies blackmailing homosexuals. Homosexuals were then an easy target because of the fear placed upon them by the committee who viewed them as major threats. Individuals who were just not aiding the committee in weeding out possible Communists were still repeatedly questioned, but to a different extent.

One man who was accused of Communist affiliation was the Brooklyn College professor of classics, Naphtali Lewis. The May 25, 1953 hearing began with McCarthy asking Lewis for his own definition as to what it meant to be a Communist. After Lewis stated his definition of a Communist as “a person who is a member of the Communist Party,” the committee persistently returned to the definition of a Communist again and

again.⁵⁸ It was as if the committee was using their power to pressure Lewis into giving more information than he was inclined to give, as they had done for other alleged Communists. The committee was focused on trying to get Lewis to trip up, looking for a mistake in his statements that would prove he was a Communist, just as the committee had done to other alleged Communists.

The committee then turned to his role as a college professor and brought up Lewis' ability to travel with the Brooklyn College Student Exchange Program where, as a professor of the classics, Lewis was qualified according to Brooklyn College to travel and teach abroad.⁵⁹ As a professor of classics, Lewis claimed he had not been knowledgeable of specific Communists information, which the committee used against him when asking about his travels for the college. Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA) specifically pointed out how Lewis "can qualify for a scholarship and go overseas to Italy...without knowing something more than the classics" thus referring to an assumption that in order to travel, a proper American professor should be knowledgeable of important aspects of current events, including the threat of Communism. The committee was portraying Lewis as naïve and dishonest throughout his hearing based on their assumption that a college professor should know more than the average person.⁶⁰

In response to committee's question of whether an individual can be a Communist as well answer as "evading the question [because]...somebody close to you might be a member of the Communist party" Lewis stated in his defense that the "American tradition of liberalism would permit a man to hold opinions ranging from the extreme

⁵⁸ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Naphtali Lewis," *Vol. 2*, 1253.

⁵⁹ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Naphtali Lewis," *Vol. 2*, 1254.

⁶⁰ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Naphtali Lewis," *Vol. 2*, 1255.

right to the extreme left.⁶¹ The committee, drawing to their own conclusions, interpreted his answer in the least favorable way possible. In Lewis' case, the committee had questioned his loyalty as a proper Caucasian⁶² citizen of the United States professor due to his vulnerability into not comprehending what it meant to be a Communist or having no grasp on the threat of Communism when traveling abroad.

Another individual who was accused of having Communist affiliations was the African American poet Langston Hughes. Hughes status as an African American man would have concerned McCarthy and the committee. Anti-Communists had long suspected civil rights activists, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) of Communist affiliations,⁶³ and the committee likely would have known that Hughes had been involved with the NAACP. On March 24, 1953, Hughes' hearing began with various questions regarding his visit to the Soviet Union. Although Hughes had gone to the Soviet Union for work purposes, his actions still seemed suspicious to his inquisitors. Hughes later explained in his hearing that his visit to the Soviet Union was related to the creation of a Soviet government film project after being questioned of his intentions there.⁶⁴ Although the movie did not end up being produced, Hughes still remained in the Soviet Union as a journalist. The beginning stages of Hughes' hearing were not specifically focused, at least overtly, on the committee's

⁶¹ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Naphtali Lewis," *Vol. 2*, 1256.

⁶² I added in the direct description of Naphtali Lewis being Caucasian to interpret the differences between Caucasians and African Americans.

⁶³ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 165.

⁶⁴ Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, "Langston Hughes," *Executive Session of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations, Vol. 2*, ed. January 2003 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), 975.

suspicion of his race or gender role which was contradictory to what identifications McCarthy used when determining what made a proper U.S. citizen.

The committee tried to attack Hughes for his writings more than what he was actually stating throughout the hearing. Senator Dirksen (R – IL) focused on Hughes’ literary works and their placement in libraries across the world. According to Dirksen, U.S. ideals were not properly presented in Hughes’ literary works, and he was concerned that “they strike a Communist, rather than an anti-Communist note.”⁶⁵ Hughes denied any intention of drawing in a Communist audience, but the persistency of the court, primarily Roy Cohn, McCarthy’s aide, led to an abundance of questions regarding his loyalty to Communism. Hughes’ poem “Ballads of Lenin” left Cohn believing Hughes had written the passage, “On guard with the workers forever – The world is our room” to support the overthrow of the U.S. government.⁶⁶ Now Hughes was allegedly creating literary works that were not reflections of U.S. ideals that went against what it meant to be a proper U.S. citizen. Hughes was viewed as a threat due to his writings and identity as a poet, and the various messages portrayed in his writings left him vulnerable.

Hughes’ primary defense was that a specific questionable literary work of his could have various meanings. One particular work examined throughout his hearing was Hughes’ “Goodbye to Christ” poem, which questioned religion. Senator Dirksen took this opportunity to question Hughes’ morality by stating “from my familiarity with the Negro people for a long time that they are innately a very devout and religious people”⁶⁷ If Hughes was a devout African American citizen he would not question religion as his

⁶⁵ Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Vol. 2*, 975.

⁶⁶ Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Vol. 2*, 978.

⁶⁷ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Langston Hughes,” *Vol. 2*, 980.

poem had. Hughes was going against Senator Dirksen's view of African Americans, and questioning the validity of God within his literary work, especially since the committee was atheist. The committee's baffled reaction to how poetry could have various meanings did not help Hughes. The committee used one meaning of Hughes' literary work to link him to Communism. The committee did not overtly discuss his sexuality, even though they viewed homosexuals as security threats. Hughes' identity as not only a homosexual but as an African American was not directly emphasized as a justifiable reason to suspect him. If Hughes' sexuality had come into question during his hearing he still might have been further suspected of Communism, but in a way that automatically presumed him as a threat.

In contrast to investigating the loyalty of Lewis and Hughes, some individuals accused were scapegoated because of their sexuality that seemed to connect them to Communism; homosexuals were characterized in similar ways to how Communists were also characterized. According to a 1950 Interim Report by the Subcommittee on Investigations, "overt acts of sex perversion, including acts of homosexuality, constitute a crime under the Federal, State, and municipal statutes."⁶⁸ In the twentieth century, individuals who "behaved immorally" were persecuted for such acts.⁶⁹ Since any act of homosexuality was viewed as illegal, those individuals were thus more vulnerable and suspicious, making them an easy scapegoat. Homosexuality was not only being viewed as an illegal act but according to sexologists, was also "abnormal or sick," and could be

⁶⁸ Subcommittee on Investigations, "Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government," in *Interim Report*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 3.

⁶⁹ Lillian Faderman, "Introduction," in *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*, (New York: The Penguin Group, 1991), 2.

described as having “men trapped in women’s bodies” and vice versa.⁷⁰ These individuals were already breaking the law because of their differing sexuality. One illegal act could then be connected to other various illegal acts, in this case Communism.

More than just illegal activity, homosexuals and Communists were viewed as related because they both had hidden secrets. As the liberal historian Arthur Schlesinger once stated, “Communism was “something secret, sweaty, and furtive like nothing so much, in the phrase of one wise observer of modern Russian, as homosexuals in a boys’ school.”⁷¹ If a person was “married and [had] children...they appeared to lead normal lives,” but that could also be a cover up of the “perverted activities” of a homosexual lifestyle.⁷² The report even went further to describe how homosexual behavior “can pollute a Government office” which provided a reason for persecuting homosexuals because of the fear that homosexual had infiltrated the government just like Communists.⁷³ Homosexuals were vulnerable to blackmail, which could lead them to be disloyal possibly not by choice but by accident or unwillingly. It was supposedly a leverage that a Communist could use against a homosexual by threatening to expose them in order to receive government secrets.

The McCarthy committee did question witnesses who had a history of homosexuality, even if they were not initially brought in that premise. On February 2, 1953, Certified Public Accountant Eric Kohler was brought before the committee to discuss a shipment of material sent to Austria, and then transferred out of Austria to

⁷⁰ Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 3.

⁷¹ James Patterson, Jr., “Red Scares Abroad and at Home,” in *Grand Expectations; The United States, 1945-1974*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 181.

⁷² Subcommittee on Investigations, “Employment of Homosexuals,” 3.

⁷³ Subcommittee on Investigations, “Employment of Homosexuals,” 4.

Russia.⁷⁴ Many of the cases where homosexuality was used against the individual being questioned were first brought to the attention of the government from the “result of an arrest on a morals charge,” a euphemism for homosexuality.⁷⁵ Prior to questioning Kohler, McCarthy revealed that there were bits of information “on [his] morals, [and] am not interested in [the] morals at all, except in so far as it might result in a security risk,” which directly linked Kohler’s sexuality to security risks.⁷⁶ Even though McCarthy claimed that Kohler’s sexuality would not be discussed, it was in fact crucial.

The hearing did discuss the issue of the material being shipped, but it abruptly changed to focus on Kohler’s sexuality. Kohler was questioned repeatedly about a man by the name of Bill with whom he had a conversation about Russian ideology. Kohler’s allegedly homosexual relationship with Bill caused concern in the hearing because of possible threats of blackmail. The committee referred to a “former intelligence officer, the head of Austrian intelligence during World War I” who was blackmailed because of his homosexuality.⁷⁷ McCarthy was assuming that because Kohler did have access to secret documents during his time working in Washington that he could then be blackmailed because of his homosexuality and spill government secrets. This was a widespread belief, exposed in the *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government Interim Report*, which claimed “if blackmailers can extort money from a homosexual under the threat of disclosure, espionage agents [could] use the same type to pressure to extort confidential information or other material they might be seeking.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Eric Kohler,” *Vol. 1*, 411.

⁷⁵ Subcommittee on Investigations, “Employment of Homosexuals,” 12.

⁷⁶ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Eric Kohler,” *Vol. 1*, 411.

⁷⁷ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Eric Kohler,” *Vol. 1*, 422.

⁷⁸ Subcommittee on Investigations, “Employment of Homosexuals,” 5.

McCarthy viewed Kohler as a security risk due to his homosexuality as not just disloyal but as vulnerable to blackmail, and was used as a scapegoat for a Communist threat.

Since January 1, 1947, up until the 1950 publishing of the *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government Interim Report*, there had been 4,954 cases involving charges of homosexuality or other types of sex perversion within the armed services and civilian agencies of the government, including Kohler's.⁷⁹ Kohler was viewed as a security risk because of his homosexuality. At the hearing McCarthy read a letter which contained quite descriptive language between Kohler and a different man named Jack that made the committee assume that there was indeed a homosexual relationship between the two men, leading to their belief that Kohler had lied and was lying under oath stated at the beginning of the hearing.⁸⁰ Kohler had previously stated that he had not had sexual relations with another man, but the letter suggested otherwise. If anything, the letter encouraged the committee to see homosexuals as untrustworthy as Communists. As the committee put it, "our intelligence agencies agree that men who are homosexual or who are not what is commonly considered normal sexually, are security risks."⁸¹

Unlike witch trials, women are no more likely to be scapegoated as compared to men. Brooklyn College professor Helen B. Lewis, wife of Naphtali Lewis, had her hearing on May 25, 1953, under the direction of McCarthy, who began the hearing with a question about her occupation, and then drastically shifted to her allegiance to the

⁷⁹ Subcommittee on Investigations, "Employment of Homosexuals," 7.

⁸⁰ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Eric Kohler," *Vol. 1*, 436.

⁸¹ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Eric Kohler," *Vol. 1*, 424.

Communist party.⁸² Committee member Cohn then rapidly attacked her “declining to answer that question under privileges afforded [her] by the Fifth Amendment,” which numerous accused citizens had used during the hearings. The committee members continued to push Helen Lewis even though she had invoked the Fifth Amendment as her reason for declining to answer. Here, Helen Lewis was not naming names or revealing any information that she could have known, which to the committee was evidence of guilt.

The committee viewed Lewis as suspicious because she refused to give information. The committee then discussed her husband, Naphtali Lewis, and the Student Exchange Program. Helen Lewis had needed a passport in order to accompany her husband to Europe for the exchange program, and McCarthy was aware of the importance it held to her. McCarthy began referencing the possibility that Helen Lewis might receive a passport if she revealed information about her husband’s alleged Communist affiliation.⁸³ As a wife, it was assumed from the committee, particularly Senator Jackson that “if [Helen] were a member of the Communist party and [Naphtali] were her husband” they would have known about each other’s Communist affiliations.⁸⁴ The committee asserted their claim that Helen was allowed to refuse to give information about her husband because “there [was] no such thing as an absolute privilege between husband and wife,” according to Cohn.⁸⁵ The committee disregarded Lewis’ loyalty to her husband, eventually arguing that it would have been better for Lewis to reveal information for the safety of the United States. McCarthy even went so far as to threaten

⁸² Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Helen B. Lewis,” *Vol. 2*, 1246.

⁸³ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Helen B. Lewis,” *Vol. 2*, 1249.

⁸⁴ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Helen B. Lewis,” *Vol. 2*, 1239.

⁸⁵ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Helen B. Lewis,” *Vol. 2*, 1250.

Helen Lewis by stating “I doubt very much that a passport will be granted to someone...to represent us...unless you come in and tell us about your activity in the party” as a way of blackmailing her.⁸⁶ Lewis contested their views that loyalty to country was more important than loyalty to spouse.

Eslanda Goode Robeson was an African American woman who also went through the hearings during the Red Scare. Starting on July 7, 1953, Robeson dealt with a bombardment of questions pertaining to her affiliation with the Communist party.⁸⁷ Robeson declined to answer numerous times, invoking the Fifth Amendment as others had done thus giving the idea she had something to hide. But the committee became even more suspicious due to her marriage to singer Paul Robeson. McCarthy was interested in the marriage due to Paul Robeson’s previous hearing in front of HUAC where he was blacklisted for Communist affiliations in 1946.⁸⁸ Eslanda Robeson’s role within her marriage to Paul Robeson could have made the committee suspicious of her loyalty because of her husband’s Communist affiliations. The committee could have viewed her as more of a threat because of Paul Robeson, and if she had not been Paul Robeson’s wife then maybe she would not have been suspected. The committee also could have questioned her husband about the same affiliation to Communism regarding Eslanda. The relationship between husband and wife led the committee to assume that Eslanda Robeson would have Communist secrets from her husband that she could share with the committee. Robeson refused to give in to McCarthy, who stated he was “going to make [the woman] answer” the given questions, even with the proclamation of the Fifth

⁸⁶ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Helen B. Lewis,” *Vol. 2*, 1251.

⁸⁷ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Eslanda Goode Robeson,” *Vol. 2*, 1224.

⁸⁸ Permanent Committee on Investigations, “Eslanda Goode Robeson,” *Vol. 2*, 1223.

Amendment.⁸⁹ This type of aggression was prevalent through many hearings, yet Robeson was not giving in to her assumed duty as a wife to know or reveal any information. Again the committee did not overtly discuss gender, but rather it tried to get her to abandon her allegiances to her husband and demonstrate loyalty to her nation instead.

More concretely, Robeson faced criticism about her writings during her hearing, primarily when Senator Symington took over as chairman and asked her if she had the ability to write her book *African Journey* by herself.⁹⁰ Symington's criticism indicated that Robeson should not have been able to create her informative book without aid from an outside source, possibly a Communist aid which would be likely if her husband was suspicious of Communist affiliations. Robeson's *African Journey* detailed her travels and anthropological observations which described the importance of individual independence.⁹¹ The committee assumed that Robeson's allegiance was in a singular idea rather than the collective idea of fighting Communism within the United States. Again, the committee believed influence of her book represented the voice of others associated with Communism.⁹²

Robeson's writings faced criticism based on the message that the committee had interpreted with the importance of individualism within a country rather than promoting a united nation. The committee viewed her work as not only farfetched for her to do by herself, but also as praise for Communism, which encouraged individuals to overthrow their government. The committee saw an African American woman writing about a

⁸⁹ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Eslanda Goode Robeson," *Vol. 2*, 1225.

⁹⁰ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Eslanda Goode Robeson," *Vol. 2*, 1225.

⁹¹ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Eslanda Goode Robeson," *Vol. 2*, 1226.

⁹² Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Eslanda Goode Robeson," *Vol. 2*, 1226.

stronger sense of individual unity as evidence of Communism. Robeson's allegiances were also questioned by Symington, who accused her of not being "a good American and at the same time dedicated to the overthrow of the government by force and violence."⁹³ Robeson's writings convinced the committee that she was a Communist because they used her writings to confirm to a proper verdict that she would be a likely sympathizer.

Writers, such as Langston Hughes and Eslanda Robeson, were viewed as threats due to the committee's interpretation of their writings. Hughes and Robeson were vulnerable to the criticisms of the committee members through the singular interpretation of their writings that the committee members viewed as threatening. Since the committee was already consumed with fear, the literary works would then be viewed as negative works that described a false U.S. ideology or going against an already perceived assumption of religion. Then for professors Naphtali Lewis and his wife Helen Lewis, their vulnerability stemmed from their lack of knowledge pertaining to Communism, which drew suspicions of being able to travel to Europe for educational purposes. The hearings did not revolve around specific gender roles, but interrogators did challenge husband and wife loyalty. Married couples such as the Lewis' and Robesons held questionable notions of marriage roles for a husband and wife to share secrets together, or for the case of the hearing anything related to Communism. The committee also linked homosexuality and Communism together, and they viewed a person's sexual identity as an easy target for accusations. Eric Kohler's hearing was executed because of his homosexual identity and the threat of government secrets being shared to Communist affiliates. The fear of homosexuality was placed above other worries that the committee

⁹³ Permanent Committee on Investigations, "Eslanda Goode Robeson," *Vol. 2*, 1226.

had in regard to maintaining social security of the United States. Although the committee focused on an individual's sexual identity as a threat, they also were concerned with the social roles men and women were going against.

The two eras created varying reasons for the persecution of specific individuals who went against the social norms at the time. The Puritan standard of 1690s Salem Village established roles that both men, but primarily women, had to follow suit. Women more than men were persecuted and accused of witchcraft due to an abundance of reasons including appearance both physically and verbally, inheritance of money, and other chance events. Puritan women had that specific gender role to fulfill, and if they did not it demonstrated they were witches. Fast forward 250 years to women during the 1950s Red Scare, and a comparison can be made regarding the assumed female role within society. Rather than physical differences, women were suspected of Communism due to their identity as a proper loyal U.S. citizen. The committee in the hearing viewed women as not leading a moral good citizen lifestyle through withholding information from the committee in regards to their husbands, or even not knowing any information about their husbands' possible Communist affiliations. A Puritan woman was viewed as a threat due to her physical ailments towards the afflicted girls and her varying characteristics whereas 1950s women were accused of having Communist affiliations if they withheld information. Although the 1690s gender role of women contrasts to what was expected of 1950s women, the collectivity of women were nonetheless viewed as scapegoats because of social discrepancies deemed unfit by the larger powers at hand.

Men during the Salem witch crisis were accused of witchcraft for varying reasons as compared to women. The accusations against men referred to their position within

society where they had to lead by example for the other members of Salem Village. The rumors of having intimate relations with Indians gave the fearful villagers a reason to scapegoat the men who were going against the Puritan standard. The men were also targeted for outcomes that were either by their profession or coincidence. By trading weapons to the Indians and French as a source of income and sometimes cheating the Indians through trade deals, the Puritan men involved would be targeted as responsible for the massacres of New England villages. The men were being persecuted for physical evidence of social discrepancies. In the 1950s the same differences followed suit through the respectable role of a man with suspicion of Communism if he had withheld information or promoted the overthrowing of the government through literary works. The ideology of men aiding a type of negative power, either through the devil in colonial times or Communism in the 1950s, went against their roles as protector to the stability of the current social norms.

Men as well as women were persecuted in the Salem witch trials for acting against their specific gender roles, where in comparison those accused of Communist affiliations were targeted for other reasons. Poets were targeted for their poetry, professors for teaching, wives for their husbands, and most importantly homosexuals for being gay. In that sense, the people persecuted in 1950s Red Scare were viewed as going against their social roles that the larger power of the committee deemed unfit for social security. The variations of social and gender norms created groups of vulnerable people who were used as scapegoats.

Conclusion:

The continuation of scapegoating specific groups of people for an external threat seems to be a reoccurring tradition in the history of the United States. Such an event occurred in Salem Village in the 1690s where men, but primarily women, were held responsible by their communities for frontier wars, disease, the loss of trade, and the hardships of life. Then in the 1950s Cold War United States, the overwhelming fear of Communism infiltrating the United States and overthrowing the government demanded finding those who were responsible. Both eras used vulnerable groups of individuals as scapegoats to try and maintain power over the social norms that the communities depended on. Individuals did not control those norms; a woman in Salem could not necessarily control a change in social standing because of a male death, but that change was deemed as a threat any way. The same can be said of a woman or man who spoke out or wore a different dress in public and was viewed as threatening social norms. Both examples resulted in the persecution of individuals for the crime of witchcraft. In 1950s Red Scare, gender roles were not as worrisome as roles for a good citizen and then the larger threat of homosexuality. The threat of homosexuality was linked to the security of the government. Men and women who went against their given social norms, whether they be based in gender or sexuality were viewed as threats and needed to be expelled from their communities to ensure the continuation of a safe and secure place, just like the threat of Muslims. The two eras demonstrated the scapegoating of various individuals who had gone against the presumed social norm roles placed upon them by Puritan standards of men and women as well as fulfilling the role of a good citizen through the McCarthy committee's definition of proper African Americans, married couples, and

individuals of differing sexuality. These individuals who were not fitting into the social normalcy of the given time period were casted out of society, just as what Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump has promised to do with Mexicans and Muslims. Accused witches and Communists make up a larger group with the addition of Mexicans and Muslims who are vulnerable to accusations of terrorism and social security because of the fear emanating from U.S. citizens who only view them as threats. This repetitive nature of fear being a driving force of the persecution of vulnerable and minority individuals will be continuous.

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