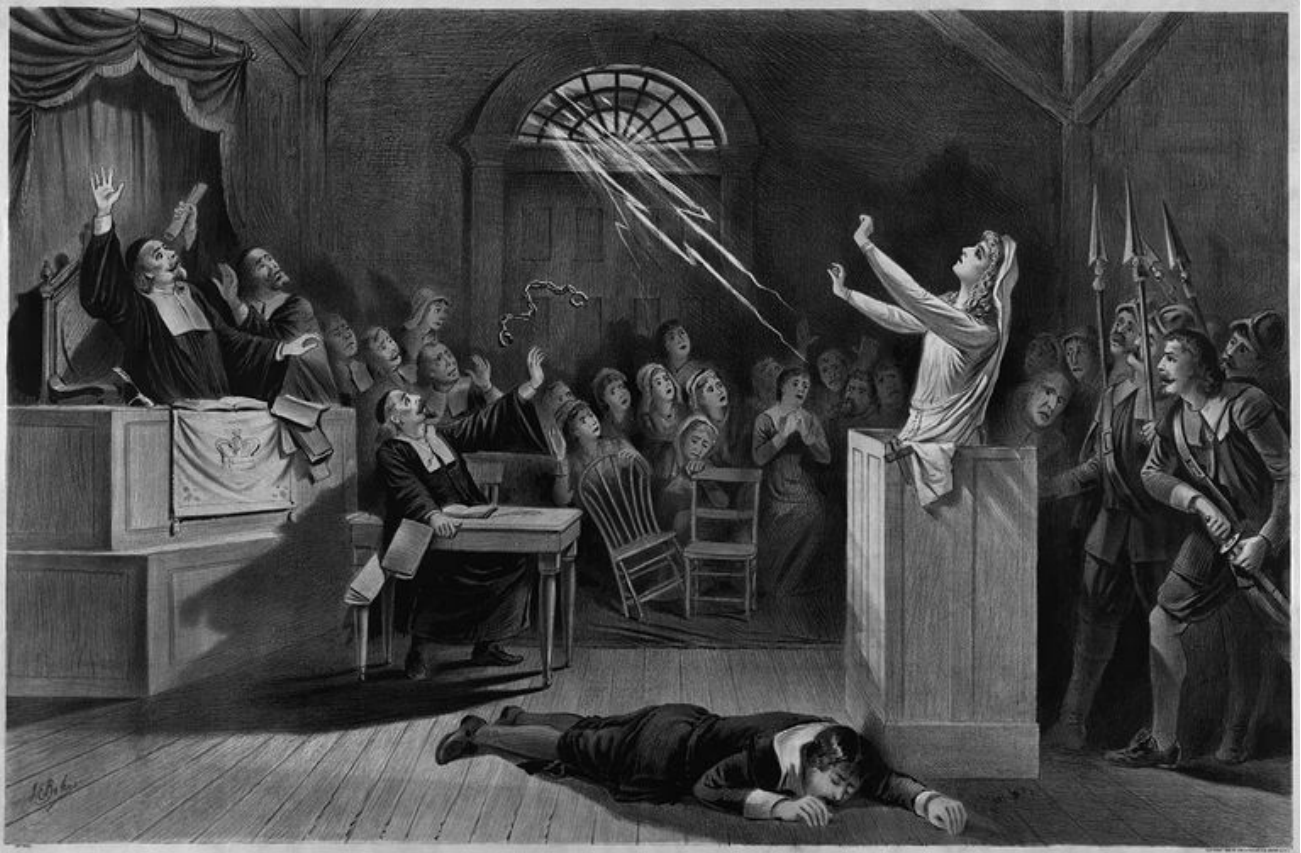


Where or When

by Marc Epstein



Music and Lyrics By Rogers & Hart from 'Babes in Arms'

(Second Verse)

[BILLIE]

When you're awake, the things you think
Come from the dreams you dream
Thought has wings
And lots of things
Are seldom what they seem
Sometimes you think you've lived before
All that you live today
Things you do
Come back to you
As though they knew the way
Oh, the tricks your mind can play!

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* is a staple of the English high school curriculum from Maine to Hawaii. The Salem witch trials of 1692, was Miller's vehicle for his critique of the 1954 McCarthy hearings. As Carol Iannone put it, "Miller suggested that America was a country prone to inquisitorial rampages, ever on the lookout for imaginary malefactors to punish in order to satisfy a simplistic worldview of good versus evil."

Iannone, in her *Commentary* review of *No Crueler Tyrannies; Accusation, False Witness, and Other Terrors of Our Times*, by Dorothy Rabinowitz, observed that given the liberal interpretation of the McCarthy hearings as represented by Miller, the eruption of mass sexual abuse charges against children in 1980s and 90s should have elicited a vociferous response from progressives. "These were cases, after all, in which outlandish, ever-escalating charges were leveled at totally innocent people, in which gross violations of due process and constitutional rights were committed, and in which terribly wrongful convictions were obtained." But instead there was a deafening silence from the progressive left.

For my money the progressive's seeming indifference was a necessary abstention. That's because these developments are a logical outcome of the progressive education philosophy that has become part of our pedagogic DNA from nursery school through higher education.

Their silence in the face of surreal sexual abuse allegations examined by Dorothy Rabinowitz, was really an intuitive defense of a child centered education system that holds teachers, the adults in the room, responsible for all aspects of a child's behavior and achievement. It is a system that has rendered meritocratic measurement meaningless, and that goes for both student performance and the criteria for hiring teachers.

While our attention is drawn to the theatrics surrounding the Kavanaugh Supreme Court Confirmation hearings as it was in

times past to the Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas spectacles, we tend to lose sight of the underlying impetus driving the Democrat political opposition. It isn't simply ugly hardball politics that we are witnessing.

Brett Kavanaugh's unforgiveable sin is that he rose to his position on the Circuit Court of Appeals, and was nominated to a seat on the Supreme Court, based on the merits of his performance in school and his performance as a judge as evidenced in his written decisions.

The Democrats have managed to graft Franz Kafka to Lewis Carroll and come up with an Orwellian dystopia using the Judiciary Committee hearing room as their stage. But variations of this play that includes unsubstantiated allegations and the presumption of guilt without due process have been played out across our educational landscape for decades. It extends from the Amirault 's Fells Acres Day School case to the Duke Lacrosse team trial.

To date, none of the judicial reversals or disproven charges of sexual abuse has served to dampen the misandry that informs Diane Feinstein and Kristen Gillibrand. It was Senator Gillibrand after all, who invited Emma Sulkowicz, aka Mattress Girl, to the State of the Union Address in 2015, even though her claim of having been raped by a male student in her dorm room was found to be without substance by Columbia University, the New York City police.

My own firsthand experience in these matters stems from a charge of corporal punishment that was leveled against me by a female student in one of my high school history classes. The discipline code had been revised so that an undesirable verbal statement could be considered "corporal" punishment.

Nothing about this incident is unusual. In fact it is commonplace and colors the world we now all inhabit. The story does have a Neverland component to it, and luckily for me a

happy ending.

"C" showed up in class after a week's absence.

She was wearing a t-shirt that had been cut down so that her midriff was exposed up to her bust line. When I informed her she was inappropriately dressed, she began to curse. I asked her to move to her seat and cover herself up. She continued to complain. Her complaints were laced with expletives. I told her that if she didn't stop I'd have her removed by a dean.

It was then that I informed her that if she didn't pass the course and the state Regents exam, she couldn't get a diploma. I had passed her in the first part of the two-year course when she was a freshman. "C", who was failing the course again would soon be two years behind in her academic progress. To date, "C" had also been suspended 9 times.

"C" went to the principal and lodged a complaint. She said I called her Tinker Bell and told her to drop out of school and enter a GED program.

According to procedure the principal called in the charge to OSI (Office of Internal Investigations) for instructions on how to proceed, even though "C" had 9 suspensions, and was still a freshman after almost three years in the school. He was told to conduct an internal investigation and I was not removed from teaching duties.

The assistant principal for security conducted the investigation. When "C's" father came up to school he informed the authorities that he had no control over his daughter.

The principal informed me that the charges were judged unfounded and since they were unfounded she wasn't removed from my class!

What I actually said was that *"she wasn't Tinker Bell, and that this wasn't Neverland."* When she asked me what Neverland

was, I informed her that it was a place where nobody grew old. *"In our world we are all growing older and that she either had to do her work or think about an alternative program."*

She had never heard of Peter Pan.

I don't know how this all ends, but I do know that what we are witnessing in our schools, the workplace, and the halls of Congress, is not a sustainable model.